

An early quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Parts 2 and 3*

William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Parts 2 and 3*. London: [Thomas Pavier, 1619]. 4o, [196] pages, A–Q4.

THE | Whole Contention | betvveene the tvvo Famous | Houses, LANCASTER and | YORKE. |
With the Tragicall ends of the good Duke | Humfrey, Richard Duke of Yorke, | and King Henrie
the | sixt. | Diuided into two Parts : And newly corrected and | enlarged. Written by *William*
Shake- | speare, Gent. | [Heb Ddieu device] | Printed at LONDON, for T. P.

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 *Henry VI, Part 2*, Henry, who ascended to the throne as an infant with protectors ruling in his stead, has reached adulthood. The Earl of Suffolk has arranged for Henry to wed Margaret of Anjou, in hopes of using her to control Henry. The action opens with the arrival of Margaret in England for her marriage to Henry (1445). The Duke of Gloucester opposes the match, leading Suffolk to arrest Gloucester for treason and, later, to arrange for his murder. Popular pressure forces Henry to banish Suffolk; Suffolk is murdered by pirates on his

way to France and is mourned by Margaret, his lover. Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, meanwhile, has been quietly plotting against Henry, convinced that his claim to the throne has more legitimacy than Henry's. York enters into open conflict with the Lancastrian forces of Henry in the first Battle of St. Albans (1455), the opening salvo in the Wars of the Roses.

Henry VI, Part 3 takes the three-part tale of the hapless Henry VI to its conclusion. Following the Battle of St. Albans, Henry VI sees the victorious Duke of York on the throne as he enters Parliament and agrees, under duress, to make York his successor rather than his son Edward. Queen Margaret reacts with fury and leads the Lancastrian forces against York in the Battle of Wakefield, in which York and his youngest son are killed. York's sons are determined to assert their family's right to the crown and successfully engage the king's army, with Edward of York emerging as king. Henry is captured upon his return to England from Scotland, and Margaret petitions the king of France (Louis XI) to help restore Henry to the throne. Margaret and her allies have the luck of capturing Edward before battle begins and Henry returns to the throne. Edward is rescued by his brother Richard, and Margaret and Edward, Prince of Wales, are captured and the prince slain. The imprisoned Henry is killed by Richard in the Tower of London, who meanwhile has developed an ambition for the crown and plots to overthrow his brother.

Now at the National Library of Scotland, this 1619 quarto of *Henry VI, Parts 2 and 3* is bound in nineteenth-century tan leather with gold-stamped ornamental borders around the edges of both covers; the same border is on the narrow turn-ins, marbled endpapers. Lettered in gold up the spine: "WHOLE CONTENTION OF THE HOUSES OF YORK & LANCASTER". 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 quarto of *Henry VI, Parts 2 and 3* was purchased by the National Library of Scotland from Major Michael Crichton Stuart on 3 April 1956. It is part of the Bute Collection of early English plays that was initially formed by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762). It was expanded by her son-in-law John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, and further enlarged by her grandson the first Marquis of Bute, also named John Stuart (1744–1814), who 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.

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