

## **The first edition of one of the most influential works on social democracy**

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*. London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859. 7 5/8 inches x 4 1/2 inches (194 x 114 mm), 208 pages.

John Stuart Mill (1806–73), one of the most widely read and influential social philosophers of the nineteenth century, was educated by his father whose philosophic tendencies leaned toward the ideas of Jeremy Bentham. He abandoned his law studies and instead took a clerkship with India House; when the company dissolved in 1858, he had risen to the ranks of examiner. He was immensely interested in political theory, and during this time he wrote for various periodicals and joined several political groups, one of whose members was historian Thomas Macaulay. Mill published *A System of Logic* in 1843 and *Principles of Political Economy* in 1848.

In 1851 Mill married Harriet Taylor with whom he had been in love for twenty years. They shared a concern for social reform, and it was his wife who brought about many of the more radical ideas found in Mill's *On Liberty*. Although Mill's doctrines followed those of his father, he tempered them with ideas of social reform and humanitarianism. He was a supporter of the North in the American Civil War, the emancipation of women, labor unions, and farm cooperatives. His theories bordered on socialism, a theory distasteful to many of his predecessors. After only seven years of marriage Harriet Mill died the year before *On Liberty* was published; they had worked together on the treatise and he dedicated the work to her. Many important ideas were exposed in this work that advocated the moral and economic freedoms of individuals from political and social structures; he claimed this right of personal liberty, "Over himself, over his mind and body, the individual is sovereign." *On Liberty* had an enormous effect on the philosophies of social reformation in the nineteenth century, and his ideas have enduring value as the basis for democratic ideals throughout the world.

This first edition of *On Liberty* is in a dark brown cloth publisher's binding, which has gilt lettering on the spine and blind ruling on the front and back covers. It is located in the

Remnant Trust Library in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

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