Shakespeare's Handwriting

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Shakespeare's Handwriting

A Study by

Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, G.C.B.

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TO

MY OLD FRIENDS

G. H. P. : E. E. P.

AN invitation from the Delegates of the Clarendon Press to contribute a chapter on Handwriting to Shakespeare's England, *a work which they then had in contemplation, first turned my serious attention to the subject of Shakespeare's penmanship, and led me to study the few authentic signatures that have survived from his hand. This study proved more productive than I had dared to hope. The general results have been published in the book above mentioned. But it was thought that so interesting a subject as Shakespeare's handwriting might with advantage be treated in fuller detail; and with this view the present monograph has been written—a strictly palaeographical study, altogether eschewing criticism of a literary nature.*

My researches in due course led to an examination of the well-known addition, written in an unidentified hand, to the MS. play of Sir Thomas More, *now the Harleian MS.* 7368 *in the British Museum. Nearly half a century has passed since, in* 1871, *this addition was brought to public notice in a contribution to* Notes and Queries *by the Shakespearian student Richard Simpson, who suggested that it was an autograph composition of Shakespeare. This attribution could not be substantiated at the time: the key of the problem was still undiscovered. When I lately*

renewed acquaintance with the Harleian MS., it was with a lively interest that I recognized in the handwriting of the addition certain features which I had already noted in Shakespeare's signatures. A careful study of the MS. ensued; and in this monograph I have set out my reasons for concluding that at length we have found what so many generations have vainly desired to behold—a holograph MS. of our great English poet.

The memory of the early years of a long official life in the service of the Trustees of the British Museum recalls a twofold forecast, hazarded in the enthusiasm of youth and the confidence of inexperience, that we might live to see the day when a papyrus roll, inscribed with one of the Epistles of St. Paul within measurable distance of the Apostle's lifetime, might be rescued from some early Egyptian Christian's tomb; and when one of Shakespeare's original MSS. might emerge from the forgotten lumber of some old Warwickshire manor-house. The Pauline papyrus still lies, if at all, under the swathing bandages of its mummied owner; but, in this age of astounding recoveries of Greek literature—classical and biblical—which the exploration of the land of Egypt is so generously yielding, who shall dare to say that such a treasure lies beyond our reach? And, as for the Shakespearian MS., who could have made bold, any time within these last hundred and sixty years, to proclaim that he who

would set eyes upon it need only raise his hand and take it down from its shelf in the Department of Manuscripts of the British Museum?

I close this note with the fullest expression of my obligations to my old friend and sometime colleague Mr. Alfred William Pollard, whose wide knowledge of Shakespearian bibliography and literature is so willingly imparted to those who seek his help.

E. M. T.

September, 1916.

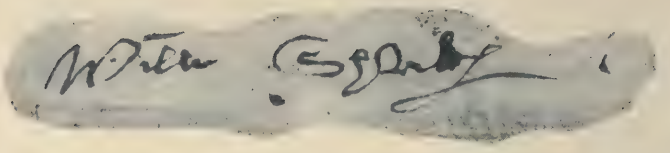
BIBLIOGRAPHY.—On the subject of the handwriting of Shakespeare, as represented in his surviving signatures, the following works may be referred to: S. JOHNSON and G. STEEVENS, *Shakspeare's Plays*, 2nd edn. 1778. In vol. i, facing p. 200, is a plate of the three signatures to the will, engraved from drawings made by Steevens in 1776. This appears to be the first published facsimile of these signatures. Unfortunately they are not correctly drawn. Steevens did not understand the construction of the English capital *S* [see pp. 13, 14 of this monograph], and mistook that letter in the third signature for the Roman letter, converting the incipient curve of the English letter into the finishing stroke of the Roman letter. He has likewise converted the initial *S* of the surname in the first signature into the Roman letter, and has failed to reproduce the signature correctly in other respects: probably at that time the signature was already partially defaced.—E. MALONE, *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare*, 1790, reproduces (vol. i, p. 190) Steevens's plate of the three signatures to the will, and also gives a facsimile (*ibid.*, p. 192) of the signature to the Blackfriars mortgage-deed [No. 3 in this monograph]. In vol. i, pp. 261–386, is published *An attempt to ascertain the Order in which the Plays of Shakspeare were written*, in the course of which Malone introduces the suggestion of Shakespeare's early employment as a lawyer's clerk. In his *Inquiry into the authenticity of certain miscellaneous papers and legal instruments published* [by S. W. H. Ireland] *Dec. 24, 1795*, 1796, Malone states that the mortgage-deed of the Blackfriars property (purchased by the British Museum in 1858) was found in 1768 among the title-deeds of Mr. Fetherstonhaugh, of Oxted, Surrey, and was presented by him to David Garrick. The Blackfriars purchase-deed (acquired by the Guildhall Library in 1843) also belonged to Fetherstonhaugh, and had, when Malone wrote, been recently rediscovered: he gives a facsimile of the signature (p. 137) and draws attention to the letter *r* written at the end of the surname, 'though on the very edge of the label'.—Sir F. MADDEN, *Observations on an Autograph of Shakspere and the orthography of his name*, contributed to *Archaeologia*, 1838, xxvii. 113–23, upholds the genuineness of the so-called autograph signature of

Shakespeare inscribed in a copy of Florio's translation of Montaigne's Essays now in the British Museum; and contends for the spelling of the poet's name as 'Shakspere', challenging the reading of *a* in the second syllable of the surname in the third signature to the will.—C. W. Wallace, *New Shakespeare Discoveries*, contributed to *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, March, 1910, describes his discovery in the Public Record Office of the papers concerning a suit brought in 1612 by Stephen Bellott against his father-in-law, Christopher Montjoy, with whom Shakespeare lodged; the deposition of Shakespeare, bearing his signature, being among the documents. Dr. Wallace has also contributed an account of the Montjoy suit to the *Nebraska University Studies* (for October, 1910), vol. x, pp. 261–304, under the title *Shakespeare and his London associates as revealed in recently discovered documents*.—Sir Sidney Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, new edition, 1915, deals with the subject of Shakespeare's handwriting in chapter xxii. 518–23. From an earlier edition the author extracted and issued, in pamphlet form, *Shakespeare's Handwriting*, 1899, with facsimiles.—*Shakespeare's England* (Clarendon Press), 1916, has, in chapter x, pp. 299–309, an analysis of Shakespeare's autograph signatures.

The original play of *Sir Thomas More* by Anthony Munday is contained in the Harleian MS. 7368 in the British Museum. It is in process of revision, being supplemented by contributions or additions by five different hands: one of them has been attributed to Shakespeare, and is dealt with in this monograph. The play has been thrice separately printed: (1) *Sir Thomas More: a play now first printed*. Edited by the Rev. Alexander Dyce (for the Shakespeare Society), 1844; (2) *Sir Thomas More*. Edited with an Introduction by A. F. Hopkinson (for private circulation), 1902; (3) *The Book of Sir Thomas More*. Edited (for the Malone Society) by W. W. Greg, 1911. The play has also been included by C. F. Tucker Brooke in his *Shakespearian Apocrypha*, 1908; and a collotype facsimile by J. S. Farmer has been issued in the series of *Tudor Facsimile Texts*, 1910. In the Malone Society edition Dr. Greg has contributed a careful revision of the text and an accurate description of the several hands employed in the Harleian MS.; without, however, entering into palaeographical details. In regard to the attribution of one

of the additions to Shakespeare he maintains a neutral attitude; and with some hesitation he suggests about 1592 or 1593 as the date of the play. But he has recently found occasion to reconsider this date. The issue in the *Tudor Facsimile Texts* of a collotype of Anthony Munday's autograph play of *John a Kent and John a Cumber*, dated 1596, led to the identification of the text of the play of *Sir Thomas More* as in Munday's autograph; and a recently acquired MS. (Add. 33384) in the British Museum, containing a copy of Munday's *Heaven of the Mind*, also has some preliminary pages written by Munday's hand in 1602. In a brief note published in *The Modern Language Review*, vol. viii (1913), p. 89, Dr. Greg has given his opinion, as the result of a comparison of the three Munday MSS., but without offering any palaeographical criticism, that the handwriting of *More* seems to be intermediate between that of *John a Kent* of 1596 and that of the *Heaven of the Mind* of 1602; and he brings down the date of *More* to, say, 1598–1600.—The first suggestion that the addition to the play of *Sir Thomas More* which has been examined in this monograph is an autograph composition of Shakespeare came from Richard Simpson in a communication to *Notes and Queries*, 4th Series, vol. viii, p. 1 (1 July, 1871), and was supported by James Spedding in the same periodical, vol. x, p. 227 (21 Sept. 1872). The question raised, whether the addition is in the handwriting of Shakespeare, has received little attention; for his authentic signatures, the sole material available for comparison, have only recently been submitted to palaeographical analysis, and any opinions hitherto ventured have been merely conjectural.

No 1



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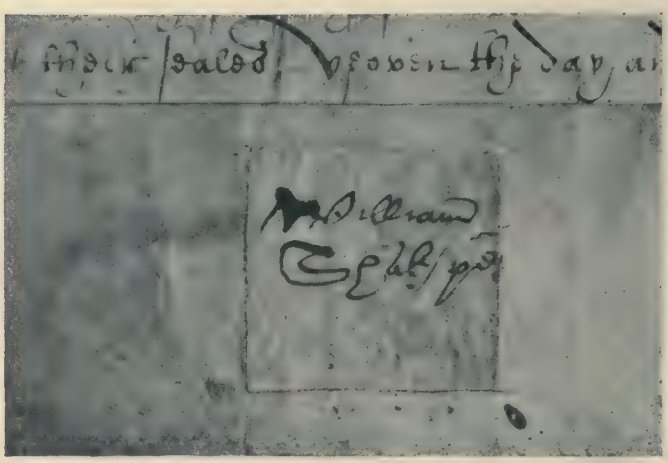

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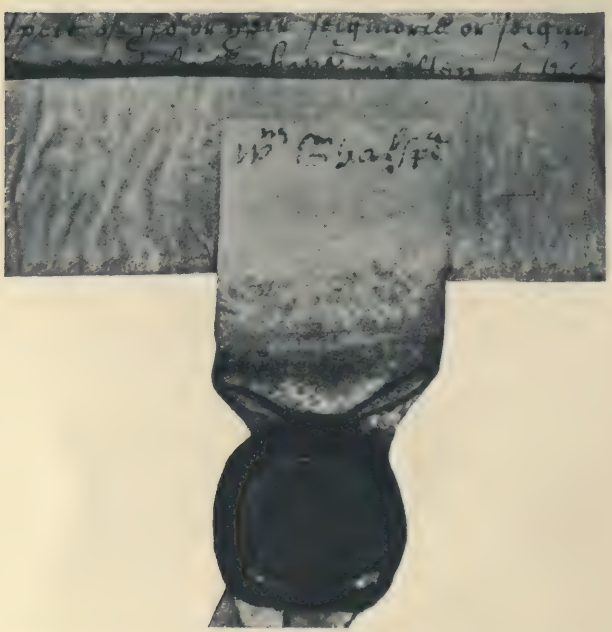
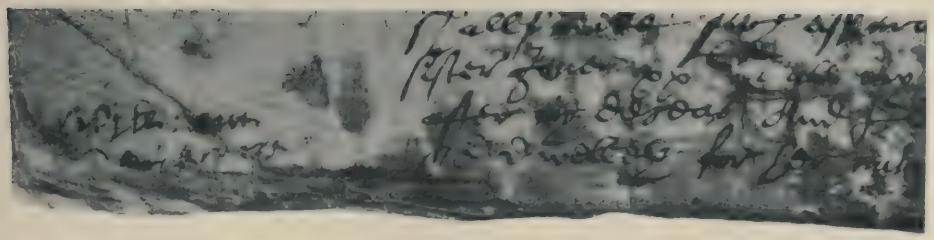


SHAKESPEARE'S SIGNATURES TO THREE LEGAL DOCUMENTS 1612 1613

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE GUILDHALL LIBRARY BRITISH MUSEUM

No 4



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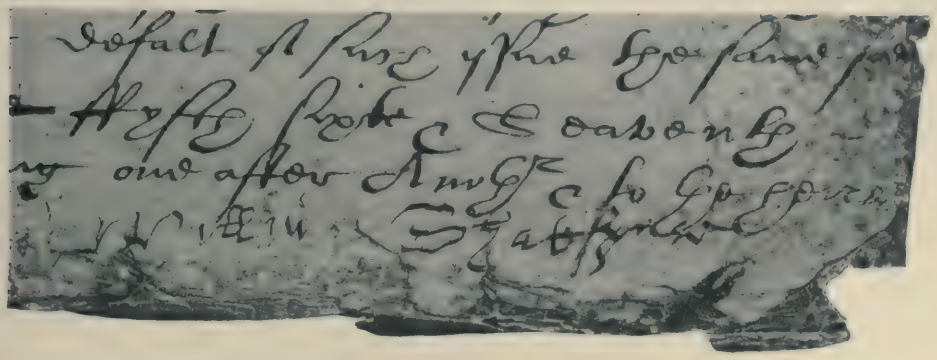
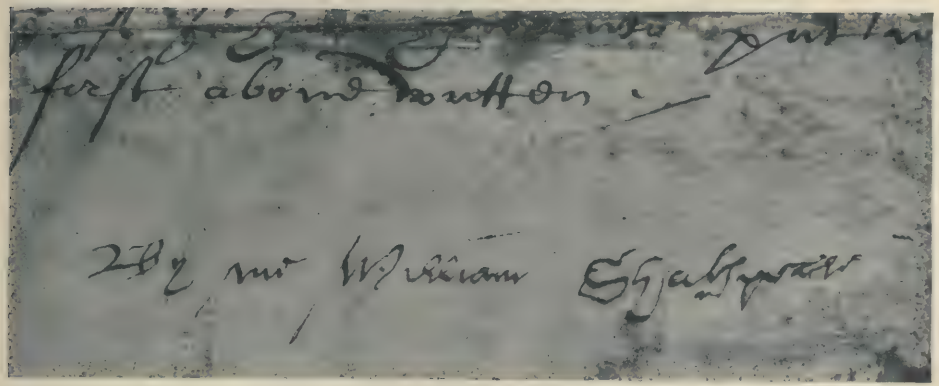


No 6



SHAKESPEARE'S SIGNATURES TO THE THREE SHEETS OF HIS WILL 1616

SOMERSET HOUSE

SHAKESPEARE'S HANDWRITING

THE subject of Shakespeare's handwriting has never been submitted to a thorough and systematic study; and the reason for this neglect is not far to seek. Down to a quite recent date five authentic signatures of the dramatist constituted the only recognized material on which to found an opinion or to attempt to build up a theory as to the character of the hand that he wrote; and of these five signatures two had been evidently subscribed under conditions restraining the freedom of the hand, and the remaining three were written when he was already stricken with mortal sickness.

