

## **The very first quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I***

William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part I*. London: Andrew Wise, 1598. 7 1/4 inches x 5 1/8 inches (184 mm x 130 mm), [80] pages, A–K4.

The | history of | Henrie the | Fovrth; | VVith the battell at Shrewsburie, |  
*betweene the King and Lord* | Henry Percy, surnamed | Henrie Hotspur of |  
the North. | *With the humorous conceits of Sir* | Iohn Falstalffe. | [Short's  
device] | At London, | Printed by *P. S.* for *Andrew Wise*, dwelling | in Paules  
Churchyard, at the signe of | the Angell. 1598.

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.

Now in the British Library, this first quarto of *Henry IV, Part 1* was bound by the British Museum Bindery in nineteenth-century red sheep with gilt tooling. “SHAKSPERE. Henrie THE FOURTH. PART I. LONDON. 1598.” is lettered in gold up the spine. The turn-ins are elaborately tooled, and the leaves’ edges are gilt. A letter to David Garrick (26 July 1757) by the quarto’s anonymous provider is inserted at the end.

This quarto was previously owned by David Garrick (1717–1779), an English actor whose unaffected performance in the title role of *Richard III* in 1741 brought him renown. Garrick, both as an actor and theatrical manager, exerted a tremendous influence on stage practices throughout the 18th century; as a friend and classics pupil of Samuel Johnson, he brought reputability to his trade. He began to collect early printed plays during the 1740s, at which time most collectors regarded stage scripts as popular works unfit for inclusion in serious libraries. Garrick, however, recognized their worth and, assisted by friends and knowledgeable advisors, built his

collection in the interest of scholarship and the enrichment of subsequent generations. He bequeathed the collection to the British Museum upon his death in 1779.

Octavo code: **shahen**