

An early quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*

William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. London: [Thomas Pavier, 1619]. 7 1/8 inches x 5 1/4 inches (181 mm x 133 mm), [64] pages, A–H4 (C2–D4 in facsimile).

[ornament] | A | Midsommer nights | dreame. | As it hath beene sundry times pub- | *likely acted, by the Right Honoura-* | ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his | *seruants.* | *VWritten by VWilliam Shakespeare.* | [printer's device] | *Printed by Iames Roberts, 1600.*

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.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is set in Athens on the eve of the marriage between Theseus, duke of Athens, and Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. Theseus has declared that Hermia must marry Demetrius, the choice of her father Egeus, despite Hermia's love of Lysander. Hermia and Lysander defy the edict and run off into the forest together. Demetrius and Hermia's friend Helena, who loves Demetrius, follow the fleeing lovers. Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies, are in the midst of a marital dispute, and Oberon, seeking to punish her, sprinkles a love potion in Titania's eyes while she sleeps that will cause her to fall in love with the first person she sees upon waking. When Oberon hears of Helena's unrequited love for Demetrius, he instructs his servant Puck to give Demetrius the love potion and be sure Helena is the first person he sees; Puck accidentally gives it to Lysander, who falls for Helena. Afterward, the mischievous Puck puts a spell on Bottom, who is rehearsing a play for the wedding celebration of Theseus, that gives him the head of a donkey. Titania is awakened by Bottom's singing and seeing him, falls in love. Oberon learns of Puck's mistake and orders him use the potion to make Demetrius love Helena. In her distraction, Titania relinquishes control of her page to Oberon, eliminating the source of their quarrel. Oberon puts the four lovers to sleep and administers the antidote to Lysander. He then gives Titania the antidote and they reconcile. Theseus and Hippolyta come upon the sleeping lovers who awake from what they think an odd dream, their allegiances now sorted out. They all return to Athens for the wedding festivities.

This second quarto of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is bound in nineteenth-century dark green levant morocco with gold tooling. A stamp on the reverse of the front free endpaper ("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 “SHAKE- | SPEARE | MID- | SOMMER | NIGHTS | DREAME” lettered in gold in the second compartment; “1600” in the third. Handwritten note (beneath pasted-in bookseller description) by J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps: “The above slip does not refer to the present copy, which has a few leaves of the text in FS” is on the recto of the first blank leaf; copy correction notes by J.O.H. on obverse of back free endpaper.

This quarto 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: **shaamk**