

MALLARMÉ, Stéphane (1842-1898; transl.)

Poe, Edgar Allan (1809-1849)

Manet, Édouard (1832-1883)

Le Corbeau (*The Raven*)

Paris; Richard Lesclide 1875

Folio (548 x 358 mm). 10 unnumbered leaves: 6 leaves of Hollande with printed title in red and black, justification verso, half-title and parallel text in English (Poe) and French (Mallarmé's translation), final leaf with 'achevé d'imprimer' dated 'le Vingt Mai Mil Huit Cent Soixante-Quinze' verso; 4 leaves of Hollande with Manet's monochrome lithographs printed recto only, each signed 'E.M' in the stone (sheet size c. 546 x 354 mm) and smaller loosely inserted parchment 'Ex Libris' leaf (194 x 278 mm) with monochrome printed text and lithograph by Manet (raven in flight). Original vellum wrappers, with Manet's lithograph raven head. A fine copy.

Manet's illustrations for Mallarmé's translation of Edgar Allen Poe's *The Raven* in its original vellum wrappers, very rare thus.

From the edition limited to 240 copies (although only 150 were printed – see below)

Le Corbeau, a large and striking work, is cited as one of the high points of French book illustration. Considered 'an astonishingly modern illustrated book for 1875' [*The Artist and the Book*] it represents a turning-point in the history of the illustrated book, which was subsequently 'liberated' from literal interpretation.

The technique used by Manet for the *Corbeau* plates was transfer lithography, 'a method ideally suited to the brush-and-ink drawing style ...' [Manet]. Wilson-Bareau describes the process, how Manet 'brushed in his designs with transfer ink on sheets of paper that Lefman, the specialist printer for this technique, then transferred to zinc plates for printing ...'

'Whether one regards *Le Corbeau* as a work of its own time, however, or as a harbinger of the modern book, it is one of the high points of French illustration.' [Ray p. 369]

'The last image is almost indecipherable in the density of its real and abstract references. The bottom of the door, an empty chair, and the shadows that menace like living evil spirits are brushed in with a suggestive force that defies description and is without analogy in other contemporary works.' [Wilson-Bareau]

It is documented in Lesclide's *Déclarations d'imprimer* at the Dépôt Légal de Paris on 14 June 1875, that apart from the few trial copies, the publisher printed only 150 copies as opposed to the 249 announced on the justification.

Guérin 85 -86; *Harris* 83; *The Artist and the Book* 178; *Ray, Art of the French Illustrated Book* 277; *Fischer* 65 - 71; see Henri Mondor, *Vie de Mallarmé*, Paris, 1941; see Wilson-Bareau, *Manet 1832-1883*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983

BENJAMIN SPADEMAN
RARE BOOKS