In these circumstances, to have attempted to solve the problem of reconstituting, with any plausible probability, the kind of handwriting in which Shakespeare committed his literary creations to paper might have been justly regarded as a presumptuous undertaking which could only prove barren in results and a futile waste of time.

But the discovery in 1910 by Dr. C. W. Wallace, in the course of his researches in the Public Record Office, of a sixth signature has altered the condition of things. By means of this signature, written with a free hand, we now know that Shakespeare was capable of writing in fluent style; and we recover the key of this leading factor of the problem.

With this addition, then, to the imperfect material which had been at the command of the students of former days, the possibility of arriving at some general conclusions was greatly improved; and it is not without hope of some measure of success that we now propose, albeit with diffidence, to submit the signatures to a close examination.

The material on which we have to work is meagre, but we start with one advantage. We can confine our survey to a single style of calligraphy. Shakespeare was born of provincial parents, citizens of a small country town in the midlands, and was being taught in the grammar school of his native Stratford-upon-Avon when his father's declining fortunes led to the boy's withdrawal, probably in 1577, to help, it is said, in his father's trade, at the early age of thirteen years—a period of life when learning is slender and the handwriting is usually still unformed. But we know the character of the writing that Shakespeare was taught. In the course of the sixteenth century the handwriting of the educated classes in England was undergoing a radical change. The old native style—a rugged and tortuous style—was gradually giving place to the new Italian hand, founded on the reformed style of the calligraphers of the Italian renaissance, the beauty and simplicity of which ensured in the end its general acceptance.

At the time when Shakespeare was at school, the new hand had made its way in England so far that the more highly educated were masters of it as well as of the native hand: they could write in either style. But progress is always slower in the provinces than in the capital, and the evidence of extant

specimens of the handwriting of Shakespeare's actual contemporaries shows that the writing-masters of Stratford were still teaching the old English hand, and that hand alone. It was not until later in the century that they appear to have adopted the Italian hand (see *Shakespeare's England*, pp. 294–6). The strong probability that Shakespeare never learned the Italian style thus reinforces the fact that his surviving signatures, written in the last years of his life, are (with a single modification which will be afterwards explained) in the old English script. Nor is it probable that he had much opportunity for practising and improving his handwriting during the remaining years of his youth before he quitted Stratford for London, if, according to tradition, he was merely assisting in his father's business. The story that he was for a time employed as a country schoolmaster has only Aubrey's slender authority; and another story that in early years (whether before or after he left Stratford) he served as a lawyer's clerk has been generally rejected. As to any probability of his having engaged in literary work, which would imply practice in handwriting as well as in composition, we can only cite, in support of the idea, the statement of his biographer Rowe that he wrote a ballad on Sir Thomas Lucy in revenge for his prosecution for deer-poaching; though this does not exclude the possibility of other, unrecorded, efforts. There remains, however, nothing to show that, from the time when he left school in 1577 to the date of his quitting his native town about 1585, Shakespeare had any special occasion for using his pen for other than business purposes or casual correspondence. Here, for the present,

we may leave the question of his education in handwriting: there will be occasion to return to the subject on a later page.

Shakespeare's six authentic signatures are subscribed to the following documents:—

1. His deposition in a law-suit brought by Stephen Bellott against his father-in-law Christopher Montjoy, a Huguenot 'tire-maker', of Silver-street, near Wood-street in the city of London, with whom Shakespeare lodged about the year 1604; dated 11th May, 1612. (Recently discovered by Dr. C. W. Wallace in the Public Record Office.)

2. Conveyance of a house in Blackfriars, London, purchased by Shakespeare; 10th March, 1613. (Now in the Guildhall Library.)

3. Mortgage-deed of the same property; 11th March, 1613. (Now in the British Museum.)

4–6. Shakespeare's will, written on three sheets of paper, with his signature at the foot of each one; executed 25th March, 1616. (Now in Somerset House.)

The six signatures—one of them prefaced by the words 'By me'—present a meagre total of fourteen words. Subscribed within the last four years of Shakespeare's life, between the 11th of May, 1612, and the 25th of March, 1616, they suffice to prove that at the close of his career he still wrote the native English hand which he had been taught at school.

The actual signatures are to be read thus:—

1. Willm̄ Shakp
2. William Shakspēr
3. Wm Shakspē

4. William Shakspere
5. Willm̄ Shakspere
6. By me William Shakspeare

The Christian name is written indifferently in a shortened form or at full length, following the ordinary practice of all modern times. It will, however, be noticed that in each of the first three signatures the surname is written in a shortened form; while in Nos. 4–6, subscribed to the will, it is subscribed at full length, but, as will presently be explained, with variations of spelling. The six signatures thus fall into two groups; and this grouping is further emphasized by the fact that those of the first group were written when the writer was presumably in normal health; those of the second group, when he was on his death-bed. All are conscious how our handwriting varies with the state of our bodily health; and the effect of Shakespeare's weakened condition upon his signatures in the second group is very painfully manifest.

When the three signatures of the first group are submitted to examination, we find that their value as witnesses to the character of Shakespeare's handwriting is materially reduced by accidental circumstances. In the first place, from the manner in which he has executed the two Blackfriars documents (Nos. 2 and 3) it is evident that he imagined, as a layman might imagine, that he was obliged, in each case, to confine his signature within the bounds of the parchment label which is inserted in the foot of the deed to carry the seal, and not to allow it to run over on to the parchment of the deed itself. Thus, in the conveyance of the property (No. 2) he has written his signature

in two lines (the surname below the Christian name), not finding room on the label to write it at length in the usual way, or not taking the trouble to accommodate his signature to the breadth of the label. And so in two lines the signature stands: WILLIAM SHAKSPĒ, the surname ending close to the edge of the label and having above the *e* a flourish indicating abbreviation. The signature was thus in itself complete, in a form which the writer must have been in the habit of using, for it appears thus in the mortgage deed (No. 3) which he executed on the following day. But now, perhaps having a passing doubt whether the shortened name would suffice, instead of leaving the signature as he had thus finished it, he added the letter *r*, altering the form to SHAKSPĒR (the abbreviating flourish being left standing above the now penultimate letter, instead of being in the proper position above the final letter, and thus without significance). That the *r* was an afterthought and an addition to the signature is proved by the paler colour of the ink, as though the fluid had partially dried on the pen before the letter was written. At this point Shakespeare's superstition for confining his signature to the limits of the label comes into play. He had finished the abbreviated surname so close to the edge of the label that there was no room left for the addition of the *r*. The upper part of that letter is accordingly made to cross the junction, but ever so little, and encroaches on the parchment of the deed; but then, to satisfy his scruples, Shakespeare has managed to draw back the lower portion of the letter and ensconce it within the sacred boundary of the label. His hesitating action in regard to this signature may be dismissed

without farther attempt at explanation; but the important fact remains that he was in the habit of using an abbreviated form of signature even in legal documents—a fact which is substantiated by the two subscriptions (Nos. 3 and 1) which will next be examined. But before quitting the present one it is necessary to note that the effect of the confinement of the names to the label has been to constrain in some degree the flow of the hand, particularly in the surname, which here compares unfavourably with the unrestrained freedom of No. 1.

In the case of the signature to the Blackfriars mortgage deed (No. 3), the value of its evidence for determining the general character of Shakespeare's handwriting is still further depreciated by the writer's adoption (one might almost accuse him of a wilful perversity!) of an unexpected style. No doubt having in his mind the difficulty he had had on the previous day in keeping strictly to the label of the purchase deed, he now made sure of not transgressing by forming each of the letters of his surname deliberately and separately (except the *a* and *k*, which are linked) and by modifying their shapes from the usual cursive to a restrained and formally set character. The surname is here again abbreviated and the signature appears as W^M^ SHAKSPĒ—the abbreviated form of the surname which, as we have seen, he employed (before the addition of the *r*) in No. 2. This shortened form we believe to have been Shakespeare's more usual form of signature; and there will be occasion to refer to it again when the signatures to the will come under review.

The formation of the abbreviating mark above the *e* demands attention. In No. 2 it is composed of two slightly concave curves

joined together. In No. 3, in keeping with the deliberate character of the letters of the signature, it is written more exactly, and the twin curves assume rather the shape of an open *a* (for which letter, indeed, the mark has sometimes been mistaken). When employing this mark of abbreviation it is not probable that Shakespeare had in his mind any idea of indicating thereby the omission of any particular letters. It was a general sign of the omission of the ending of his name, and nothing more.

To sum up, then, the results of the scrutiny of the two signatures to the Blackfriars deeds (Nos. 2 and 3), they amount to this: that there is evidence that Shakespeare was in the habit of making use of an abbreviated signature, even in legal documents; that, while No. 2 affords a clue to the general character of Shakespeare's handwriting, its testimony is marred by a certain restraint imposed by its restriction to the limits of the label; and that No. 3 is still less satisfactory in this respect owing to the deliberate and *un*cursive style of the letters.

With signature No. 1 we are on firmer ground, and its evidence for the object of our present study is of first-rate importance. Here again we find a subscription in a shortened form, but not the same as in those attached to the Blackfriars deeds. Written carelessly but with remarkable freedom and facility the letters are WILLM̃ SHAKP—with a long horizontal stroke passing through the stem of the *p*, indicating abbreviation. It is notable that the medial *s* of the surname is omitted, as though the writer thought the letter negligible, provided he gave the emphatic *p*; unless, indeed, in his hurry he accidentally left it out. We might almost imagine that, having dropped the

unfortunate blot of ink on the *k*, in his confusion he hastened to finish the signature without giving a thought to the necessary *s*. The *p* with the crossed stem would, according to the usual laws of abbreviated symbols, be interpreted as equivalent to *per*, and of course Shakespeare knew the literal value of this common symbol; but it is quite possible that he used the stem-cross merely as a general sign of abbreviation of the ending of his name without intending it to represent any particular spelling, whether *per*, *pere*, or *peare*. It is remarkable that this, the earliest of the three signatures of our first group, should again, like the other two, come to us in a shortened form, but in a different form from the others. The conclusion to which one naturally comes is that, if within a year we find Shakespeare employing two differently abbreviated signatures, even in legal documents (and we may even count a third form in the amended signature, with the added *r*, of No. 2), there may have been other forms adopted by him at other times. At any rate these quick changes indicate a certain carelessness on the part of the dramatist in the matter of his signatures; and we might even imagine him a man impatient of the little conventionalities of daily life.

Apart, however, from the peculiarities of this specimen of Shakespeare's calligraphy as a signature, its value for gauging his capacity for dexterity with his pen can hardly be placed too high. It enables us to form a judgement on this problem from a point of view quite different from that to which we were tied by the condition of the five signatures known to us before its discovery. In this signature to Shakespeare's deposition we see a strong handwriting altogether devoid of hesitation or

restraint, the writer wielding the pen with the unconscious ease that betokens perfect command of the instrument and an ability for swift formation of the letters. He is plainly in the enjoyment of full bodily health. There is no indication here of any fault with the nervous system. Still there is no reason to put forward any claim to precise calligraphy, such as would be looked for in the writing of a highly trained hand. The Christian name, for instance, shows evident faults. It is dashed off hurriedly, even impatiently, the final huddled *m* rather indicated than formed. But the surname makes up for these shortcomings by its vigorous and sure formation of the varied curves of the letters and their links. With this signature before our eyes we easily recognize that Shakespeare was quite equal to the task of committing his thoughts to paper with adequate speed, and without feeling the mechanical labour which clogs the progress of a feeble pen.

The forms of the several letters employed in this and the other signatures of the first group will be more conveniently examined after the signatures of the second group have been described, when we shall be in a position to submit the letters of the six subscriptions in one view to a careful analysis.

Turning now to the signatures of our second group—the three signatures subscribed to the three sheets of Shakespeare's will, it is obvious, at a glance, that here a different order of conditions obtains, and that there is a marked contrast with the signatures of the first group, and especially with the one attached to the deposition (No. 1)—the painful contrast between the handwriting of sickness and the handwriting of health.

Shakespeare's will, now preserved in Somerset House, was prepared in draft on three sheets of paper, and was originally dated the 25th January, 1616. The testator is therein stated to be 'in perfect health', as no doubt he was at the time; and the execution of the will was deferred. But in the course of the next two months he was attacked by the malady which was to prove fatal. The traditional account of the illness is that it was a fever following on a carouse with his friends Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton. But, whatever the cause, the condition of the patient became so critical that the draft will had to be used without waiting for a fair engrossment; and, with many alterations and interlineations, it was executed on the 25th March. Although Shakespeare lived for nearly a month longer, till the 23rd April, there can be no question that at the date of the execution of the will he was sorely stricken: of this the imperfections in the handwriting of the signatures afford ample evidence.

Each of the three sheets of the will bears Shakespeare's signature in full. The first sheet is signed low down in the margin on the left. The writing has become indistinct, but the facsimiles made when the document was in better condition show that the signature is WILLIAM SHAKSPERE, in two lines, the surname below the Christian name, there not being sufficient marginal space to allow the name to be written in the ordinary manner: just as the signature to the Blackfriars deed (No. 2) was written in two lines to keep within the limits of the label.

The signature to the second sheet is written at the foot of the page—WILLM̄ SHAKSPERE, in one line.

The signature to the third sheet is written at the end of the will—WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE, preceded by the introductory words, 'By me'.

It will be observed that the three signatures vary in form —the Christian name in the second (No. 5) being shortened, while it is written in full in the other two. They vary also in spelling, the surname in the first and second (Nos. 4 and 5) being written 'Shakspere', while in the third (No. 6) it appears as 'Shakspeare', with *a* in the last syllable. But besides these inconsistencies, they vary also in handwriting and legibility. If the three signatures had been attached to three separate documents, they might very excusably have been mistaken at first sight for the signatures of three different persons. Any idea that the variations between them might be accounted for on the supposition that they were inscribed at different times and not all together may be dismissed without hesitation. Shakespeare would have been required to execute his will in proper legal form, and he must have written the three signatures all at the time of execution. But there remains something to be said as to the order in which he signed the three sheets, for in themselves there is to be found intrinsic evidence on the point.

