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OBSERVATIONS ON AN  
AUTOGRAPH OF SHAKESPEARE

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OBSERVATIONS  
ON AN  
AUTOGRAPH OF SHAKSPERE,  
AND THE  
ORTHOGRAPHY OF HIS NAME.

COMMUNICATED  
TO THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES  
BY  
SIR FREDERIC MADDEN, K.H., F.R.S. AND S.A.  
IN A LETTER TO  
JOHN GAGE, Esq., F.R.S. DIRECTOR.

LONDON:  
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MDCCCXXXVIII.

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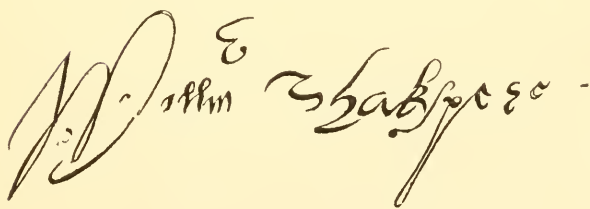
TO THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES

BY

SIR FREDERIC MADDEN, K.H., F.R.S. AND S.A.

IN A LETTER TO

JOHN GAGE, Esq. F.R.S. DIRECTOR.



*F. Madden Esq. Shakspeare*

LONDON:  
THOMAS RODD, GREAT NEWPORT STREET.  
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## OBSERVATIONS,

&c. &c.

*British Museum, Jan. 11, 1837.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I TRUST it will not be deemed foreign to the pursuits of the Society of Antiquaries, to receive some particulars respecting the autograph of an individual, the magic of whose name must best plead as my apology for abstracting them from their graver subjects of inquiry. The individual I allude to is no less a personage than our immortal dramatic poet, WILLIAM SHAKSPERE, to mention whom, and to excite curiosity and interest, I may, I believe, in any society of educated persons, assume to be inseparable. By the assistance of my friend, Charles Frederick Barnwell, Esq., of the British Museum, I am enabled to lay before the Society an accurate fac-simile of the signature of this great man, written on the fly-leaf of a volume which, there is every reason to believe, once formed a part of his library, and which has hitherto, strange to say, been hidden from the knowledge and indefatigable researches of the whole host of Shaksperian commentators, collectors, and illustrators. Already, on the mere announcement of the fact, one might fancy, with no

great effort of imagination, the shades of Warburton and Johnson, Tyrwhitt and Steevens, Ritson and Chalmers, Warton and Parr, again crowding round the volume, to view the characters traced by the Bard of Avon; again might we view the adoration of Boswell's bended knees; and, on this occasion, no sceptic sneer would distort the lip or depress the brow of the critical Malone.—But to the point:

The precious volume which I have thus introduced to your notice is a copy of the first edition of the English translation of Montaigne's "Essays," by John Florio, printed in folio, 1603,\* and its fortunate owner is the Reverend Edward Patteson, of East Sheen, in Surrey, to whom the Society will be indebted, in common with myself, for any gratification they may receive from the present communication. Of its history nothing more can be stated than this, that it belonged previously to Mr. Patteson's father, the Reverend Edward Patteson, minister of Smeth-

\* "The Essayes, or Morall, Politike, and Millitarie Discourses of Lo. Michaell de Montaigne, Knight. First written by him in French, and now done into English by him that hath inuiolably vowed his labors to the Æternitie of their Honors, whose names he hath senerally inscribed on these his consecrated Altares. The first booke to the Right Honorable Lucie Co. of Bedford, and Ladie Anne Harrington, her Ho. Mother. The second booke to the Right Honorable Elizabeth Co. of Rutland, and Ladye Penelope Riche. The third booke to the right Honorable Ladie Elizabeth Grey and Ladie Maria Nevile. John Florio."

