

An early quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*

William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*. London: Andrew Wise, 1600. 7 7/16 inches x 4 7/8 inches (189 mm x 124 mm), [72] pages, A–I4 (title and I4 in facsimile).

[ornament] | Much adoe about | Nothing. | *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.

Much Ado About Nothing is a comedic story of two sets of lovers, mingled together throughout the action of the play. Benedick and Beatrice, both happy in their single lives are reluctant to be involved with the other and vow never to marry; they are slowly tricked into believing they are the object of the other's desire and thus fall in love. The romance of Claudio and Hero is jeopardized by Claudio being convinced by a jealous companion that his lover Hero has been unchaste. Claudio and Hero are eventually brought together by the Friar's plan to unmask the slanderer by claiming that Hero died after hearing that Claudio thought she was a whore. The plot is revealed and both pairs happily prepare to be married.

This Shakespeare quarto is bound in tan half calf over pastepaper boards. The 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 | MUCH | ADOE | ABOUT | NOTHING" lettered in gold in the second compartment.; "LONDON | 1600" in the third. Handwritten notes by J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps on the obverse of the front free endpaper, and on obverse back free endpaper.

This Capell, Kinsman copy of the first quarto of *Much Ado* (sold 1870). I 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).

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