

A rare quarto wrongly attributed to Shakespeare

[Thomas Middleton], *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. London: [Thomas Pavel], 1619. 7 inches x 4 7/8 inches (178 x 124 mm); [32] pages; π, A–C4, D2.

A | YORKSHIRE | TRAGEDIE. | *Not so New, as Lamentable* | and True. | Written by W. **Shakespeare**. | [Heb Ddieu device] | Printed for *T. P.* 1619:

It is believed that *A Yorkshire Tragedy* was written by Thomas Middleton in 1607–08. Middleton attended Oxford University and wrote several plays, both comedies (*Michaelmas Term*, c. 1605; *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, 1611) and tragedies (*The Changeling*, 1622; *Women Beware Women*, 1625). *A Yorkshire Tragedy* is based on an event chronicled by an anonymous pamphleteer in 1605. It is a single-act play with ten scenes telling the story of the husband Caverley who squanders his family fortune and reputation on a lavish lifestyle. When he is told by the master of the local college how he has wasted his life, instead of repenting, he gives precedence to his family pride and kills two of his children to prevent them from becoming usurers. *A Yorkshire Tragedy* is one of several plays, including *The Whole Contention* and *Sir John Oldcastle*, that were printed in 1619 by William Jaggard and whose authorship was credited to Shakespeare.

This copy of *The Yorkshire Tragedy* is bound in nineteenth-century red levant morocco with gold tooling. A stamp in the bottom center of the front cover turn-in (“BOUND BY F. BEDFORD”) identifies this as the work of the noted nineteenth-century London binder Francis Bedford (1799–1883). The spine is divided into six compartments with raised bands, with “A |

YORK | SHIRE | TRA | GEDIE” lettered in gold in the second compartment; “W. | SHAKE | SPEARE | 1619” in the third. A handwritten note by J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps on the front flyleaf reads “This copy cost me £12.12.0 at George Smith’s Sale, 1867.”

This book was given to Edinburgh University Library in 1872 by James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps (1820–1889), the English Shakespeare collector and scholar whose *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* (1848) was published in several editions. Beginning in the 1870s, he devoted his time completely to the research of Shakespeare’s life. Halliwell-Phillipps was instrumental in the acquisition of New Place, the site of Shakespeare’s last home, and in the creation of the Museum at Stratford-upon-Avon (now Nash’s House and New Place).

Octavo code: **shaayp**