"Printed at London by Val. Sims, for Edward Blount, dwelling in Paules Churchyard, 1603." From his address "to the courteous readers," we learn that this translation was undertaken at the suggestion of Sir Edward Wotton. It was reprinted in 1613, (Lowndes,) and a third time in 1632. These later editions are dedicated to Queen Anna of Denmark, and prefixed are some commendatory verses by Sam. Daniel, to his "deare brother and friend, Mr. John Florio, one of the gentlemen of her Majestie's most royal Privie Chamber." The original work was first published in 1588.

wick, in Staffordshire, about three miles from Birmingham, and thus contiguous to the county which gave Shakspeare birth. How or when this gentleman first became possessed of it, is not known; but it is very certain that, previous to the year 1780, Mr. Patteson used to exhibit the volume to his friends as a curiosity, *on account of the autograph*. No public notice of it, however, was at any time made; and, contented with this faint notoriety, the autograph of Shakspeare continued to slumber in the hands of this gentleman and his son, until by the friendly representations of Mr. Barnwell, the present owner was induced to bring it to the British Museum for inspection. Now, imperfect as this information is, yet it is ample of itself to set at rest all doubts that might at first naturally arise in the minds of those who are acquainted with the forgeries of Ireland, since, at the period when this volume was assuredly in the library at Smethwick, and known to contain Shakspeare's autograph, this literary impostor was scarcely born. This fact must at once obviate any scruples in regard to the autograph now brought forward, having emanated from the same manufactory which produced the "*Miscellaneous Papers*." For myself, I may be permitted to remark, that the forgeries of Chatterton\* and Ireland have always appeared to me thoroughly contempt-

\* The Chatterton forgeries are now preserved in the British Museum, MSS. Add. 5766, A. B. C. and exhibit the most decisive proofs of the impudence of the imposture, and the obstinate ignorance of those who were to the last its champions. These defenders of Rowley argue that Chatterton was incapable of reading any work of research; but if so, how is it we find among his fictions the list of romances printed in Madox's *Formulare Anglicanum*, and a copy of the kneeling figure of one of the Howard family,

ible, and utterly unworthy of the controversy they occasioned ; indeed, they can only be justly characterised in the words of Malone, as “ the genuine offspring of consummate ignorance and unparalleled audacity.” \* At the present day the study and knowledge of ancient manuscripts, the progress of our language, and the rules of exact criticism in matters of this kind have become too extensively spread to allow us to suppose any similar attempt will ever disgrace our literature ; but for the sake of gratifying curiosity, and of a comparison between the genuine autograph of Shakspeare, and the miserable imitations of *Master William Henry Ireland*, I am enabled, by the kindness of Sir Henry Ellis, to exhibit to the Society a paper in the hand-writing of the forger, in which may be seen at one view his copies † of other genuine signatures of the poet, and his own avowal of his fabrications. The present autograph *challenges and defies suspicion*, and has already passed the ordeal of numerous competent examiners, all of whom have, *without a single doubt*, expressed their conviction of its genuineness.

in Weever's funeral monuments, p. 847, which the impostor has partly altered, and then had the assurance to write around an inscription to the memory of *Sir Gualeroy de Chatterton*? To those who may have the least lingering wish to advocate the cause of Rowley, I recommend the task of deciphering eighteen lines in *the Purple Roll*, which for some reason or other have never yet been printed. It is worthy of remark, that one of these contemptible fragments is actually fastened to a portion of a genuine deed of the date of 10 Hen. IV., which in all probability is one of the very parchments that *did* come out of the celebrated *chest*, and which is just what we might expect it to be, a quit-claim from one citizen of Bristol to another, of his right in four shops in the suburbs ! See MSS. Add. 5766, a. fol. 28.

\* Inquiry, p. 354.

† Fac similes of these having already appeared in his “ Confessions,” it was thought unnecessary to repeat them here.

The only possible objection which might arise in the mind of a sceptic is this, whether there might not have been living at the same time other persons of the name of *William Shakspeare*, to one of whom the volume might have belonged? In reply to this it must be remarked, *first*, that on comparing the autograph before us with the genuine signatures of the poet, on his will, and on two legal instruments, there is a sufficient resemblance to warrant the conclusion that they are by the same hand, although enough variation to preclude the idea of imitation; and, *secondly*, that the contents of the volume itself come in aid, and afford additional evidence of the genuineness, as well as add to the interest of the autograph; for it is well known that this book was consulted by Shakspeare in the composition of his plays. The *Tempest* presents us with a proof so undeniable of this fact, that I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of quoting it here.

