

**HISTORY OF THE LIFE  
AND DEATH OF KING  
JOHN, WITH NOTES**

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History of the Life and Death of King John, with Notes by William Shakespeare & William J. Rolfe

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**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & WILLIAM J. ROLFE**

**HISTORY OF THE LIFE  
AND DEATH OF KING  
JOHN, WITH NOTES**





SHAKESPEARE'S  
HISTORY OF  
THE LIFE AND DEATH  
OF  
KING JOHN.

EDITED, WITH NOTES,  
BY  
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*WITH ENGRAVINGS.*



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KING JOHN.

INTRODUCTION  
TO  
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF KING JOHN.

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I. THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

*King John* was first printed in the folio of 1623, where it is entitled "The life and death of King Iohn," and occupies pages 1-22 in the division of "Histories." It is the only one of the undoubted works of Shakespeare which is not entered in the Registers of the Stationers' Company. Internal evidence shows pretty clearly that it was written at about the same time as *Richard II.*; and it is probable that it

followed rather than preceded that play. We cannot be far wrong if, with Furnivall, we assign it to the year 1595. Dowden (*Shaks. Primer*, p. 90) also says: "The chief point of difference with respect to form is that *Richard II.* contains a much larger proportion of rhymed verse, and on the whole we shall not perhaps err in regarding *Richard II.* as the earlier of the two." Prof. Ward (*Eng. Dram. Lit.* vol. i. p. 368) remarks that "the play evidently belongs to the same period of Shakspeare's productivity as *Richard II.*, and may be dated about the same time; probably before the body of those in which he mainly followed Holinshed." Fleay makes the date 1596, seeing in i. 2. 66-75, as certain other critics have done, an allusion to the fleet sent against Spain in that year. He believes also that "the laments of Constance for Arthur's death (iii. 4) were inspired by Shakspeare's sorrow for his heir and only son, Hamnet, whom he lost August 12, 1596." As it is included in Meres's list in his *Palladis Tamia* (see *M. N. D.* p. 9), it must have been put upon the stage before the publication of that book in September, 1598.

## II. THE SOURCES OF THE PLOT.

*King John* varies from the facts of history more than any other of the "Histories," being founded upon an earlier play published in 1591 with the following title-page, of which Halliwell gives a fac-simile:

THE | Troublesome Raigne | of *John King of England*,  
with the dis- | couerie of King Richard Cordelions | Base  
sonne (vulgarly named, The Ba- | stard Fawconbridge): also  
the | death of King *John* at *Swinstead* | *Abbey*. | As it was  
(sundry times) publikely acted by the | *Queenes Maiesties Play-*  
*ers, in the ho- | nourable Citie of* | London. Imprinted at  
London for *Sampson Clarke*, | and are to be solde at his shop,  
on the backe- | side of the *Royall Exchange*. | 1591.

In the year 1611 this play was reprinted "by Valentine Simmes for John Helme," with "Written by W. Sh." added