

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

William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part 1*. London: Mathew Law, 1613. 6 3/4 inches x 4 3/4 inches (171 mm x 121 mm), [80] pages, A–K4.

The | history of | Henrie the fourth, | With the Battell at Shrewseburie,
betweene | the King, and Lord Henrie Percy, sur- | named *Henrie Hotspur* of
the North. | VVith the humorous conceites of Sir | *Iohn Falstaffe*. | Newly
corrected by *W. Shake-speare*. | [White's device] | London, | Printed by *W.*
W. 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. | 1613.

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 1 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.

This British Library copy of the fifth quarto of *Henry IV, Part 1* is bound by the British Museum Bindery in nineteenth-century red sheep.

“SHAKSPERE. HENRIE THE FOURTH. PT. 1. LONDON. 1613.” is lettered in gold up the spine. The edges of the boards and the turn-ins are gold tooled. “George Steevens” is written on the title page, and the crest of Roxburghe appears on the verso.

This quarto was once owned by George Steevens (1736–1800), was an English Shakespeare editor who collaborated with Samuel Johnson in issuing a complete edition of Shakespeare, *The Works of Shakespeare with the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators* (10 vols., 1773). He owned roughly fifty quartos, and his sale (13 May 1800) was the first large Shakespeare collection to appear at auction. The book was acquired by John Ker, 3rd Duke of Roxburghe (1740–1804), Scottish noble and bibliophile. Ker was a personal friend of George III, who bestowed

numerous honors and offices upon him. His superb collection focused on Shakespeareana and included Caxtons as well as a legendary first edition of Boccaccio's *Decameron*; the collection was sold at auction in 1812, an event that prompted the founding the Roxburghe Club for rare books. Some time after Ker, the book was purchased 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). A number of choice items from Halliwell-Phillipps' collection were acquired by the British Museum in 1858.

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