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### A Unique 'Prognosticon'

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## A UNIQUE "PROGNOSTICON"

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In 1921, I came into possession of a folio volume in black-letter *De Civitate Dei* of Augustine, dated 1490. I noticed that on the inside of the oak boards, which formed the covers, were pasted papers, each of which bore two pages, black-letter print, in the German language. Four pages were visible on the inside of the two covers. It was evident that these papers were printed on both sides, and that four other pages would be uncovered if the papers were removed from the oak boards. It was seen that the four pages that were visible constituted parts of a pamphlet. It occurred to me at the time that possibly I might discover some hitherto unknown pamphlet, if I were able to remove these two sheets from the wood to which they were firmly fastened with paste. I took a sheet of blotting paper, and, after wetting it thoroughly with clear water, laid it flat on the inside of the board cover, to soften the paste and remove intact the printed pages. After many hours of soaking, I was able, using the greatest care not to tear the paper, to raise the sheets gradually, using a flat ivory paper cutter for the purpose. After drying them, I found that I was in possession of an eight-page pamphlet or tract, containing the Prognostication for 1490 of a Dr. Mellerstaed. A search for any record of such a tract gave me the following information. Dr. Martin Polich Mellerstadt apparently wrote a great many medico-astrological works during the latter part of the fifteenth century. In the *Beiheft zum Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, XXII, Leipzig, 1899, I found mention of Mellerstadt, and the statement that he had prepared a Prognosticon for 1483. There exist also one for 1488 and one for 1489, written at the command of Friedrich the Wise and printed by Kreusner in Nuremberg. I have been unable to find any record of the Prognosticon for 1490. Dr. Wilfrid Voynich wrote me in 1922, "It is quite possible that this little pamphlet is entirely unknown to bibliographers," and this appears to be the case. The Prognosticon is written in old German. Dr. Daniel B. Shumway, professor of German at the University of Pennsylvania, has translated the pamphlet, and I expect to publish it, for such value as it may have.

Apart from the fact that the copy thus brought to light may be unique and therefore of special interest to bibliophiles and bibliographers, the pamphlet itself has interest from the nature of its contents, showing as it does an early example of the Prognostications which continue to be printed in certain well-known calendars and almanacs, and are regarded as important by considerable portions of the community.