In the second act, sc. 2, p. 64, tom. iv. ed. 8vo. 1813, occurs the following dialogue, after the escape of the king's party from the vessel, on the deserted island:—

*Gonzalo.* Had I plantation of this isle, my lord:—

*Antonio.* He'd sow it with nettle-seed.

*Sebastian.* Or docks, or mallows.

*Gon.*—and were the king of it, what would I do?

*Seb.* 'Scape being drunk for want of wine.

*Gon.* I' the commonwealth I would by contraries  
Execute all things; for *no kind of traffic*  
Would I admit; *no name of magistrate*;  
*Letters should not be known*; *no use of service*,  
*Of riches, or of poverty*; *no contracts*;  
*Successions*; *bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none*;  
*No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil*;  
*No occupation*; *all men idle, all*,  
And woman too, but innocent and pure;  
No sovereignty.—



*Seb.* And yet he would be king on't!

*Ant.* The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning!"

The corresponding passage of Montaigne occurs in Book i. chap. 30, p. 102, where he is speaking of a newly discovered country, which he calls *Antar-tick France*, and thus proceeds:—

"It is a nation, would I answer Plato, that hath *no kind of traffike, no knowledge of letters*, no intelligence of numbers, *no name of magistrate*, nor of politike superioritie; *no use of service, of riches, or of poverty*; *no contracts, no successions, no dividences*;\* *no occupation, but idle*; no respect of kindred, but common; no apparell but naturall; no manuring of lands; *no use of wine, corne, or mettle*. The very words that impart lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulations, covetousness, envie, detraction, and pardon, were never heard of amongst them."

The words marked in italics will sufficiently point out the close imitation; for, in truth, Shakspeare has scarcely done more than copy Florio's translation, with just sufficient alteration to cause the sentences to fall into rhythm. Warburton has noted, that throughout the dialogue Shakspeare's aim is to convey a satire on the various Utopian treatises of government; but in the original, Montaigne is speaking seriously of the newly discovered country of Brasil, where Villegaignon first landed in 1555.† Malone infers, with great probability, that it was from the perusal of this chapter that Shakspeare was

\* The edition of 1632 reads *partitions*, and it is rather singular that Malone, in quoting this passage in his notes, should have referred to that, and not to the first edition. The coincidence of the passage had been previously pointed out by Capell; but he quotes the French text, which he very absurdly supposes was made use of by Shakspeare.

† See "Histoire des Choses Memorables advenues en la terre du Bresil, partre de l'Amerique Australe, sous le gouvernement de N. de Villeg. depuis l'an 1555, jusques à l'an 1558." 8vo. 1561.



led to make an uninhabited island the scene of his *Tempest*; and from the title "Of the *Canniballes*," as it stands in Florio, he has evidently, by transposition, (as remarked by Dr. Farmer,) formed the name of his man-monster, *Caliban*.

The copy of Montaigne's work in Mr. Patteson's hands has suffered in some degree from damp, so that the fly-leaves at the beginning and end have become loose, and the edges somewhat worn. On the top of the same page which contains Shakspeare's autograph, are written in a smaller, and in my opinion, a more recent hand, two short sentences from the *Thyestes* of Seneca, Act. v. *cecidit incassum dolor*, and *vota non faciam improba*. The same hand, apparently, has written on the fly-leaf at the end of the volume many similar Latin sentences, with reference to the pages of Montaigne's work, from which they are all borrowed; such as *Faber est sue quisque fortunæ*.—*Festinatio tarda est*.—*Calamitosus est animus futuri anxius*, &c. Could we believe these to have proceeded from Shakspeare's hand, they would acquire a high degree of interest; but after an attentive examination of them, I am persuaded they were added by a later pen, and in this opinion I have been confirmed by the judgment of other persons versed in the writings of that period. A very few marginal notes occur in the volume, at pp. 134, 254, 513, which are by the same hand, to which also in all probability we must assign the word "Thessayes," written in ink on the back of the volume. The binding is in its original state, and no doubt the same as when the book was read by Shakspeare.