We think that it may be safely assumed that the signature to the third sheet was the one which was written first. It is the signature executing the will itself—the other two signatures being merely subscriptions authenticating the two sheets to which they are respectively attached. As the main signature, No. 6 is emphasized by the introductory words, 'By me'. The

firmness and legibility of the first three words, 'By me William', as compared with the weakness and malformation of the surname and of both the other two signatures, are very striking. We can attribute that weakness and malformation certainly to the condition of the dying man. The firmness of the first three words indicate, we believe, an effort on the part of the invalid, which however he was incapable of maintaining to the end. Bracing himself to his task, Shakespeare, all things considered, accomplished the three words remarkably well. There are, it is true, minor irregularities in some of the letters which, but for his weak state, would scarcely have appeared. On the other hand, the success with which he has formed the *B* with its rather intricate strokes, and the firmness of the fine upstroke to the *m* in 'me' and to the *W* of the Christian name, the latter even furnished with a delicate initial loop (like the eye of a needle), are in astonishing contrast to the breakdown which ensues in the surname.

We will proceed to examine carefully this written surname and compare it in detail with the signatures of the first group. Turning to the signature to the deposition (No. 1) we see there in its best form the old English capital *S* and we have no difficulty in understanding its construction. The two alternating curves which constitute the actual letter are finished off by continuing the tail of the second curve and drawing it round the letter in an embracing semicircle which ends in an arch above the head. Now to analyse the *S* in the will-signature before us (No. 6). The two alternating curves are distinctly written (the first curve, represented by a small hook, appearing

in the centre of the letter), but when the hand begins the retrograde movement from right to left in order to accomplish the embracing semicircle, it fails at once. The curve, instead of travelling its proper course, immediately becomes angular, and being carried upwards by the wavering hand in a vertical line becomes entangled in the back of the initial curve of the *S*, and then, rising higher, it at length finishes in the covering arch with better success, the hand now moving in easier action from left to right. The tag at the end is evidently an accidental flick from the feeble hand. The curious result of this failure to write the old English letter in correct form is that a letter has been produced which may be easily mistaken (as it has been mistaken), by those who are not acquainted with the construction of the old English letter, for a capital S of the Italian (or, as we now call it, the Roman) alphabet.

In the deposition signature (No. 1) the letters *ha* are linked by a bold action of the pen, the pendent bow of the *h* being carried up above the line in an arched curve and merging with the *a*, which by this action is left open at the top like a *u*. It will be seen that Shakespeare has used the same style of linking in the Blackfriars signature (No. 2), where however the ink has partially failed in the extension upwards of the pendent bow of the *h*. In the will-signature (No. 6) the letters *ha* are weakly formed, and they are not linked; but it will be noticed that the pendent bow of the *h* is produced upwards to a point level with the top of the line of writing and then breaks off abruptly, as though the writer had not had the power to accomplish the arched curve and to link it to

the *a*. The next following letter is so imperfect that, taken independently, it would scarcely be recognized as a *k*. It runs on to the following long *s*, which is weakly written and ends in a tremulous finial. Then follow the letters *pe* linked: and here we arrive at a very interesting point in our scrutiny.

Shakespeare appears usually to have written the old English *e* with the loop reversed. He has formed it in its normal shape in signature No. 2, the loop there being perfect. In the signature before us and in the other two signatures to the will, this letter is in all instances imperfectly formed, the loop being slurred and the letter ending in a mere thickening or tick—in fact the letter is a blind letter. But in the case of the *e* following the *p* in the surname of the signature No. 6, it will be seen that there is something more than the tick or blind loop of the other instances—a long waving horizontal flourish proceeds from the top of the letter. This flourish on close scrutiny will be found to consist of two shallow curves, conjoined and ending in a thickening or dot. Now, having in mind Shakespeare's practice of signing his surname in a shortened form, as demonstrated in the signatures of the first group, we feel pretty confident that in this signature (written so far) we have another instance of the abbreviated surname, the twin-curved flourish being in the principle of its construction similar to the abbreviating flourish in signatures Nos. 2 and 3. Thus we have here the surname written 'Shakspē' with an abbreviating flourish just as we have seen it written in No. 3, and in No. 2 (before the *r* was added), that is, in the shortened form which we have

reason to believe was one adopted by Shakespeare in the execution of legal deeds.

In this instance, however, the surname has not been allowed to remain in a shortened form. For some sufficient reason—perhaps the lawyer required the signature to be in full; perhaps the testator himself, on second thoughts, may have decided that in the execution of so solemn a document as his last will there should be no ambiguity about the subscription—the dying man added the concluding letters of the name, *are*, writing the *a* small and bringing it quite under the flourish in order to follow close to the preceding *e*. The letters are weakly formed, the final *e* being a blotted or blind letter; but we have in this instance the name in its full form, 'Shakspeare', with *a* in the last syllable. The existence of the *a* has indeed been disputed by Edmund Malone (*Inquiry*, 1796, p. 117), who only sees in the letter a random blot due to the tremor of the hand; and this view is supported by Sir F. Madden (*Observations*, 1838). But we venture to maintain that the letter is really the letter *a* and not a mere blot. It is extremely improbable that a random blot should have taken the shape of the letter which might naturally be expected to occur in that place; and the fact that it is linked with the following *r* by a very decided connecting stroke proves that the writer intended it for a letter. There would have been no need to link a blot. If we refer to No. 5, we find there an instance of the letter *r* devoid of a connecting stroke when unlinked with the preceding letter.

The other two signatures to the will (Nos. 4 and 5) need not detain us long. They are both very imperfectly written, No. 5

being the worst of all and the one which we believe was the last to be subscribed. In our view, the sick man, when he had succeeded in accomplishing the main signature, relaxed all effort, and, knowing that the two signatures still to be written were only authenticating signatures, he scrawled them he cared not how. The fact that they both have the surname in full, 'Shakspere', affords evidence that they were written after No. 6, in which the surname, as we have endeavoured to demonstrate, was extended from a shortened to a full-length form. Had not that surname been so extended, it may be assumed that Shakespeare would have been content to use, according to his habit, shortened signatures also to authenticate the first two sheets of his will. That the two signatures should not be consistent in spelling with that of No. 6—both omitting the *a* in the last syllable of the surname—was perhaps hardly to be expected. It is a fact that people in Shakespeare's days were not always consistent in the spelling of their own names; but it is curious that two differently spelt subscriptions should have been attached to one and the same document. The lapse may be fairly ascribed to the testator's bodily condition; or it may even be taken as evidence that he was so accustomed to sign his surname in a shortened form, that, when he had to expand it, he was indifferent to the manner of spelling the ending.

The surname in the signature to the second sheet (No. 5) has also been read 'Shakspeare' with *a* in the final syllable; but this is an error caused by entanglement of the name with the pendent bow of *h* in the word 'the' in the last line of the text

of the will beneath which the signature is written. The signature proceeds as far as 'Shakspe'; then, coming to the bow, the pen is lifted to jump the obstacle, and in consequence the concluding letters *re* are separated by the base of the bow (mistaken for an *a*) from the rest of the name.

It should also be noticed that, taught by his failure with the capital *S* in No. *6*, Shakespeare has here avoided a struggle with the embracing semicircle by forming it in two sections, with a gap between them, instead of attempting to execute it in a continuous curve.

Before bringing to a close this section of our study, in which the general character of the signatures and the conditions under which they were written have been explained, and before passing to the scrutiny of the several alphabetical letters employed by Shakespeare in those authentic specimens of his handwriting; there is one important detail in their construction which must now be described.

When it was stated above that he wrote his signatures in the old English script, a note of warning was added that this was subject to a certain modification. This modification of Shakespeare's English hand consists in his use of a long s (*ſ*), as a medial letter in the surname of his signatures, in the form of the Italian cursive letter, which was no doubt borrowed by him from the new foreign style which was making its way in England with increased vigour during the poet's later years. It figures in the signatures Nos. 2, 3, and *6*. It would be useless to seek for a definite reason for his arbitrary selection of this letter to be associated with the purely English letters

of his signature; but it may perhaps be suggested that in practice he found the English long *s* (ſ), with its aggressively large bow topping the line of writing, an awkward letter to stand next to the *k*, likewise a tall looped letter, and that he therefore generally adopted the simpler and more easily written Italian form. (The letter in the badly written signature No. 5 appears to be an exception and to be intended for the English long *s*. It will be examined below.) As was only to be expected, to a certain extent the intermingling of the letters (and particularly the capital letters) of the two styles, the native English and the intruding Italian, is to be found in the handwritings of the time[1]; but the adoption of a single letter, in the way that Shakespeare has adopted this Italian form, is at least remarkable; its employment constitutes a personal peculiarity and provides us with one of the keys for the identification of the poet's handwriting.

Proceeding now to examine the construction of the individual letters found in Shakespeare's signatures, we shall follow them in the two groups already defined. In the letters of the first group, written when he was in normal health, we shall expect to find the letters formed with normal regularity and

[1] An interesting and appropriate illustration of this crossing of the two alphabets is seen in plate X of *The Catalogue of the Shakespeare Exhibition held in the Bodleian Library*, 1916, in which are reproduced cuttings from the shelf-lists of books arranged under letter S in the Bodleian Library, which were drawn up by different hands between 1614 and 1623. The entries of 'Shakespeare' (1623) are written, in four of the lists, in the English script; in three, in the Italian. But the English script is not unalloyed, for both the initial *S* and the medial *ſ* are in the Italian style. Nor, on the other hand, is the integrity of the Italian script respected, in which other entries are written, for here an English letter occasionally intrudes.

firmness: in those of the second group we shall have to make full allowance for malformation and indecision owing to the weak condition of the dying man.

In the six signatures there are represented eleven small letters of the alphabet: *a*, *e*, *h*, *i*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *p*, *r*, *s*, *y*; and three capital letters: *B*, *S*, *W*.

a.—In the first group we find the ordinary closed letter in No. 3. But it is not to be forgotten that this signature is written deliberately in formal characters. In the other two signatures, written cursively, the same ordinary letter appears in the Christian name of No. 2; but in the surname of both Nos. 1 and 2 the open *u*-shaped letter is used because it is linked with the preceding *h* in the way described above (p. 14): it is formed more freely in No. 1 than in the constrained signature No. 2. In No. 1 a prominent feature in the letter is the spur at the back, which is so marked that it may be regarded as a personal peculiarity. In the more constrained writing of No. 2 the spur does not appear, the base of the letter being round. (It may be here noted that one form of the open letter *a*, which is in common use in the English hand of this period, is provided with an introductory curve above the line—a form which no doubt grew out of the frequent linking of this letter by means of the arched link, as seen here in No. 1, the link eventually becoming an integral part of the letter. And it is not only the letter *h* which is thus linked with *a*, although that combination appears to have

been the most common; *ma*, *na*, *sa*, *ya*, &c., connected by the arched link, also occur.) In the second group, through the inability of the sick man to control the pen, the arched link does not find a place: the ordinary form of *a* alone is used.

e.—The ordinary cursive *e* of the time has the loop reversed. In the first group, it is normal only in No. 2. In the second group it degenerates into a blind letter; or a tick takes the place of the loop. The letter in No. 3 is of the more set type, composed of two independent curves, not looped.

h.—This letter was one of the letters of the English alphabet which called for special dexterity in the writer. The loop at the head, the bend in the main-stroke, the turn to the left, and the sweeping bow dropping below the line and thence rising, as required, to link, either above or below the line of writing, with the next following letter—all required so many quick movements of the pen and of the controlling fingers. In the first group it is formed with great freedom in No. 1; less so in No. 2. (The letter in No. 3 is of a more formal type.) In the second group the malformation of the head-loop in No. 5 and its evasion in No. 6, and in both instances the angularity of the turns in the letter and the lack of freedom in the pendent bow, indicate the difficult points where a weak hand would naturally fail. As the freedom of the letter in No. 1 suggests, Shakespeare, when writing under ordinary conditions, no doubt would have accomplished all the turns of the letter with ease; under pressure of haste he might have

slurred the bends and curves into less pliant strokes; but he would not have passed from curves into the angular efforts of his dying hand.

i.—There is little to be said about this rather insignificant letter. There is a tendency to make the base pointed—a tendency which is exaggerated in the badly written signatures Nos. 4 and 5.

k.—Shakespeare seems to have indulged in variety in his treatment of this letter in his signatures. Perhaps the fact of its being a rather difficult letter to write with ease, and also that he had to write it every time he wrote his name, may have led him into experimenting in different forms. The normal shape of the letter in the English cursive alphabet of the time was that seen in No. 3: a looped stem with a short horizontal base-stroke, and a loop and cross-bar attached to the centre of the stem. Unfortunately in No. 1 the letter is hopelessly obliterated by the untidy blot. In No. 2 it is of the normal shape but not very clearly written, the central loop being diminutive. The second group provides us with two other forms. In No. 5 the construction of the letter, although clumsily written, can be followed: the stem is rounded at the base like a modern cursive *l*, and the pen is carried upwards to the level of the middle of the stem, and then, without being lifted, forms the cross-bar by moving horizontally to the left and then travelling back on the same line to the right, a heavy dot or comma being afterwards added above the cross-bar to represent the central loop of the

normal letter. The skeleton of the letter may be represented thus:  . This formation of the letter *k* is so unusual that we are justified in marking it as most probably a personal peculiarity in Shakespeare's writing and as thus affording a means of identifying his hand. In the *k* of No. 6 the *l*-shaped construction is seen in progress but omits the cross-bar, and the imperfect letter runs on and links up the following long *s*. Here then we find an instance of a *k* without a cross-bar.

l.—Generally carelessly written, without symmetry.

m.—As a final letter *m* is huddled and incomplete in No. 1; it is an insignificant letter in No. 2, running off small, the minims concave, and ending in a turn-over flourish. In No. 3, written small above the line, the letter ends in a superfluous pendent tag, as if the hand had wavered. In the second group, more deliberately written, it appears in complete form with its three minims. In no instance is it well formed, the proper convexity of the minims being neglected.

p.—The normal form of the English letter appears in No. 2. In No. 3 it is the truncated *p*, which was used less frequently. In the second group, we have malformed specimens: a twisted letter in No. 5; a blind letter in No. 6. The letter in No. 1 with stroke through the stem, which is the recognized symbol for the contracted syllable *per*, is formed hastily: a mere loop for the body of the letter, and an oblique stem—a reclining letter.

r.—This letter occurs four times, in Nos. 2, 4, 5, and 6, and only in the left-shouldered shape, *r*.

s.—The adoption by Shakespeare of the Italian cursive long *s* (*ſ*) as a medial letter in his surname has already been referred to above (p. 18). In the first group, it is omitted in No. 1; in No. 2 it is a thin letter, formed with a finer line than the rest of the letters, evidently by a light stroke of the pen turned inwards, and ending in a dot; in No. 3 it is written in the same way but more deliberately, in conformity with the exact style of the signature. The same construction of the letter is seen in No. 6, of the second group; but there it is linked with the preceding *k* by a blind head-loop and ends in a tremulous finial. In No. 5 the letter is different, and is no doubt intended for the English long *s* (ſ), although obscurely written. The letter, when normally written, begins in the centre with a vertical down-stroke to form the shaft; then the pen is carried up on the same line and continued in a bold sweep to form the head. In No. 5 the shaft is looped, and the head appears to be patched up into the semblance of a bow. In this signature, perhaps the last that Shakespeare ever wrote, it seems as if he reverted, through forgetfulness, to an earlier style before he had adopted the Italian form of letter.

y.—This letter occurs but once, in the word 'By' in No. 6. It is of the normal English cursive type.

