

The Moon considered as a planet, a word, and a satellite

5.000 €

Author	**James Nasmyth**
Year	**1874**
Book language	**English**
Condition	**Good**

General Astronomy · Star Atlases & Charts

DESCRIPTION

FIRST PRINTED EDITION in the year 1874, 23 Woodbury-type plates, 1 chromolithographed plate, heliographed frontispiece with margins, numerous text illustrations, original blue publisher's cloth, gilt vignette at the top, slightly rubbed, spine somewhat faded, corners rubbed, 4to, London, John Murray, 1874. This scarce work is most notable for its photographs of the surface of the moon. This was achieved by the Scottish astronomer James Nasmyth, who sketched the mountainous, crater-filled surface of the moon from observations he made over more than thirty years. He then constructed plaster models based on the drawings and photographed them against black backgrounds using raking light, to "produce the most faithful representations of the original". Nasmyth's technique circumvented the technical limitations of astronomical photography to achieve the detail required. He likely adopted the method from his father, a well-known Scottish landscape painter who used plaster models as studies for his paintings. The book was one of the first to be illustrated with photomechanical prints, which were praised by one of the book's contemporary reviewers as one of the "most truthful and striking representations of natural objects" ever encountered by a student of science. The first three editions include a variety of processes, such as engraving, photogravure, heliotype, lithography, chromolithography and four different variations of the Woodbury type. It is likely that the first two editions, published simultaneously, were in part experiments as to which method of reproduction was best. The Woodbury type appears to have been favoured, as the third edition is composed entirely of Woodbury type. The Moon also includes numerous examples of the types of schematic diagrams most commonly used to illustrate scientific texts. These engravings trace astral trajectories, describe hypothetical cross-sections of the planet's underground layers and reveal the mechanisms by which Nasmyth and Carpenter believed ancient volcanoes must have shaped the lunar surface. The book's combination of different image types and reproduction technologies allowed it to convey more extensive and varied information, while reinforcing its claims to scientific "truthfulness". The diagrams, schematic drawings and photomechanical illustrations allow the viewer to probe the depths of the moon and scale its heights, to examine it up close and also to trace its path through the cosmos.