Having thus stated all I can collect relative to the

history of this treasure, I must beg leave, before I conclude, to make a few remarks on the orthography of Shakspeare's name, *as written by himself*.

There are five acknowledged genuine signatures of Shakspeare in existence, exclusive of the one which forms the subject of this communication. Of these, three are attached to his will in the Prerogative Court, executed 25th March, 1615-16; the fourth is written on a mortgage deed, dated 11th March, 1612-13, of a small estate purchased by Shakspeare of Henry Walker, in Blackfriars; and the fifth on the counterpart of the deed of bargain and sale of the same property, dated 10th March, 1612-13.

From a comparison of these with each other, and with the autograph now first brought forward, it is most certain, in my opinion, that the poet always wrote his name SHAKSPERE, and consequently, that those who have inserted an *e* after the *k*, or an *a* in the second syllable, do not write the same (as far as we are able to judge) in the same manner as the poet himself uniformly would authorise us to do. This I state in opposition to Chalmers and Drake, who assert that "all the genuine signatures of Shakspeare are dissimilar."\* Let us consider them separately, not according to the priority of dates, but in the order they were introduced to the notice of the public.

In the year 1776, George Steevens traced from the will of Shakspeare the three signatures attached

\* "Apology," p. 426. Drake's "Shakspeare and his Times," vol. 1, p. 17, 4to., 1817, who servilely copies Chalmers, and never took the trouble to see the original.

to it (one to each sheet), and they were engraved for the first time in the *second* edition of Shakspeare, by Johnson and Steevens, in 1788.\* They have since been engraved in nearly all the subsequent editions; in Malone's "Inquiry," 1796; in Chalmers's "Apology," 1797; in Harding's "Essence of Malone," 1801; in Ireland's "Confessions," 1805; in Drake's "Shakspeare and his Times," 1817; and lastly, in J. G. Nichols's "Autographs," 1829; in which work they are, for the second time, traced from the original document. The first of these signatures, subscribed on the first sheet, at the right hand corner of the paper, is decidedly *William Shakspeare*, and no one has ventured to raise a doubt respecting the six last letters.† The second signature is at the left hand corner of the second sheet, and is also clearly *Will'm Shakspeare*, although from the tail of the letter *h* of the line above intervening between the *e* and *r*, Chalmers would fain raise an idle quibble as to the omission of a letter. The third signature has been the subject of greater controversy, and has usually been read, *By me, William Shakspeare*. Malone, however, was the first publicly to abjure this reading, and in his "Inquiry," p. 117, owns the error to have been pointed out to him by

\* Mr. J. G. Nichols is therefore in error, when he supposes these signatures were first traced from the will for Malone's "Inquiry," published in 1796. See his "Autographs of Remarkable Personages," fol. Lond. 1829. No. 11, B.

† From a close examination of the original, it appears that this first signature has been considerably damaged since Steevens's time, and two of the letters are no longer legible, as may also be found in Nichols. It may be remarked, in addition, that Steevens has evidently confounded this signature with the name of *Shackspeare* written at the top of the same margin by the scrivener, and by doing so, has misled Dr. Drake, although he

an anonymous correspondent, who “shewed most clearly, that the superfluous stroke in the letter *r* was only the tremor of his (Shakspeare’s) hand, and no *a*.” In this opinion, after the most scrupulous examination, I entirely concur, and can repeat with confidence the words of Mr. Boaden, that “if there be truth in sight, the poet himself inserted no *a* in the second syllable of his name.”\* The only remaining remark I have to make respecting the will (which it is to be regretted, has never yet been printed as it ought to be, with the original orthography and interlineations) is, that the date of execution was written at first *Januarii* (not *Februarii*, as Malone states), over which *Martii* has been written; and that throughout the body of the document the scrivener has written the testator’s name *Shackspeare*, whereas on the outside it is docketed twice by the Clerk of the Prerogative Court, as the will of Mr. *Shakspeare*.