B.—Of the three capital letters found in the signatures, it is remarkable that, although so afflicted with bodily infirmity that he failed to accomplish the whole of his signature in No. 6 without a breakdown, Shakespeare has succeeded

in forming the rather elaborate English letter *B*, with its large flying fore-limb, so successfully.

S.—The construction of the English capital *S* has already been described above (p. 13). In the first group, in No. 1 it appears in its best form: the actual letter, so to say, in the heart of the symbol, embraced by a semicircular curve which is in fact a fanciful extension of its tail. In the two constrained signatures, Nos. 2 and 3, the two examples of the letter are complete, but the sweeping curve is embarrassed and has lost its free character. The quavering end of this curve in No. 3 seems to be evidence of Shakespeare's inability to write neatly in a confined space. The malformation of the letter in the signatures Nos. 6 and 5 of the second group has already been accounted for (pp. 13, 18).

W.—Shakespeare made use of two forms of the capital *W* in his signatures: the one, which resembles our modern cursive letter, is seen in Nos. 1, 3, and 6; the other, which is the more elaborate letter of his time, has the final limb attached to the middle stroke by a base-curve, like the modern German cursive letter, and is used in Nos. 2, 4, and 5. In most instances an ornamental dot is placed within the curve of the final limb. This ornament is a common feature also in other capital letters of the English alphabet, particularly in the scrivener's hand.

We here bring to a close the description of the general character of Shakespeare's authentic signatures and of the forma-

tion of the several alphabetical letters of which he made use. We may now venture to express an opinion, formed by the study of these signatures, on the general style of his handwriting and his ability to cope with the clerical labours of authorship. To begin with, it has been shown that Shakespeare wrote the native English hand which he had originally been taught at school. That style of writing was in many respects rude and ill-formed, including as it did among its letters extravagant and exaggerated shapes ill adapted to receive the calligraphic treatment which could be applied with effect to the simple and chastened style of the imported Italian cursive hand. Besides, Shakespeare had received only an imperfect education and would have had little, if any, opportunity of cultivating the graces of handwriting which a more continuous training might have developed. If the handwriting of a scholar or man of affairs, who had had the advantage of the education of those in the higher ranks of life up to the period of early manhood, had been the subject of our inquiry, we should have looked for a script of individual character, displaying a pliant play of the pen and exhibiting those little tricks and turns which constitute the features of a man's handwriting and are as easily recognizable in the eyes of his acquaintance as are the features of his face.

With Shakespeare's handwriting the case is different. From the time when he left school, still in boyhood, to the time when he quitted Stratford in early manhood, as we have already noticed, he probably had but little occasion for exercising his pen. His writing therefore when he entered life

in London was probably of the schoolboy type, which had casually and mechanically strengthened with his growth but was deficient in the individual quality which we call character. This is what we might expect; and the examination of his signatures supports this view. The writing here is of the common English type, with little to distinguish it from that of any number of ordinary hands of the same type written by Englishmen engaged in trade or commerce or other affairs of life.

In addition to the ordinary character of Shakespeare's handwriting, the inequality of the several signatures among themselves is also a source of perplexity in the attempt to gauge its standard. Taking into our hands the signature to the deposition (No. 1), there can be no question of the dramatist's ability to write a fluent hand. But when we place by its side and compare with it the signature of the Blackfriars conveyance (No. 2), we are struck with the difference in style, and we recognize that under embarrassing circumstances he failed to write easily. If the later signature alone had survived, we should have been inclined to judge Shakespeare's handwriting to have been that of an imperfectly educated man of inferior rank. The writing has lost in standard of character, the letters have lost form. Perhaps we may best express our estimate of the quality of this specimen if we declare it to be comparatively mean; and we may even see in it a deterioration, a reversion to a lower level than that to which the writer of No. 1 by constant practice had been able to attain. This lower level of writing, resulting from

the writer's embarrassment when confining his signature arbitrarily to restricted limits, indicates, we think, a certain lack of confidence in himself which may have been induced by a subconsciousness of imperfect training. There is likewise an indication of carelessness, if not of slovenliness, in both these signatures, to be detected in the presence of the disfiguring blots effacing the *k* in No. 1 and marring the *W* in No. 2. Practically these two signatures are the only specimens from among the six which afford sufficient data for forming an opinion on the character of Shakespeare's handwriting. The third signature, as already noticed, is too formal to serve as a criterion. But here again there is an indication of deterioration under embarrassment; although the writer was forming his letters slowly and deliberately. The three signatures to the will are likewise of little value for general comparison, with the exception of the first three words of No. 6, which have an importance not only on account of the comparative firmness with which they are inscribed, but also from the presence of the delicate introductory upstrokes in connexion with the second and third. Such upstrokes, which may be classed as ornamental accessories, are to be found among the English handwritings of the period, but not in frequent instances; a certain percentage of writings thus ornamented may be picked out, here and there, in turning over a series of contemporary documents; and these will be found generally to be the work of the more expert calligraphers or professional scriveners. The presence of the two examples in this signature, which is introduced with formality by the words 'By me', seems to

suggest that the writer was preparing to execute his will in the best formal style of his calligraphy. But, however that may be, the important points regarding these two upstrokes are their length, the precise manner of their formation, and the contrast of their fineness with the comparative heaviness of the downstrokes of the letters of the words with which they are connected. We should certainly be prepared to find such introductory upstrokes in any MSS. emanating from Shakespeare's hand.

Shakespeare's handwriting, then, being of an ordinary type and presenting few salient features for instantaneous recognition, we should have to test very closely any writings which might be put forward as in his autograph, in order to detect in them any personal peculiarities, which, however small and even seemingly trivial when considered individually, might, when taken collectively, afford cumulative evidence for identification. Such peculiarities would be, among others, the delicate introductory upstrokes just described, the employment of the Italian long *s* (*ſ*), the unusual form of the *k* noted above, and other personal varieties among the letters.

The examination of the authentic signatures of Shakespeare having been completed, the next step in our undertaking is to submit to a like scrutiny a MS. fragment which has for many years been well known among Shakespearian students as possibly an autograph composition of the dramatist.

This fragment is a portion of the play of *Sir Thomas More*, the bulk of which has been identified as the work of the Elizabethan

playwright Anthony Munday, and is contained in the Harleian MS. 7368 in the British Museum. The play is here in course of revision. Of the twenty paper leaves of which it is now composed, thirteen are in the autograph of the author. The rest (seven leaves, together with two small sheets originally pasted down to two pages of the original MS., but now lifted from them) are contributions by five different hands, and contain additional matter intended to take the place of, or supplement, passages which have been excised or marked for deletion in the author's MS. Two of these leaves, now numbered 8 and 9, contain, in three pages (the verso of f. 9 being left blank), an addition which has been adjudged by critics, on account of the high merit of its composition, to be worthy of being pronounced the work of Shakespeare, and to be in his autograph. It is not necessary in this place to enter into the subject of the play further than to state that this addition was written for insertion in a scene representing the insurrection of the London apprentices against the aliens resident in the city, which was quelled by the intervention of More, then sheriff. Nor are we called upon to give any opinion on the literary value of the addition; perhaps enough has already been written on that head by qualified scholars. Our study is strictly palaeographical; and what we have to ascertain is whether the handwriting can be shown to possess characteristics which are sufficient to identify it with the writing of the undoubted signatures of Shakespeare.

The Harleian MS., the leaves of which measure about $12\frac{1}{2}$ by $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches, is, as regards most of its pages, in poor condition, and has been extensively repaired about the middle of the last

century; many of its pages having been then protected with tracing paper pasted to the surface. The result has been unfortunate, as, chiefly owing to the thickening of the paste, the writing is much obscured. This is unhappily the case with the recto page of f. 8, which is still covered with tracing paper; and the verso page, from which it has been possible to remove the tracing paper without injury to the MS., has also suffered in former days from the effects of damp. But the third page, f. 9 *a*, is perfect, and the writing is in excellent condition.

The play of *Sir Thomas More* was first edited from the Harleian MS. by Alexander Dyce, for the Shakespeare Society, in 1844. The chief value of his edition consists in the fact that he used the MS. before it had been repaired, and that therefore it is the authority for those portions of the text which have since become illegible. Other editions have been issued by Mr. A. F. Hopkinson (privately printed) in 1902, and by Mr. C. F. T. Brooke, in his *Shakespeare Apocrypha*, in 1908. But the latest edition, by Dr. W. W. Greg, printed for the Malone Society in 1911, holds the field. With infinite pains the editor has scrupulously revised the text and has determined and criticized, most successfully, the several handwritings found in the MS. The entire MS. has been reproduced in collotype in the *Tudor Facsimile Texts* by Mr. J. S. Farmer in 1910.

The three pages of the addition attributed to Shakespeare are now submitted herewith in collotype facsimile together with a transcript of the text.

The characters represented are the insurgents, including Lincoln (a broker, the ringleader), George Betts and his brother

a clown, and Williamson (a carpenter) and his wife Doll; a sergeant-at-arms and a sheriff; and the Lord Mayor, the Earl of Surrey, the Earl of Shrewsbury, and Sir Thomas More.

Fol. 8a

Lincolne Peace heare me, he that will not see ⟨a red⟩ hearing at a harry grote, butter at a levenpence a pou⟨nde, meale at⟩ nyne shillinge a Bushell and Beeff at fower nob⟨les a stone lys⟩t to me

[other] *Geo bett* yt will Come to that passe yf strain⟨gers be su⟩fferd mark him

Linco our Countrie is a great eating Country, argo they eate more in our Countrey then they do in their owne

[other] *betts clow* by a half penny loff a day troy waight

Linc they bring in straing rootes, which is meerly to the vndoing of poor prentizes, for whate [a watrie] a sorry psnyp to a good hart

[oth] *william* trash trash,: they breed sore eyes and tis enough to infect the Cytty wt the palsey

Lin nay yt has infected yt wt the palsey, for theise basterde of dung as you knowe they growe in Dvng haue infected vs, and yt is our infeccion will make the Cytty shake which ptly Coms through the eating of psnyps

[o] *Clown. betts* trewe and pumpions togeather

Enter seriant what say you to the mercy of the king do you refuse yt

Lin you woold have ⟨vs⟩ vppon thipp woold you no marry do we not, we accept of the kinge mercy but wee will showe no mercy vppō the straingers

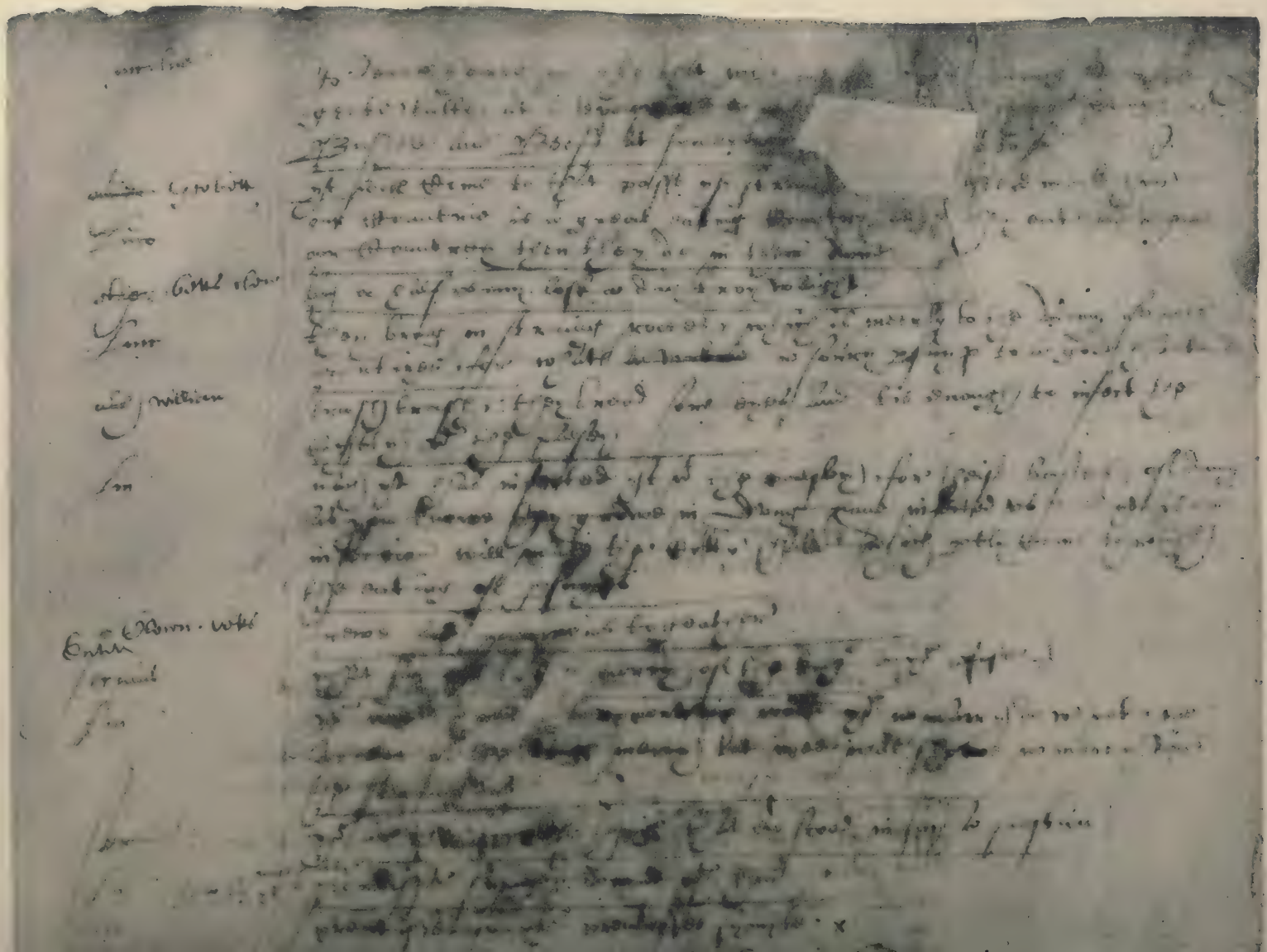
seriaunt you ar the simplest thinge that eu' stood in such a question

