

A rare early quarto of *Love's Labours Lost*

William Shakespeare, *Love's Labours Lost*. London: John Smethwicke, 1631. 7 1/4 inches x 5 1/4 inches (184 mm x 133 mm), [76] pages, A-I4 K2.

Loues Labours lost. | A WITTIE AND | PLEASANT | COMEDIE, | As it was Acted by his
Maiesties Seruants at | *the Blacke-Friers and the Globe*. | *Written* | By WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. |
[Smethwicke's device] | LONDON, | Printed by W. S. for *Iohn Smethwicke*, and are to be | sold at
his Shop in Saint *Dunstones* Church- | yard vnder the Diall. | 1631.

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.

At the opening of the play, Ferdinand, the king of Navarre, and three noble friends take an oath to devote themselves to scholarship and avoid women for a period of three years. He decrees that no woman will come near his court. Soon after the princess of France arrives, along with three ladies from her retinue, to discuss whether France owes money to the kingdom of Navarre. The French delegation is granted an audience with Ferdinand, who immediately becomes smitten with the princess. Each of his attendants, as well, have been captivated by different ladies

accompanying the princess. One by one, the men let slip their love for the women; they agree to break their vow and pursue their respective love interests. The men visit the princess and her attendants in disguise but are recognized by the women who tease them. The men return out of costume and declare their love. After a lavish pageant, word arrives at the court that the king of France is dead; the princess declares she will not consider Ferdinand's suit before a year of mourning has elapsed. Her attendants do likewise with their suitors and they return to France.

This 1631 second quarto of *Love's Labours Lost*, now at the National Library of Scotland, 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: "LOVES | LABOURS | LOST" in the second compartment; "2ND | EDIT." in the third, "WM. | SHAKESPEARE" in the fourth and "1631" 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 second quarto of *Love's Labours Lost* was owned by Dr. Richard Farmer (1735–1797), Shakespeare scholar and collector, and Canon of St. Paul's, London. It was sold at 1798 Farmer sale to the English book collector Richard Forster and then acquired 1806 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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