

## **An early quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Henry V***

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*. [London: Thomas Pavier, 1619]. 6 7/8 inches x 4 11/16 inches (175 mm x 119 mm), [56] pages, A–G4 (blank G4 wanting).

THE | Chronicle History | of Henry the fift, with his | battell fought at *Agin Court* in | France.  
Together with an- | cient Pistoll. | As it hath bene sundry times playd by the Right Honou- | rable  
the Lord Chamberlaine his | Seruants. | [printer's device] | Printed for T. P. 1608.

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 V* takes place in England and France at the beginning of Henry's reign. The action opens before the 1415 Battle of Agincourt and presents the events leading to the conflict and preparations for battle. The English arrive in France, take control of a town, and are cautioned by the French who vow not to back down. On the eve of battle, Henry wanders anonymously among his soldiers and expresses his doubts, yet he gives them a rousing call to arms the following day. The English prevail, and King Charles VI of France consents both to Henry's marriage of his

daughter, Catherine of Valois, and to Henry's eventual succession to the French throne. (Henry died only two months before Charles, narrowly missing his chance to become king of France.)

This third quarto of *Henry V* 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: "HENRY THE FIFT 1608". 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 third quarto of *Henry V* was likely owned by George Steevens (1736–1800). He was an English Shakespeare editor who 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. This quarto was purchased by the English book collector Richard Forster; it was sold in 1806 to 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.

Octavo code: **shaheg**