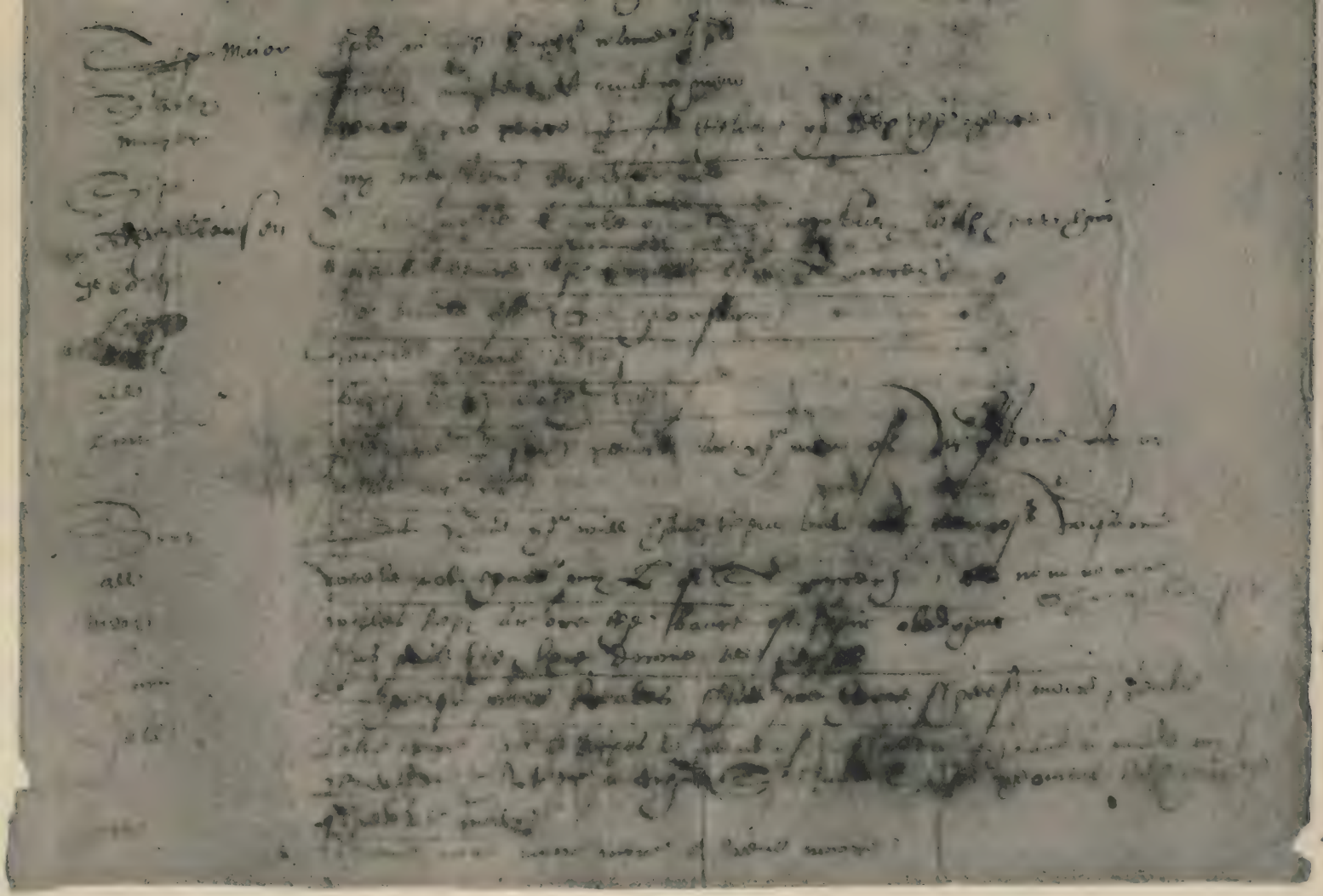
Lin how say yo now prenty prentisses symple downe wth him

all prentisses symple prentisses symple

[Words or letters now illegible are here enclosed within pointed brackets; deletions, within square brackets. Alterations by a second hand, identified as C by Dr. Greg, are printed in italics. Abbreviations and contractions used in the text are:—p=*par*; p=*pro*; eu'=*ever* (l. 21); uppō=*upon*; matie=*maiestie*; and a looped flourish=final *es* (sometimes *s*).]

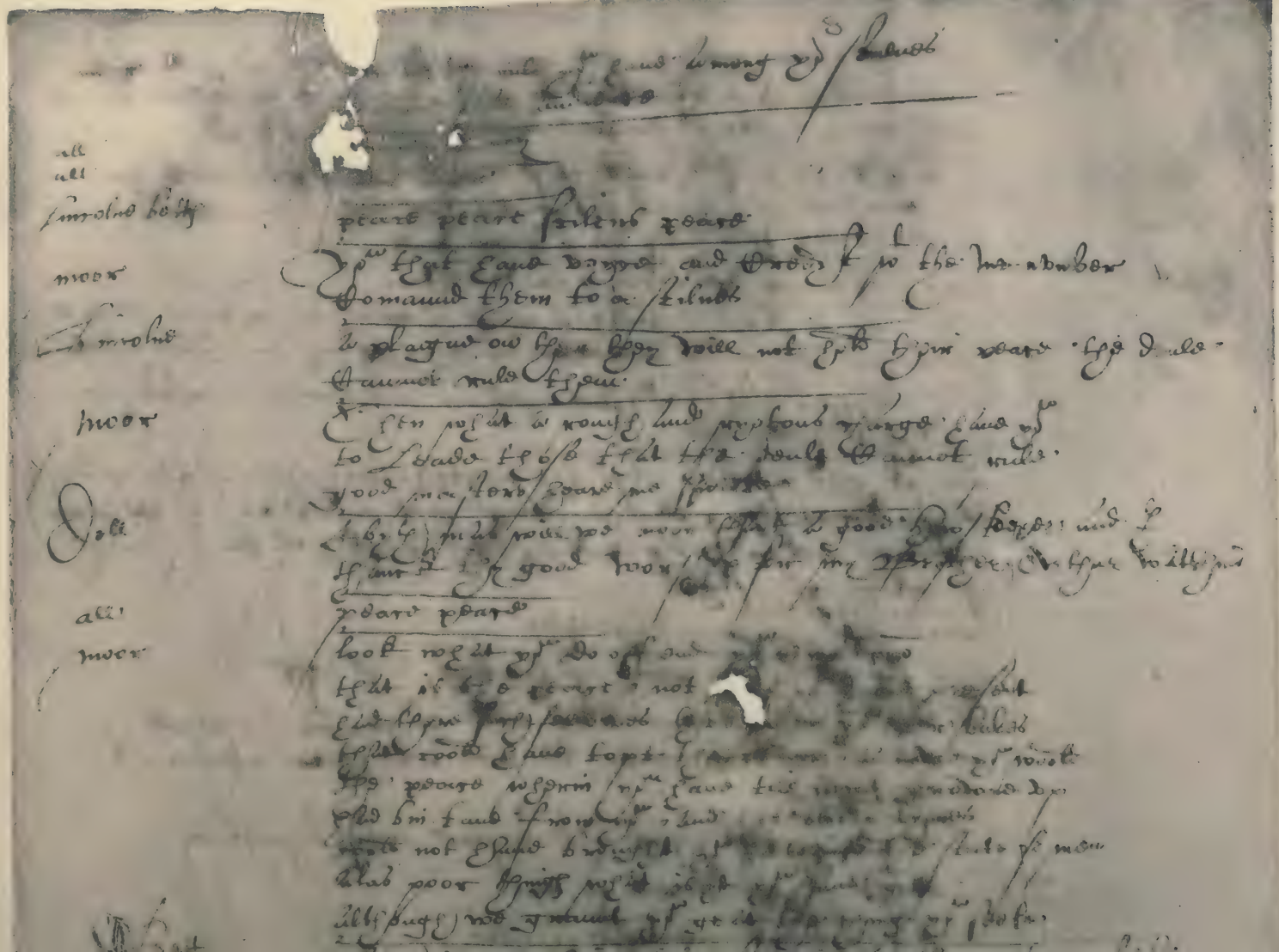
5 *Linco*] *in*, two minims only. 10 *William*] *m*, two minims only. 12 *dung*] *un* written with five minims. 23 The small cross at the end of the line (found also elsewhere) is probably a mark by some modern reader or copyist.

