

# **SHAKESPERE'S HANDWRITING**

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Shakespere's Handwriting by George Greenwood

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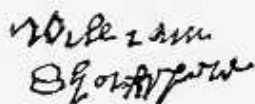
**GEORGE GREENWOOD**

**SHAKESPERE'S  
HANDWRITING**



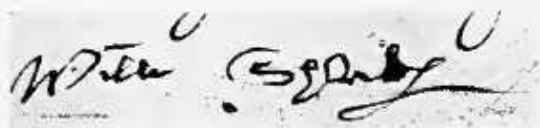
Shaffpere

NO. 1. THE NAME SHAKSPERE AS PRINTED IN GERMAN  
*From the "Dresdner Anzeiger" of April 3, 1910*



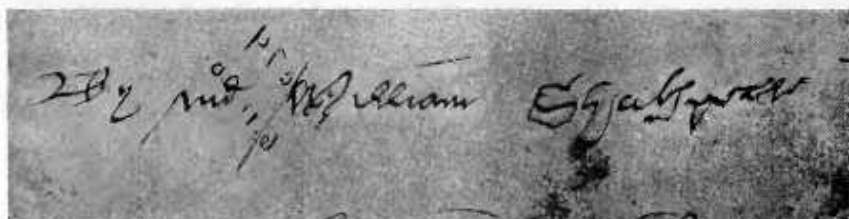
Willeam  
Shaffpere

NO. 2. THE FIRST WILL SIGNATURE  
*From "Berzoff's Malone," Vol. 2, p. 601*



Willeam Shaffpere

NO. 3. THE "WALLACE" SIGNATURE



Willeam Shaffpere

NO. 4. THE THIRD WILL SIGNATURE

JK  
5527  
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Shakspeare's Handwriting  
By Sir George Greenwood

ERRATA.

- Page 13. *Line 13.* For "scriviner" read "scrivener."
- Page 25. *Last Line.* Reference to Note 1. This note appears at foot of page 26.
- Page 33. *2nd Footnote.* For "See copy at page 38" read "See copy on Frontispiece."

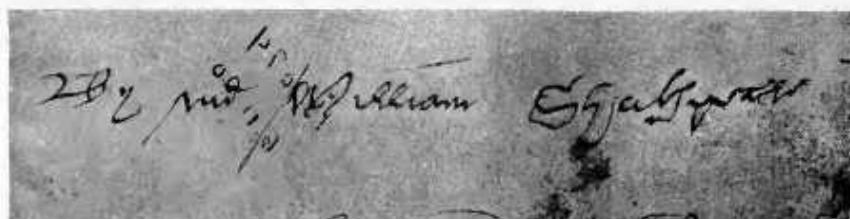
157074  
6.11.20

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, W.  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY, MCMXX.

Shakspere

NO. 1. THE NAME SHAKSPERE AS PRINTED IN GERMAN.  
*From the "Dresdner Anzeiger" of April 3, 1910*

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Shakspere



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Wille 2 am  
Shakspere

NO. 4. THE THIRD WILL SIGNATURE

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Greenwood

# Shakspeare's Handwriting

By Sir George Greenwood

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## SHAKSPERE'S HANDWRITING.

EVERYBODY knows the saying, attributed to a certain judge of the mid-Victorian period, to the effect that the unvaracious might be divided into "liars, damned liars, and expert witnesses." This was, of course, a saying more jocular than judicial, but, like many another exaggerated statement, it has, nevertheless, a substratum of truth. To illustrate, for example, the untrustworthiness of expert witnesses, I need only refer to a case which was tried at the Law Courts while I was practising at the Bar. At that time the two great "experts" whose services were constantly requisitioned in cases of disputed handwriting, were Messrs. Inglis & Netherclift, and, in the particular case referred to, one of these great men was engaged on behalf of the plaintiff and the other on behalf of the defendant. The trial took place before a Judge and Jury, when the two handwriting experts went into the box in support of their respective clients, and each, with equal positiveness, pledged his reputation in support of diametrically opposite opinions; whereupon the Judge directed the Jury that they should leave the "expert evidence" altogether out of consideration.

What are we to say then, when we find experts in high places—none other than the "paleographers" and "graphonomists" of the present day—differing widely among themselves? Are we to follow the example of the Judge and put the "expert evidence" altogether out of our consideration? That can hardly be done where the subject-matter for examination is one of such great literary importance as that of "Shakespeare's handwriting," and yet it is clear, when there is such difference of opinion among the learned, that we cannot adopt the advice of the school boy who translated "*experto crede*" by the words "trust the expert"! What, then, can the poor ordinary mortal do? He can only examine these different opinions, together with the subject-matter of the inquiry, and, making use of such reason, and judgment, and experience as he possesses, endeavour to arrive at a conclusion for himself.

Now at the present moment this absorbing question is agitating the minds of all Shakespearian scholars and students: Have we at last found one of Shakespeare's manuscripts, meaning thereby certain sheets of paper bearing words written by the same hand as that which wrote the six signatures which have hitherto been believed to be the only examples of Shakespeare's writing? That is, of course, an intensely interesting question. One of Shakespeare's manuscripts! A thing which everybody has longed for! What would not a lover of Shakespeare give to behold with his own eyes a page of Shakespeare's own undoubted writing! And if it can be proven that the sheets in question have been written on by the same hand as that which penned the signatures, then those poor deluded persons who doubt, nay, disbelieve, that Shakspere of Stratford was indeed the author of the plays and poems of Shakespeare, are for ever put to silence. Obviously, therefore, every good and orthodox Shakespearian must ardently desire to believe, and to proclaim unto the world, that these pages are really and truly, and beyond a doubt, the longed-for Shakespearian manuscripts.

Now let me state the point at issue more definitely. There is, among the Harleian MSS. at the British Museum, an old manuscript play of "Sir Thomas More," the greater part of which is said to be in the handwriting of Anthony Munday. This work is something of an *olla podrida*. It is composed of twenty paper leaves, of which thirteen, we are told, are in Anthony Munday's autograph. "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."<sup>1</sup> Two of these leaves contain an "addition" which certain experts, or "paleographers," maintain to be in the same handwriting as that of the "Shakespeare" signatures. That is the question which I propose to examine, but before doing so I think it will be useful to consider the evidence which the handwriting experts generally have placed before the world concerning not only these and other signatures

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare's Handwriting*. By Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, G.C.B. (1916), p. 30.