The next document is the mortgage deed, which was discovered in 1768 by Mr. Albany Wallis, a solicitor, among the title deeds of the Rev. Mr. Featherstonehaugh, of Oxted, in Surrey, and was presented to Garrick. From the label of this, the fac-simile in Malone’s edition of Shakspeare, 1790, was executed, bearing this appearance, *Wm. Shakspe*; and on this, in conjunction with the third signature of the will, was founded Malone’s mistake in printing the name with an *a* in the second syllable.

might have been taught better by Chalmer’s “Apology,” p. 426, note. As to Chalmers’s notion (copied of course by Drake) that there is a *c* inserted before the *k*, it is not correct, and he has been misled by a straggling open *a*.

\* “An Inquiry into the authenticity of the various portraits of Shakspeare,” 4to. Lond. 1824, p. 62.

The deed was at that time in the possession of Mrs. Garrick; but in 1796, when Malone published his "Inquiry," and had become convinced of his error, and of the fault of his engraver, in substituting what looks like the letter *a* instead of *re* (which it ought to be), the original document was missing, and could not be consulted for the purpose of rectifying the mistake.\* Malone has been very severely handled by Chalmers and the facetious George Hardinge, for this apparent inconsistency; but a few words may plead Malone's excuse. Steevens and himself, in 1778, resolved to exclude the *e* after the *k* in the poet's name, and accordingly the second edition of that year appeared with the title-pages so corrected, and the third edition of 1784 so corrected throughout. It was therefore only in reference to this *e* that Malone laid down the rule for its exclusion, in his edition of 1790, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 192; for as to the *a*, its insertion at that time had not been questioned. In 1796, therefore, when Malone again touched on the subject, and declared against the *a* in the second syllable also, he by no means contradicts himself, but writes from the fuller evidence he had obtained on the subject.

This evidence forms the third document bearing Shakspeare's signature, *viz.* the counterpart of the deed of bargain and sale, dated the day before the

\* Ireland states, "Confessions," p. 88, that this document was bequeathed by Garrick to the British Museum, which is not true. How it was lost remains, I believe, a mystery; but its production, I am firmly convinced, would corroborate the reading of *Shakspeare*.



mortgage deed. This also was found among Mr. Featherstonehaugh's evidences, and in 1796 was in the hands of Mr. Wallis, who lent it to Malone to print in his often-quoted "Inquiry." Here the signature is, beyond all cavil or suspicion, *William Shakspēr*, where the mark above is the usual abbreviation of the period for the final *e*.\*

To these we have now to add the autograph before us, in Florio's volume, which so unquestionably decides in favour of *Shakspeare*, that in this manner I shall beg leave in future to write it; since I know no reason why we should not sooner take the poet's own authority in this point, than that of his friends or printers.†

At the same time it must be admitted, that if we disregard the form traced by the poet's own hand, the whole weight of printed evidence of his time (with few exceptions), is in favour of *Shakespeare*,‡ as still adhered to by Mr. Collier; whose recent discoveries and publications on the subject of Shakspeare and his writings,§ entitle him to the hearty thanks of every admirer of our great dramatic writer, both in England and abroad.

\* See Malone, Pl. ii. No. x. Query, what has become of this document?

† To those deeply interested in the subject, it may be as well to add, that the name of our poet, both at his baptism and burial, in the Stratford Register, is spelt *Shakspeare*, and so are the names of other members of his family, between the years 1558 to 1593; and in the marriage licence, recently discovered in the Consistorial Court of Worcester, it is spelt *Shagspere*, which, in effect, is the same thing.

‡ See the evidence summed up, but not without many inaccuracies, in "Another Essence of Malone," 8vo. 1801, pp. 73, 96, which was published anonymously by Geo. Hardinge.

