

A rare early quarto of Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*

William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part I*. London: Mathew Law, 1608. 6 1/2 inches x 4 1/2 inches (165 mm x 114 mm), [80] pages, A–K4.

THE | HISTORY OF | Henry the fourth, | VVith the battell at Shrewseburie, | *betweene the King, and Lord* | Henry Percy, surnamed Henry | *Hotspur of the north.* | *With the humorous conceites of Sir Iohn Falstalffe. Newly corrected by W. Shake-speare.* | [ornament] | LONDON, | Printed for *Mathew Law*, and are to be sold at | his shop in Paules Church-yard, neere vnto S. | *Augustines* gate, at the signe of | the Foxe. 1608.

Shakespeare's quartos, so named because of their format (a single sheet folded twice, creating four leaves or eight pages), are the first printed representations of his plays and, as none of the plays survives in manuscript, of great importance to Shakespeare scholarship. Only twenty-one of Shakespeare's plays were published in quarto before the closure of the theaters and outbreak of civil war in 1642. These quartos were printed from either Shakespeare's "foul papers" (a draft with notations and changes that was given in sections to actors for their respective roles); from "fair copies" created from foul papers that presented the entire action of the play; from promptbooks, essentially fair copies annotated and expanded by the author and acting company to clarify stage directions, sound effects, etc.; or from a previously published quarto edition. The quartos were inexpensive to produce and were published for various reasons, including to secure the acting company's rights to the material and to bring in money during the plague years in London when the theaters were closed.

Henry IV, Part I begins where *Richard II* (1595) leaves off — following Henry's usurpation and Richard's death. Henry immediately faces rebellion by supporters of Richard. In the climax of the play, a rebel force led by the Percy family of Northumberland that sought to join a group of Welsh rebels is engaged by the forces of Henry IV in the Battle of Shrewsbury (21 July 1403). Henry's men, led by Prince Hal his young son, win the battle, although casualties are high on

both sides. Ironically, the Percy family had assisted Henry only three years before in deposing Richard. But when land in Cumbria that the Percys felt were their just reward was given to a rival, they were greatly offended and joined the uprising against Henry.

Now at the National Library of Scotland, this 1608 fourth quarto of *Henry IV, Part 1* is in a nineteenth-century half-leather binding with dark green straight-grained morocco spine and tips edged with gold rules, dark tan boards. Lettered in gold: “HISTORY | OF | HENRIE 4TH” in the second compartment; “WM. | SHAKESPEARE” in the fourth and “1608” in the last. The bookplate of John Patrick Crichton Stuart, the third Marquis of Bute is on the front pastedown; the bookplate for the Bute Collection of English Plays is on the back pastedown.

This fourth quarto of *Henry IV, Part 1* was purchased by the National Library of Scotland from Major Michael Crichton Stuart on 3 April 1956. It is part of the Bute Collection of early English plays that was initially formed by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762). It was expanded by her son-in-law John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, and further enlarged by her grandson the first Marquis of Bute, also named John Stuart (1744–1814), who notably acquired 39 Shakespeare quartos. This quarto was likely acquired by the first Marquis from the 1806 sale of the English book collector Richard Forster. The National Library of Scotland collection contains 1,266 English plays and includes seventeenth- and eighteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays and examples of the foremost dramatists from Elizabethan, Jacobean, Caroline, and Restoration periods; also included are a number of promptbooks.

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