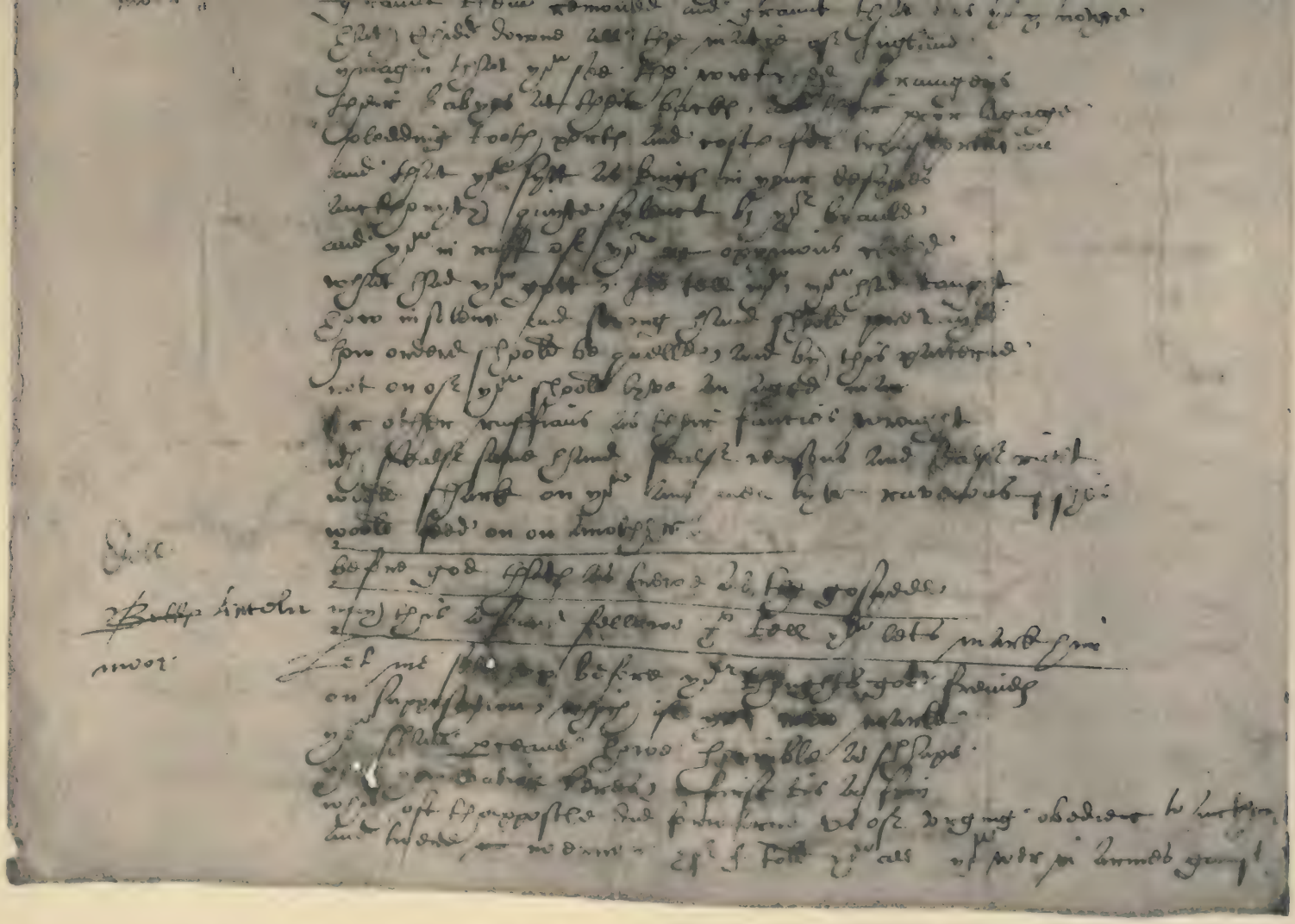




ADDITION TO THE PLAY OF SIR THOMAS MORE

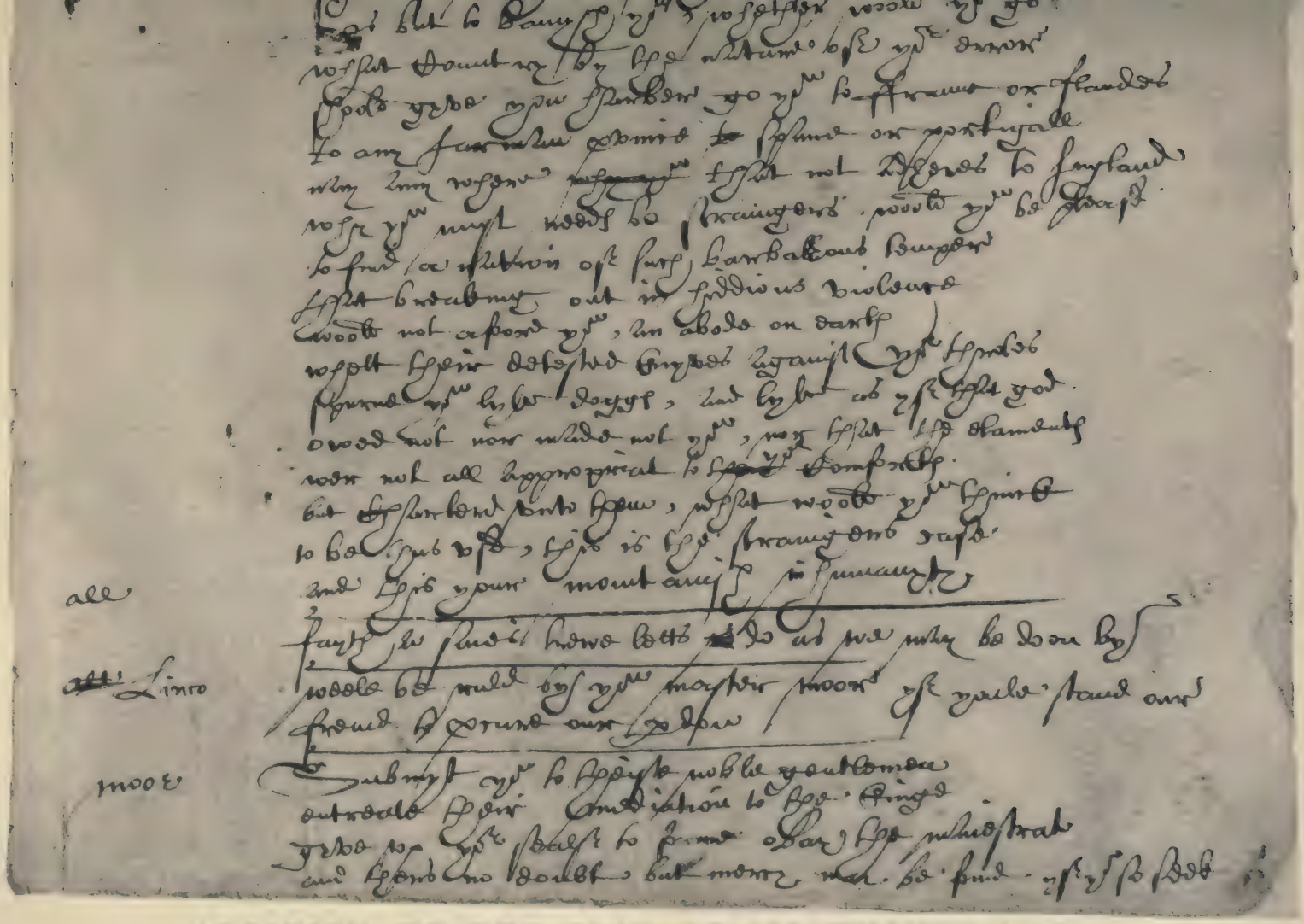
BRITISH MUSEUM HARLEIAN MS 7368 ff 8 9





ADDITION TO THE PLAY OF SIR THOMAS MORE

BRITISH MUSEUM HARLEIAN MS 7368 ff 8 9



ADDITION TO THE PLAY OF SIR THOMAS MORE

BRITISH MUSEUM HARLEIAN MS 7368 ff 8 9

Enter the L maier Surrey
Shrewsbury

[Sher] *Maior* hold in the kinge name hold
Surrey frende masters Countrymen
mayer peace how peace I [sh] Charg you keep the peace
Shro. my masters Countrymen
[Sher] *Williamson* The noble Earle of Shrowsbury lette hear him
Ge bette weele heare the Earle of Surrey
Linc the earle of Shrowsbury
bette weele heare both
all both both both both
Linc Peace I say peace ar you men of Wisdome [ar] or what ar you
Surr [But] what you will haue them but not men of wisdome
all weele not heare my L of Surrey, [all] no no no no no Shrowsbury shr
moor whiles they ar ore the banck of their obedyenc thus will they bere downe all thinge
Linc Shreiff moor speakes shall we heare shreef moor speake
Doll Lette heare him a keepes a plentyfull shrevaltry. and a made my Brother Arther watchin⟨s⟩ Seriant Safes yeoman lete heare shreeve moore
all Shreiue moor moor more Shreue moore
moor ⟨ev⟩en by the rule you haue among yor sealues Comand still audience
all ⟨S⟩urrey Sury
all moor moor
Lincolne bette peace peace scilens peace
moor You that haue voyce and Credyt wt the [mv] nvmber Comaund them to a stilnes
Lincolne a plaigue on them they will not hold their peace the deule Cannot rule them
moor Then what a rough and ryotous charge haue you to Leade those that the deule Cannot rule good masters heare me speake

FOL. 8b

Doll I byth mas will we moor thart a good howskeeper and I
thanck thy good worship for my Brother Arthur watchins
all peace peace
moor look what yo^{u} do offend yo^{u} Cry vppō
that is the peace; not ⟨on⟩ of yo^{u} heare present
had there such fellowes lyvd when yo^{u} wer babes
that coold haue topt the peace, as nowe yo^{u} woold
the peace wherin yo^{u} haue till nowe growne vp
had bin tane from yo^{u}, and the bloody tymes
coold not haue brought yo^{u} to [theise] the state of men
alas poor thinge what is yt yo^{u} haue gott
although we graunt yo^{u} geat the thing yo^{u} seeke
[D] Bett marry the removing of the straingers w^{ch} cannot choose but
much [helpe] advauntage the poor handycraftes of the Cytty
moor graunt them remoued and graunt that this yo^{r} [y] noyce
hath Chidd downe all the matie of Ingland
ymagin that yo^{u} see the wretched straingers
their babyes at their backe, and their poor lugage
plodding tooth porte and coste for transportacion
and that yo^{u} sytt as kinge in your desyres
aucthoryty quyte sylenct by yo^{r} braule
and yo^{u} in ruff of yo^{r} [yo] opynions clothd
what had yo^{u} gott; Ile tell yo^{u}, yo^{u} had taught
how insolenc and strong hand shoold prevayle
how orderd shoold be quelld, and by this patterne
not on of yo^{u} shoold lyve an aged man
for other ruffians as their fancies wrought
wth sealf same hand sealf reasons and sealf right
woold shark on yo^{u} and men lyke ravenous fishes
woold feed on on another
Doll before god thate as trewe as the gospell

58 *I*]=*Aye.* 62 *on*]=*one*, as in ll. 83, 87, 91. 71 *handycraftes*] the termination *es* is probably intended, but the *e* is malformed. 72 *noyce*] *y* altered from *w*. 73 *matie*] the mark of contraction omitted.

[Bettę] *Lincoln* nay this a sound fellowe I tell yo^{u} lets mark him
moor Let me sett vp before yo^{r} thoughts good freindę
on supposytion, which if yo^{u} will marke
yo^{u} shall ꝑceaue howe horrible a shape
yo^{r} ynnovation beres, first tis a sinn
which oft thappostle did forwarne vs of urging obedienc to aucthory⟨ty⟩
and twere [in] no error yf I told you all yo^{u} wer in armes gainst g⟨od⟩
all marry god forbid that
FOL. 9^{a}
moo nay certainly yo^{u} ar
for to the king god hath his offyc lent
of dread of Iustyce, power and Comaund
hath bid him rule, and willd yo^{u} to obay
and to add ampler matie to this
he [god] hath not [le] souly lent the king his figure
his throne [hys] & sword, but gyven him his owne name
calls him a god on earth, what do yo^{u} then
rysing gainst him that god himsealf enstalls
but ryse gainst god, what do yo^{u} to yo^{r} sowles
in doing this o desperat [ar] as you are.
wash your foule mynds w^{t} teares and those same handę
that yo^{u} lyke rebells lyft against the peace
lift vp for peace, and your vnreuerent knees
[that] make them your feet to kneele to be forgyven
[is safer warrs, then euer yo^{u} can make]
[in in to yo^{r} obedienc] *s*
[whose discipline is ryot; why euen yo^{r} [warre] hurly]
tell me but this
[cannot ꝑceed but by obedienc] what rebell captaine

101 *and*] *n* written with three minims. 102 *souly*]=*solely*. First written *only*; then a long *s* squeezed in under the line before the *o*; and, the writer's *n* and *u* being much alike, the word is converted into *souly*. 103 *hys*] something is written above this deleted word; probably a symbol for *and*. 110 *and your*] a word was interlined for insertion between these two words, but it appears to have been wiped out while the ink was still wet. The traces of the letters seem to suggest *bend*. 112–14 *is safer . . . obedienc*] these two and a half lines were left in an unfinished state by the writer. In l. 113 he altered *warre* into *warrs* by interlining a long *s*, having used *warrs* in l. 112; then he struck out the word and substituted *hurly*. Then he appears to have interlined the words *in in to yo^{r} obedienc* as an

as mutynes ar incident, by his name
can still the rout who will obay [th] a traytor
or howe can well that ꝑclamation sounde
when ther is no adicion but a rebell
to quallyfy a rebell, youle put downe straingers
kill them cutt their throts possesse their howses
and leade the matie of lawe in liom
to slipp him lyke a hound ; [alas alas] [saying] say nowe the king
as he is clement, yf thoffendor moorne
shoold so much com to short of your great trespas
as but to banysh yo^{u}, whether woold yo^{u} go.
what Country by the nature of yo^{r} error
shoold gyve you harber go yo^{u} to ffraunc or flanders
to any Iarman ꝑvince, [to] spane or portigall
nay any where [why yo^{u}] that not adheres to Ingland
why yo^{u} must needꝫ be straingers, woold yo^{u} be pleasd
to find a nation of such barbarous temper
that breaking out in hiddious violence
woold not afoord yo^{u}, an abode on earth
whett their detested knyves against yo^{r} throtes
spurne yo^{u} lyke doggꝫ, and lyke as yf that god
owed not nor made not yo^{u}, nor that the elementꝫ,
wer not all appropriat to [ther] yo^{r} Comfortꝫ.
but Charterd vnto them, what woold yo^{u} thinck
to be thus vsd, this is the straingers case
and this your mountanish inbumanyty.

all fayth a saies trewe letts vs do as we may be doon by

[all] *Linco* weele be ruld by yo^{u} master moor yf youle stand our freind to ꝑcure our ꝑdon

alternative for the two half-lines *why euen . . . by obedienc.* Finally the reviser C has struck out the whole of the passage and written a make-shift half-line *tell me but this.*

117 *sounde*] *un* only three minims. 121 *matie*] the mark of contraction omitted. *liom*] =*liam*, a leash. 131 *barbarous*] the second *r* an alteration apparently from a *k*. 140 *mountanish*] *un* only three minims. 141 *vs*] struck out with modern ink.

moor Submyt yo^{u} to theise noble gentlemen
entreate their mediation to the kinge
gyve vp yo^{r} sealf to forme obay the maiestrate
and thers no doubt, but mercy may be found yf yo^{u} so seek

These three pages, written in the ordinary English cursive script of the Elizabethan period, are obviously the autograph composition of the writer, and not a mere transcript by a copyist. The nature of the first-hand corrections are sufficient proof of this. It is also obvious that the writer was a careless contributor. It has been remarked by Dr. Greg that he shows no respect for, perhaps no knowledge of, the play on which he was at work. In a haphazard fashion he distributes speeches and exclamations among the insurgents, and sometimes he merely attaches the word 'other' instead of the actual name of a character to a speech, leaving it to the reviser to put things straight. In one passage, which he has partially altered, he leaves two and a half lines (ll. 112–14) so confused that the reviser has found no way out of the difficulty but to strike them out and substitute a half-line of his own. All these liberties would suggest that the writer was one who held a high place among his fellow contributors to the piecing-out of the play, and that they recognized his superior talent just as much as later critics have done.

The first to suggest that this addition to the play of *Sir Thomas More* was composed by, and was in the handwriting of, Shakespeare was Mr. Richard Simpson, who contributed to *Notes and Queries* (4th Series, viii, July 1, 1871) a note under the title 'Are there any extant MSS. in Shakespeare's handwriting?' in

147 *found*] *un* only three minims.

which he claimed, as the dramatist's composition and autograph, not only the addition (ff. 8, 9) to the Insurrection Scene, but also additions to other scenes. With regard to the handwriting his general statement is correct, that the style of the poet's hand, as shown by his signatures, was that of the ordinary scrivener or copyist of the time (that is, in the native English script). 'This fact', he continues, 'while it makes any holograph of his more difficult to distinguish from similar writings, at the same time points to the possibility or even probability of something from his hand being extant among the mass of manuscripts written in the scrivener's hand of the period.' From this dictum of the difficulty of distinguishing among ordinary hands, as compared with the handwritings of scholars, few will dissent; and, if Shakespeare's hand can be once for all distinguished among similar ordinary hands, we must all devoutly hope that other autograph remains of his compositions may be speedily recognized. But Mr. Simpson was not an expert in handwriting; and he fell into the common error of seeing in the style of writing of a period or school the style of an individual hand.

It will be convenient here to quote Mr. Simpson when he reminds us that the Insurrection Scene represents the rioting of the London apprentices against the aliens on the famous 'ill May day' of 1517, and continues: 'The same feeling, prevalent for years in Elizabeth's reign, was very nearly bursting out into violent acts in September, 1586, when Recorder Fleetwood wrote to Burghley that the apprentices had conspired an insurrection against the French and Dutch, but especially the French, "all things as like unto yll May day as could be devised, in all

manner of circumstances, *mutatis mutandis*"'; and concludes that it was during the heat of this feeling that the play came before the censor, who forthwith issued his order (written in the margin of the first page of the MS.) 'to leave out the insurrection wholly and the cause thereof'.

The fact that this and other strictures of the censor were ignored in the present MS. (otherwise the addition in which we are interested would not have been written) has led Dr. Greg to conclude that the play was already in its present shape when it was submitted to the censor for approval, and that the censor's notes are directions for further revision and do not refer to revision already effected; and 'that it was quite impossible to comply with the demands of the censor without eviscerating the play in a manner fatal to its success on the stage . . . The MS. was consequently laid aside and the play never came on the boards'.

Simpson's note seems to have attracted no particular attention, until, more than a year afterwards, Mr. James Spedding in a communication to *Notes and Queries* (4th Series, x, Sept. 21, 1872) supported him in his ascription of the addition to the Insurrection Scene (but not the other additions claimed), both as regards composition and handwriting, to Shakespeare. Spedding was more experienced and better qualified to hazard an opinion on the handwriting, but, not being an expert, he confines his remarks to recognition by general impression: that the writing 'is a hand which answers to all we know about Shakespeare's. It agrees with his signature, which is a simple one, written in the ordinary character of the time'. General impression is a very

valuable asset in identification, but it is not conclusive. We recognize other persons usually by general impression; but the innumerable instances of mistaken identity afford sufficient proof that something else is also needed. How many of us can describe accurately, from memory, the subtle traits and variations in the features of our friends? But it is these personal peculiarities that, added to general impression, constitute the final convincing proofs. So with handwriting. General impression will carry the cautious expert an appreciable distance on his way, but he will fortify his general impression by identifying the more minute details, the personal peculiarities in the handwriting under examination.

To return for a moment to Spedding's remarks on the handwriting attributed to Shakespeare. He states that 'it agrees with the tradition that his first occupation was that of a "Noverint" or lawyer's copying clerk: for in that case he must have acquired in early youth a hand of that type, which, when he left copying and took to original composition, would naturally grow into such a hand as we have here.' Whether the handwriting bears within itself any indication of such training as a legal copyist can only be considered after it has been subjected to analysis.

We will now turn to the examination of the three pages of the addition to the play of *Sir Thomas More* which have been attributed to Shakespeare, and in the first place we will take a general survey of the style of writing.

The total number of written lines contained in the addition is 147. In the first page (f. 8 *a*) there are 45; in the second page (f. 8 *b*) there are 50; in the third page (f. 9 *a*) there are 52.