§ "New facts regarding the Life of Shakespeare," &c. 12mo. 1835; and "New Particulars regarding the Works of Shakespeare," 12mo. 1836.

Here I might close my case; but a few words more may be requisite in regard to some other *presumed* specimens of Shakspeare's handwriting. I would certainly not go so far as Malone, in asserting, that if any other original letter or MS. of his should be discovered, his name would appear as just written;\* but I think any variation would afford reasonable cause for suspicion. Since I commenced this paper, I have discovered that two other volumes claim the honour of containing Shakspeare's autograph, *not* manufactured by Ireland. The first of these is a copy of Warner's *Albion's England*, 4to. 1612, which was bought at Steevens's sale in 1800, by Mr. Heber, and which is now in the British Museum. On the title page is "William Shakspeare his booke;" and it will be evident to any one who takes the trouble of comparing it with the similar notorious forgeries of Ireland on a copy of Holland's translation of Pliny, folio, 1601, and on Bartholomeus de *Proprietatibus Rerum*, *Thomas Berthelet*, [1535], fol. in Sir Joseph Banks's library, that they all three are traced by the same hand. Whether Steevens had any hand in Ireland's fabrications, is a discussion foreign to my purpose; but I do not think it *very* improbable. The second claimant is a copy of Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, 1605. In 1829 it was in the possession of Mr. Thomas Fisher, of the East India House, and is described as being "filled with MS. notes." It bears *in limine* the same signature as in Warner's work, and a fac-simile of it is given by Nichols, in his *Autographs*. From an inspection of

\* "Inquiry," p. 120.

this (for I have not seen the volume itself), I should unhesitatingly say, that the signature is a modern fabrication; and subsequent inquiry has placed the fact beyond all question.\*

Only one document remains to be noticed, the genuineness of which, if established, would make even the autograph of Florio to "vail its bonnet." I allude to the copy of verses existing at Bridge-water House, signed "W. Sh.," and printed by Mr. Collier, in his "New Particulars regarding the Works of Shakspeare." As far as the internal evidence goes, I do not see any reasonable objection against them; but, as no fac-simile has yet appeared of the original, it is impossible at present to offer any further remark. Mr. Collier urges their claim very modestly and fairly; but, as the paper *may* itself be a *transcript* of verses composed by Shakspeare, some additional evidence is required, in regard to the hand-writing, &c. to enable any critic, in matters of this kind, to form an opinion.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours, very truly,

FREDERIC MADDEN.

*John Gage, Esq., Director, A. S.*

*&c. &c. &c.*

\* See Wheler's Guide to Stratford-upon-Avon, 12mo. 1834, p. 143, where mention is made of a forgery of Shakspeare's name, executed by John Jordan, author of a local poem called "Welcombe Hills," which has recently been ascertained to be the one referred to in the text.



#### ADDITIONAL NOTE.

SINCE the preceding letter was printed as a portion of the *Archæologia*, I have been favored with a letter from the Rev. Joseph Hunter, in which he suggests, that the passage in Montaigne was taken by Shakspeare from the work while yet circulated in MS. some years previous to the first edition of 1603. But admitting the fact, (which will probably be considered more at large in Mr. Hunter's forthcoming work, intitled, "New Illustrations of the Life, Studies, and Writings of Shakspeare,") it does not at all affect the proprietorship of the volume, or the authenticity of the signature. In reference also to the poem printed by Mr. Collier, and supposed to be signed "W. Sh." Mr. Hunter clearly proves that we should read "W. Sk.," and that the author is not William Shakspeare, but *Sir William Skipwith*, specimens of whose verses may be found in Nichols's Leicestershire, vol. ii. p. 367, and MS. Lansdowne, 207, F. I have only to add, in conclusion, that the volume which belonged to Mr. Fisher, supposed to contain Shakspeare's autograph, was sold at Evans's, 1st June, 1837; and as I then had an opportunity of examining it, my previous conviction of its falsity was confirmed by ocular evidence.

F. M.

11th April, 1838.

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