

A first edition, first issue quarto of Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 2*

William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part 2*. London: Andrew Wise, 1600. 6 3/4 inches x 4 11/16 inches (171 mm x 119 mm), [88] pages, A–K4, L2.

THE | Second part of Henrie | the fourth, continuing to his death, | *and coronation of Henrie* | the
fift. | With the humours of sir Iohn Fal- | *staffe, and swaggering* | Pistoll. | *As it hath been sundrie*
times publikely | acted by the right honourable, the Lord | Chamberlaine his seruants. | *Written by*
William Shakespeare. | [ornament] | LONDON | Printed by V. S. for Andrew Wise, and |
William Aspley. | 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.

Henry IV, Part 2 opens in the wake of the Battle of Shrewsbury. The play chronicles the ongoing conspiracy against Henry IV by the Archbishop of York and other nobles and the responses of the Lancastrian loyalists. The end of the play brings the death of Henry (1413) by natural causes and the coronation of his son, known as Prince Hal, as Henry V. Despite the challenges to his father's legitimacy, Henry V was to reign unchallenged until illness claimed his life in 1422.

Both parts of Henry IV feature the memorable character Sir John Falstaff, an overweight reveler and shirker of duty.

Now at the National Library of Scotland, this 1608 first edition, first issue quarto of *Henry IV, Part 2* 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 | P^T 2.” in the second compartment; “WM. | SHAKESPEARE” in the fourth and “1600” 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 first edition, first issue quarto of *Henry IV, Part 2* was previously owned by George Steevens (1736–1800). Steevens, an English Shakespeare editor, 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, from which this quarto was purchased by John Stuart, the first Marquis of Bute (1744–1814). Stuart added it to the Bute Collection of early English plays that was initially formed by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762) and expanded by her son-in-law John Stuart, third Earl of Bute. The first Marquis of Bute notably acquired 39 Shakespeare quartos. The 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. The Bute Collection is now in the National Library of Scotland, which purchased it from Major Michael Crichton Stuart on 3 April 1956.

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