Although the writing is generally small on the first page, there are fewer written lines, as a good deal of space is occupied by the dividing lines which separate the speeches of the several characters. There is a decided distinction between the writing of the first two pages and that of the third page. The text of the former is evidently written with speed, and apparently with a fine-pointed and hard pen. The rapid action of the hand is indicated, for example, by the prevalence of thin long-shafted descending letters (*f* and long *ſ*), which are carried down often to unusual length and end in a sharp point, and by a certain dash in the formation of the other letters both in the text and in the marginal names of the characters. These signs of speed generally slacken in the course of the second page, in the second half of which the long-shafted descending letters give place to some extent to a more deliberate and heavier style of lettering. This change seems to be coincident with the change in the character of the composition—the change from the noisy tumult of the insurgents to the intervention of More with his persuasive speeches, requiring more thought and choice of language on the part of the author. The full effect of this change in the style of the composition is manifest in the more deliberate character of the writing of the third page. This page was probably written later than the other two; at least, not at the same sitting. This seems to be indicated by the fact that, in order to finish a speech at the foot of the second page, the author has arranged its four concluding metrical lines in two written lines: which he would hardly have troubled to do, if it had been his intention to pass on immediately to a fresh page.

The writing of the third page, while it is pliant and runs in a free style, maintains a more marked contrast between the light and heavy strokes than is the case generally with the lettering of the first two pages. While the long-shafted descending letters (*f* and long *s*) are there so common, here the larger proportion of those letters are stoutly-shafted and even incline to be truncated. Their different forms will be described more in detail when we analyse the several letters of this hand. At the moment it will be enough to state that in the first page the proportion of the long descending *f* to the shorter and more deliberate form is about four to one; that of the long descending *s* to the shorter form, nearly three to one. In the second page the proportions are reduced nearly to equality. In the third page the balance inclines the other way, and the proportion of the long *f* to the shorter form falls to about one to two; and that of the long *s* to the shorter form to about one to three. We may also for this purpose quote the proportions of the two forms of the letter *g* as they appear in this hand—the more simple form in which the stem is merely turned back and finished off with a thickening or slight curl; and the more elaborate form in which the stem is turned back, but then brought round again in a heavy curved stroke, like the blade of a scythe. In the first and second pages the proportion of the simple to the elaborate letter is a little over three to one; in the third page the proportion is reversed and the elaborate form stands to the simpler as two to one. These figures may suffice to demonstrate the varying influences of speed and of deliberation on the handwriting of this author. But quite independently

of such literal calculations as a means of assisting palaeographical judgement, for simple recognition of the distinction of the two styles an appeal may be made to ocular experiment. If the eyes, after resting on, say, the text of the first page long enough to take in a general impression of the writing, are shifted suddenly to the third page, and if the process is repeated twice or thrice, the difference between the two styles is quickly appreciated.

If, then, there has been established a distinction of two styles of writing, the speedy and the more deliberate, in these three pages of the MS., an opinion may be offered that the more deliberate style would naturally be the one which would represent the characteristic hand of the writer, being the style in which he would set down his more thoughtful scenes more deliberately than those of a lighter nature, such as the tumultuous passages in the Insurrection Scene before the appearance of More which are here presented. In the latter class of composition, he might be expected to dash off his lines so easily as almost to be in the position of a mere transcriber, and so to inscribe line after line with little variety in the ordinary scrivener's clerical hand, such as that which generally fills the first two pages. The more deliberate hand of the third page would postulate temporary pauses in the course of composition and corresponding suspensions of the pen and consequent loss in the momentum of the writing. Hence we should expect to find in this style of writing greater opportunities for detecting the personal peculiarities of the writer in his formation of individual letters and accessories of the script, than in the even cursive flow of the more clerical hand.

One of the accessories of this handwriting is the frequently occurring introductory upstroke which is attached as a calligraphic ornament to certain letters when any of them stands at the beginning of a word, and which there has been occasion to notice on a former page (p. 28). These letters are *i*, *m*, *n*, *r*, *v*, *w*. But this writer is somewhat capricious in his employment of the upstroke, for he often neglects to attach it to those letters when in an initial position. At the same time a glance along the lines will satisfy the eye that its use here, though not universal, is general. Its construction is as follows: the writer either forms the stroke by a single action of the pen, or more usually he first makes a short downstroke well below the line of writing, then, without lifting the pen, he forms the upstroke, either travelling over the course of the preliminary downstroke, and thus imparting to the first part of the upstroke a certain thickening, or, if the downstroke happens to lie out of the direct line, leaving it to the right or left, and thus forming a hook at the extreme lower point or more rarely a loop. Instances of all these actions will be found without much trouble in any one of the three plates, but may most conveniently be looked for in the uninjured third page. For example, the hooked stroke appears in the words 'vnreuerent' (l. 110), 'mountanish inhumanity' (l. 140), 'weele' (l. 142); the loop, in 'needes' (l. 130). But it is not only the frequency of these otiose upstrokes that arrests the eye, but more especially their length. Few of them are short, the greater number are long enough to extend to the next following line of writing; some are of more inordinate length, such as those in 'my masters' (l. 29), 'weele' (l. 31),

'whiles' (l. 39), 'rule' (l. 56), 'marry' and 'removing' (l. 70), 'wretched' (l. 74), 'ruffians' (l. 84), 'marry' (l. 96), 'rout' (l. 116), 'well' (l. 117), 'moorne' (l. 123), 'must needes' (l. 130), 'ruld' and 'master moor' (l. 142), and in the name 'Moor' among the characters in the margin of the second and third pages.

We will now proceed to an analysis of the letters in the addition to the play of *Sir Thomas More*, and first of the small letters, the alphabet of which is complete with the exception of the letter *x*; the analysis of such capital letters as occur therein will follow.

a.—There are two forms of this letter: the normal closed form; and the form open at the top like *u*, which has attached to it an overhead curve that is a means of linking with the preceding letter, such as *h*, *m*, *n*, *s*, *y*. In this hand also, as in Shakespeare's signature No. 1 (see p. 20), is to be noticed the occurrence, in the second form, of a spur at the back of the letter, resulting from the overhead curve being produced quite down to the base line of writing: instances are to be seen in 'audience' (l. 47), 'at' (l. 75), 'and' (ll. 76, 85), 'what' (l. 80), 'ar' (l. 97), 'are' (l. 107), 'harber' (l. 127), 'nation' (l. 131), and in other places.

b.—In the normal letter of the English hand, the stem is carried down to the base line and terminates in a point whence the curve proceeds. Here the normal pattern is fairly well followed; but occasionally the base is round.

c.—The simple normal shape is scarcely varied. The vertical stroke is occasionally a little more curved than usual. It is

noticeable that the writer makes use of the capital letter very often in the early part of the text; less frequently as he progresses.

d.—This letter is the ordinary looped form. It varies in size, sometimes being reduced to the dimensions of an *e*. When following a tall letter, the loop is elongated and thrown back as in 'Wisdome' (ll. 35, 37), 'vsd' (l. 139), 'hold' (ll. 26, 53), 'coold' (l. 64), 'woold' (ll. 64, 125), 'shoold' (ll. 81, 124, 127), &c.

e.—The ordinary form used by the writer is the letter with reversed loop. As a final letter he sometimes finishes it off with a flourish ending in a dot. He also uses rarely the more set type, composed of two curves, not looped as in 'grote' (l. 2), 'meerly' (l. 8), 'peace' (l. 50), &c.

f.—There are two forms of this letter: the long-shafted form, that is, the shaft descending well below the line and terminating in a point; and the stout-shafted form. The first prevails in the earlier portion of the text, in which the writing has been more speedy; the second, in the later portion, where the writing is more deliberate. The shaft of the long letter is made in one stroke, and the curved head is added to the top and carried round to accomplish the cross-bar. In the shorter form, the shaft, more or less heavily drawn, descends from the line of writing generally to a moderate length, then the pen ascends without being lifted, travelling usually over the course of the shaft, and the curved head and cross-bar are added. In the double letter (which from an early date has done duty for the

capital letter) the head of the first limb is drawn down to form the shaft of the second limb, to which the curved head is then added and the two limbs are crossed in one stroke (see 'ffraunc', l. 127). Final *f* has no cross-bar, but the head is drawn down and in normal hands is thickened at the extremity; in this hand it is finished off with a flourish resembling the letter *t*.

g.—This letter has two forms. In the first, the stem produced below the line is turned back and is finished off with a thickening or small curl. In the second, the stem is turned back in the same manner but is then brought round again in a broad curved stroke resembling an inverted scythe blade.

h.—The pendent bow of this straggling letter usually hangs loosely in this hand; less frequently the letter is braced up, the bow starting from the main stroke with a sudden curve, and it then takes the form almost of a modern ε ('wash', l. 108).

i.—An unobtrusive letter, with a tendency to be pointed at the base.

k.—A letter of various forms: (1) the normal letter, having a looped stem with a short base-stroke at right angles and a loop and cross-bar attached to the centre of the stem;—(2) the stem curved at the top and brought round at the base like *l*, the pen then travelling upwards and forming a small loop, and thence making the cross-bar, *e.g.* 'king' (l. 122), 'knyves' (l. 134);—(3) the same *l*-formation, but instead of making the small loop the pen turns to the left

and accomplishes the cross-bar by a horizontal stroke to the left and then to the right, above which a heavy comma is added to represent the small loop—an unusual form—'knees' (l. 110);—(4) the same *l*-formation, but the end of the curve looped or thickened, and there is no cross-bar. This form is used especially in words ending in *ke*; the *e* negligently written and ending in a flourish—'shake' (l. 14), 'lyke' (ll. 86, 109, 122, 135).

l.—Not a well-formed letter, the back tending to be bowed. When doubled, the pair of letters is usually written small.

m.—This letter is never very well formed, the writer showing some impatience with it, running it small, and, when it is doubled or comes next to *n* or *u*, not always forming the right number of minims. Early in a word the correct convexity of the minims is usually maintained; otherwise there is a tendency to concave formation (see 'mountanish inhumanity', l. 140). In final *m* the last stroke is more generally straight, without being turned up.

n.—What has been said about *m* applies generally to *n*. There is much tendency to concavity when it is combined with *u* or doubled, as in such words as 'country' and 'cannot'. Final *n* has generally this defect, except in monosyllabic words. There is one instance of the last stroke of final *n* being turned up and back over the line—'infeccion' (l. 14).

o.—This letter is more independent in its formation and is less liable to combination than other letters. It generally escapes linking with a following letter, except in the common words

'you' and 'yor', where it changes its normal circle into a looser formation.

p.—This letter has many forms, the circular head shaped in the more perfect manner of the scrivener's letter, as in 'peace' (end of l. 50), 'desperat' (l. 107), or merely written in a loop; and the stem ranging from a short stump to a long descending stroke. Instances of the stumpy letter are to be found in 'passe' (l. 4), 'prentisses' (l. 23), 'peace' (ll. 50, 53, 110), 'patterne' (l. 82), 'power' (l. 99), 'possesse' (l. 120); of the medium length of stem we have such examples as 'poor' (ll. 68, 71, 75), 'plodding' (l. 76), 'prevayle' (l. 81); of the long stem, with return linking stroke, 'prentizes' (l. 9), 'prentisses' (l. 22), 'peace' (l. 109), 'portigall' (l. 128); of the long descending stem terminating in a point, 'peace' (l. 60), and in the *p*-symbol for *pro* (ll. 114, 117, 128, 143). In the *p*-symbol for *par* or *per* (ll. 9, 14, 15, 92, 143) the stem is rather sloped and turned round in a sweeping loop.

q.—Like the modern letter; the stem pointed at the extremity (ll. 21, 78, 119).

r.—The double-stemmed English letter is commonly used; more seldom the left-shouldered form *ꝛ*, as in 'great' (l. 124), and in the common abbreviated word 'yor'.

s.—The long *ſ* (ſ) employed at the beginning or in the middle of a word, both in single and double form, follows in construction that of *f*, of course omitting the cross-bar. In the earlier portion of the text, where the writing is more cursive, instances occur in which the writer in his haste has detached the curved head from the shaft and thrown it

forward ('question', l. 21, 'sealues', l. 46). The double letter is seen in l. 120. The small looped form used as final *s* is often finished off in a flourish.

It is remarkable that the writer has in two instances employed the Italian form of cursive long *s* (*ſ*) in correcting the text: in altering 'only' into 'souly' (l. 102), and 'warre' into 'warrs' (l. 113). He also uses an enlarged form of the same Italian letter, but looping it at the base, as the initial letter for the 'seriant' (Sergeant-at-arms), the character entered in the margin of l. 17. A few lines below he uses the English long *s* for the same character.

t.—The writer makes use of two forms of *t*: the more conventional neatly written scrivener's letter, curved at the top and having a short base-stroke; and a rougher and heavier character, generally with a straight stem and a horizontal finishing stroke to represent the cross-bar.

u.—This letter calls for no particular remark. Like *m* and *n*, it is often written negligently small. With regard to the word 'you', it was the practice to write the *u* above the line, as if the word were abbreviated. The writer follows the practice, but now and then he writes the letter in the line (ll. 13, 107, 127).

v.—Normally formed, with little, if any, variation. In the early portion of the text, where the writing is more cursive, there are tokens of haste in the sweeping initial curve of the letter, as in 'vndoing' (l. 8), 'vppon' (l. 19).

w.—This letter is also fairly constant to the normal form; but, like *v*, under stress of haste it developes occasionally

a sweeping initial curve, as in 'wisdome' (l. 37), 'weele' (l. 38), and in other words (ll. 53, 59).

x.—There is no instance of this letter. The normal letter at this period resembles *p* in the formation of the head, but the descending stroke curves sharply to the right.

y.—The conventional form is employed, with little variation. The descending bow, like that of *h*, is occasionally carried up above the line to link with the following letter.

z.—Only one instance, of the normal form, occurs—in 'prentizes' (l. 9).

Of capital letters the following are found in these three pages of the play: *A*, *B*, *C*, *D*, *E*, *ff* (doing duty as a capital), *I* or *J*, *L*, *P*, *S*, *T*, *W*, *Y*. Some of them are more or less arbitrarily varied from the normal models. At all times there has been a natural tendency to introduce fanciful variations among the capitals which, in comparison with the small letters, are not so frequently called for and hence rather invite capricious treatment.

A.—A straggling letter, devoid of cross-bar, the incipient curve enclosing an ornamental dot (l. 43) or not thus ornamented (l. 59).

B.—The English capital is rather elaborate, preceded by a flying fore-limb. It appears in ll. 3, 37, 43, 59, and in the margin of the second page.

C.—This letter, formed somewhat like a modern cursive capital *O* with a horizontal cross-bar, is frequent in the earlier portion of the text (*e.g.* ll. 11, 14, 27, 28, 51, 52, 54), rarer towards the end (*e.g.* ll. 126, 138).

D.—The conventional letter appears in l. 13. What appears to be an arbitrary form, a straggling enlargement of the minuscule, is seen in the name 'Doll' in the margins.

E.—The conventional crescent-shaped letter with central double cross-bar (ll. 24, 30).

