

[illegible]

THE FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY

new and the manuscript of Shakespeare. Public taste and the individual predilections of actors and dramatists have been the chief influences in the prompt-books of Kemble, Sarah Siddons, Booth, Irving, and the Terry family.

BIOGRAPHY AND ICONOGRAPHY

It is not incredible that, after Shakespeare's death it should have been possible for a bibliophile, however zealous, to find no documents relating to his biography, but Folger had a good fortune. In describing this class of material, J. Q. Adams has written as follows:

Of early manuscripts relating to Shakespeare Mr. Folger gathered a collection that in extent and variety admits no error. I need not mention the Ricci after cataloguing the items before the year 1625, and that the first of manuscript Shakespeareana the Folger Library stands out supreme. . . . As a direct object of the library "contains all extant manuscripts of any portions of his works," and the only early manuscript of the poet, a version of *Henry IV* prepared about 1611, it seems, as Court or at some other house. Of Shakespeare's signatures, all authentic, and all attached to legal documents, preserved in official archives where safe from loss, he entered and; the Library, however, is a number of attributed signatures, one or two of which are genuine."

These lines were printed in 1833. Just ten years later, it was Adams's good fortune to be able to publish an illustrated edition of his amazing purchase for £1 on 28 November 1938 at the Bodleian, as an undeciphered manuscript of the poet's name, a copy of William Lambard's *Archeologia* (1508) which contains in the right-hand corner of the title-page the name, "W. Shakespeare," "C. . . .", he wrote, "there are three possible explanations for this signature; first, it may be a signature made with ink and a quill; secondly, it may be a genuine signature of some person with the name 'William Shakespeare'; and, thirdly, it may be the signature of William Shakespeare the dramatist." Efforts to discover evidence that he signed with the poet have been unavailing. "Thus," Adams concluded, "it is a case in which modern science can tell, there seems to be no real, no justifiable ground for believing the autograph of the poet."

Among the biographical documents are four successive titles to Shakespeare's house, the purchase deed of his Blackfriars property, and two indentures of a fine levied on New Place, all from the Folger Shakespeare Library. Another group of manuscripts supplements and corroborates the grant of arms to Shakespeare; these include a contemporary copy of the grant of arms to William Dethick, related in the autograph of Ralph Brooke, William Smith's autograph, and the great prejudice and hindrance of the Folger Shakespeare Library. Also his holograph "Abuses committed by painters and others to the prejudice of the effects of the . . . and several other treatises or note-books of contemporary or later date. The . . . no-quoted autograph of the merry meeting with Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton, and Shakespeare's . . . another Folger manuscript, the voluminous diary of the Rev. . . .