F.—The double *f* represents the capital in 'ffraunc' (l. 127).

I. or *J.*—The conventional letter, beginning with a looped head, a cross-bar in the middle, and a pendent curve below the line, is seen in ll. 28, 35, 58, 89. An arbitrary form, looped at top and bottom and descending below the line, occurs in ll. 73, 80, 99, 128, 129. A nondescript letter, intermediate between the above forms, stands at the beginning of l. 58.

L.—The conventional letter is generally at this period written in a sloping posture: we may call it a reclining letter. The writer here follows the convention both in the text (ll. 42, 56, 90) and in the margins of the first and second pages.

P.—The normal letter of the scrivener's alphabet, with an ornamental dot enclosed in the final curve is seen in l. 1. Another variety, also with central ornamental dot, occurs at the beginning of l. 35.

S.—The English capital of the conventional type, the construction of which has engaged attention above, p. 13, is frequent in the lower half of the first page, both in text and margin; and in l. 144. It is symmetrically formed in the name 'Surrey' (l. 24). In the marginal entries it is written at great speed.

T.—This letter occurs twice (ll. 30, 55): a crescent delicately formed, with a heavier oblique cross-stroke towards the upper extremity of the crescent, within which is an

ornamental dot. This is a refinement of the conventional letter.

W.—A capital letter with a sweeping initial curve balanced by a final curve which is attached to the body of the letter by a short base-curve (like the ordinary cursive German capital) and encloses an ornamental dot—in 'Wisdome' (l. 35).

Y.—Formed on the lines of the minuscule letter, with a sweeping initial curve (l. 51).

Having now analysed the handwriting of this addition to the play of *Sir Thomas More*, we are at length in a position to consider whether the signatures of Shakespeare, which have been the subject of the first part of this study, and the three pages of this addition have been made to yield sufficient internal evidence to prove that the documents are in the handwriting of one and the same person. The problem is not an ordinary one; it is not a simple matter of deciding whether a particular MS. is in a handwriting already ascertained, of which abundant specimens are extant as material for comparison. Here we have to establish the identity of the handwriting of these three pages of the Harleian MS. with another handwriting altogether unknown to us but for the survival of a few signatures, half of which are imperfect. The task may be compared to that of attempting to identify a face in the dark by the dim light of a lucifer match. But, notwithstanding the difficulties, we venture to think that sufficient close resemblances have been detected to bring the two handwritings together and to identify them as coming from one and the same

hand. Personally we feel confident that in this addition to the play of *Sir Thomas More* we have indeed the handwriting of WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

The discerning reader will doubtless have been quick to take the points of resemblance which have been brought out in the analyses, and will have been prepared for this opinion. We will presently recapitulate these points; but, before proceeding to do so, we may briefly survey the new position and see how far this identification satisfies our preconceived notions of what might prove to be the style of Shakespeare's handwriting. The character of the writing of the signatures made us confident that any remains of his compositions which might come to light would prove to be written in the native English script; and the history of his broken education seemed to justify us in anticipating that it would be of an ordinary type, without individual character marking it to any great extent: a strong and fluent hand without calligraphic pretensions, partly self-taught and trained by the manual practice of authorship into an instrument sufficiently facile to enable him to express his thoughts easily with his pen. How far, then, does the handwriting of the *More* MS. satisfy these expectations? The difference between the style of the first two pages and that of the third page has been already described: in the former we have found evidence of speed; in the latter, evidence of deliberation. We may, then, answer our question by replying that in the style of the writing of the third page we have a reasonable fulfilment of such anticipated conditions. The hand is the native English hand with nothing particularly characteristic in it to distinguish it; sufficiently

strong and clear for practical usefulness, but rather rough and irregular. But, turning to the first two pages, we are conscious of another influence. While the hand is the same as in the third page, the effect of speed has been to induce more general regularity and uniformity and to convey the impression that Shakespeare had received a more thorough training as a scribe than had been thought probable. In this particular the handwriting exceeds our expectations. To put the case briefly: in the writing of the first two pages there is more of the hand of the scrivener; in the writing of the third page there is more of the hand of the author. We have already tentatively suggested that the writing of the first two pages (or at least most of it) may reflect ease of composition, while the deliberate hand of the third page may indicate more deliberate thought. If rare good fortune should ever lay before our eyes the autograph MSS. of Shakespeare's plays, we should expect to find, for example, the second style in *Hamlet*, the first in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

We have, then, to revert to the question of Shakespeare's education in handwriting, and this takes us back to the tradition, to which Spedding refers, that in his youth he found employment as a lawyer's copying clerk—a 'Noverint', in the slang phrase. This so-called tradition, however, proves on examination to be no tradition at all; the idea appears to have originated in a suggestion by Malone,[1] by way of explaining the prevalence of legal terms and phrases in Shakespeare's plays, that before he left Stratford he may have served as a clerk to some attorney practising in the local Court of

[1] In his essay on the chronological order of Shakespeare's plays.

Record. The phantom tradition may be therefore put aside without more ado. But still the fact remains that the style of writing of the first two pages of the addition certainly does convey the impression of training, at least in some degree, in the formal style of the scrivener; and this impression is enforced by the employment of certain formal contractions and abbreviations of words which were in common use among lawyers and trained secretaries of the day. Added to all this, the prevalence of the fine initial upstrokes in the writing, which suggest a tendency to formality and ornamental calligraphy, must also be taken into account. But of course it is not necessary to try to explain the existence of such formality of script as due to any direct legal or secretarial training. Shakespeare may very probably have acquired the formal cast of writing, which for convenience we may call his scrivener style, by constant practice in such work as transcription from scriveners' copies of plays and actors' parts, on which it is not unreasonable to conjecture that he may have been employed in his early connexion with theatrical life; and a little later in his prentice work as a playwright and adapter and botcher of the compositions of others. This, however, is only unprofitable guessing: we may content ourselves with recording the existence of this more formal scrivener variety in the handwriting which we maintain to be Shakespeare's.

There is little room for doubt that the names of the characters of the play were written in the margins of the pages after the text had been composed. The perfunctory manner in which they are scribbled and the abbreviation of many

of them, increasing in brevity as they proceed, seem to prove this. On the first page 'Lincolne' diminishes successively to 'Linco', 'Linc', 'Lin'. 'Other', meaning any one whose name the reviser may choose to insert, runs down to 'oth' and at last dwindles to solitary 'o'. Even in the case of the leading character, More, although he gets his full name 'Moor' in most instances, yet it is omitted altogether from the speech at the end of the second page and has to be supplied by the reviser. And what can be more ludicrous than the reduction of the name to bovine 'Moo', attached to the long speech on the third page, for lack of a scratch of the pen to add the harmless necessary *r*? In the face of these indications of carelessness, we might almost say boredom, on the part of Shakespeare in the matter of vain repetitions, we begin to experience an abatement in our wonder that he shirked signing his name in full if he could invent any excuse for cutting it short.

It is time to compare the alphabetical letters which are found both in the signatures and in the addition to the *More* MS.: for convenience the signatures may be classed and referred to as S, the addition as A.[1] These letters are the eleven small letters *a*, *e*, *h*, *i*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *p*, *r*, *s*, *y*, and the three capital letters *B*, *S*, *W*; but of four of these, viz. *i*, *l*, *r*, *y*, there are not sufficient instances in S as well as in A to afford criteria.

a.—In both S and A the two forms (the closed and the open) are used. The open letter appears both in S1 and in S2

[1] The two alphabets have been separately analysed above, pp. 20–25, and pp. 45–53.

linked with the preceding *h*. In A it is a common form, provided with a linking curve as explained in the analysis of the letters of S (p .20). The letter in S 1 is remarkable in having a spur at the back, caused by the curved link above the line being drawn down and back along the base line. The same spur-construction is found in many instances in A. As this is a strongly marked peculiarity, its occurrence in both S and A is very significant and points to identity.

e.—The letter with the reversed loop appears in S 2 and is the ordinary letter in A. The more formal set letter, composed of two independent curves, not looped, is occasionally used in A; it also occurs in S 3.

h.—The normal English cursive letter is constant in A. It appears in ordinary form in S 1 and S 2. The method of linking the letter above the line with the following letter creates a feature of resemblance. The set form of the letter in S 3 does not occur in A: it would not be expected in a cursively written MS.

k.—Four varieties of this letter have been described as found in A (p. 47). Three of them are represented in S: the normal letter appears in S 2 and S 3; the unusual form marked (3) in the analysis of the letters of A appears in S 5; and in S 6 a letter devoid of a cross-bar as in (4) of A. Making due allowance for the different conditions under which A and S were written, and therefore without pretending to detect exact likenesses between the two series of letters, the coincidence of three varieties, constructed

in the same manner, being found in both series, provides a forcible argument for identity of handwriting; and special stress should be laid on the existence in both S and A of a form (3) which is of unusual construction and may be considered a personal peculiarity of Shakespeare's hand (see *k* in S 5 and in 'knees', A, l. 110).

m.—In S 2 is to be seen the same inclination as in A of this letter to diminish in scale and for the minims to become concave. In this instance the end of the letter is curved and turned back over the line—the only example in S. In A there is no example of this form of termination of the letter; but in the case of *n*, a letter of similar construction, there is a single example in 'infeccion' (l. 14).

p.—Of the varieties of this letter found in A, the short-stemmed letter appears in S 3; the letter with medium stem in S 2. The long reclining letter in S 1 with sweeping stroke through the stem (the symbol for *par* or *per*) may be compared, for posture and construction, with the symbol in 'pardon', A, l. 143.

s.—In S 2, 3, 6 Shakespeare has adopted the Italian long cursive letter (*ſ*); in S 5 the English long *s* (ſ) is used. In A the Italian letter is employed in two alterations in the text (ll. 102, 113) and, with a slight modification, in the name of one of the characters (l. 17). This is the only letter of the foreign script to be found either in S or A; and its presence in both of them has the strongest significance for their identity.

B.—Among the signatures, this letter (only found once, in S 6) is of the scrivener type. In construction it is similar to the letter employed in A (ll. 3, 37, 43, 59).

S.—Of this English capital letter the most symmetrical example in S is in the first signature; and it may be compared with the *S* of 'Surrey' in A, l. 24. The rather cramped example in S 2 may be compared with that in 'Seriant', A, l. 43, which is a little constrained, being near the foot of the page where the writing runs small.

W.—The only instance in A of this capital letter is that in l. 35. It is constructed on the same lines as the letter in S 2, S 4, and S 5, but is written more symmetrically.

The analytical remarks on the rest of the letters in A, which have not been included in this comparison, may serve to aid in the identification of any other MSS. which may come to light and may be put forward as autographs of the great dramatist.

Besides the points of resemblance between the individual letters of S and A, the important feature, common to both, of the use of the fine upstroke as an ornamental adjunct to certain letters must also be insisted on. It is indeed, in its way, as strong a mark of identity as any that has been adduced. Its frequency in A is evidence of its being a habit of the hand. Its unexpected presence among the signatures of Shakespeare may be regarded as a happy occurrence; and, in order to bring more clearly into view the most probable reason for its appearance in connexion with the main signature, No. 6, to Shakespeare's will, a few words may be added. When, as suggested above, the dying man braced his nerves to execute that document, he naturally must have been impressed with the solemnity of the occasion.

He was about to inscribe perhaps the most important signature of his life. He was prepared to do so 'in a high style'. He therefore introduced it with the formal words 'By me'. Involuntarily perhaps, but quite evidently, his hand assumed formality. He began with a scrivener's formal capital *B*—a rather troublesome letter for a sick man to accomplish: a simple minuscule letter, easier to write, would have served the purpose equally well. Thus he succeeded with 'By'. The next letter he had to write was the *m* of 'me'. Still having formality in his mind, he naturally introduced the long ornamental upstroke which, as is amply demonstrated in the text of the addition to the *More* MS., so frequently accompanies that letter. And so, writing 'me', he passed on to his Christian name; and still under the influence of formality, and now departing from his usual practice of subscribing his signature without preliminary flourish, he began the *W* with another still longer upstroke, managing with dexterity the initial needle-eyed loop, and thus accomplished the Christian name. So far he had succeeded in the formal scrivener style—and then came the breakdown. This we believe to be the history of the formal treatment of this signature, and of the employment in this place of the ornamental upstroke.

It is necessary to remark on the phonetic spelling (if it can be justly called phonetic) of some of the words in the text of the addition. For it may have come as a shock to some that the alteration, in line 102, of 'only' to 'souly' (= solely) should have been adopted as a correct interpretation. There can be no question of the insertion, before the word 'only', of an

Italian long *s*, the same letter as that interlined to alter 'warre' into 'warrs' (l. 113). The only apparent violence done is by the assumption that the *n* of 'only' is to be read as the *u* of 'souly'—an assumption that implies that Shakespeare was conscious of the careless formation of his *n*'s and *u*'s, and was prepared to read them with interchangeable values. But we see no improbability in this implication.

The only remaining question which calls for remark is the probable date of the play of *Sir Thomas More* and its additions. If, as we believe, the addition which has been here a subject of our study is the composition, and in the handwriting, of Shakespeare, it must be placed in the earlier period of his career as a dramatist, when he was employed in such work as adapting and supplementing the plays of other authors. Mr. Simpson's suggested date of 1586 or 1587 appears to be too early. Dr. Greg in his edition for the Malone Society has suggested 'some such year as 1592 or 1593', which would fit in well with the chronology of Shakespeare's career.[1] The few watermarks which are still visible in the Harleian MS. containing the play do not help us. They are varieties of the tankard mark, perhaps the most common of all the numerous watermarks of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and of such countless and rapidly changing patterns that the chance of identification by means of examples to be sought in dated MSS. would be infinitesimal.

[1] Dr. Greg's more recent opinion, however, inclines to bring down the date to the end of the century, which he thinks would be fatal to the attribution of the addition to Shakespeare. See *The Modern Language Review*, vol. viii (1913), 89.

Finally we venture to submit that, despite the scanty examples of Shakespeare's hitherto acknowledged handwriting, the cumulative evidence in favour of the identity of the writing of the signatures with that of the addition to the play of *Sir Thomas More*, which has been elicited by the scrutiny of the documents, is far more conclusive than might have been anticipated. We commend it to the careful consideration of the impartial reader. There should be no mystery about the study of handwriting. He who undertakes to explain to others the identity of this hand with that hand has a simple and straightforward task to perform. By his own wider experience he may be qualified, not to force his opinion upon them, but to guide them how to look at things in a way which he has found by study to be the right way to reveal to untrained eyes points of evidence in the documents under examination, which without such guidance might escape them. When he has done this his task is accomplished, and he leaves it to them to decide whether his conclusions are just.

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