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978-1-107-41612-3 - New Readings in Shakespeare: Volume One: Introduction
the Comedies the Poems

C. J. Sisson
Frontmatter

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SHAKESPEARE PROBLEMS

Edited by J. DOVER WILSON

VIII. NEW READINGS IN SHAKESPEARE

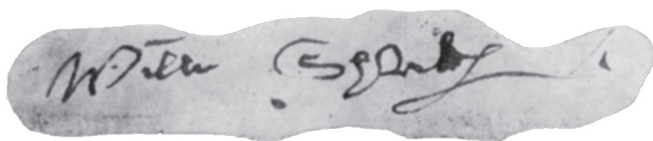
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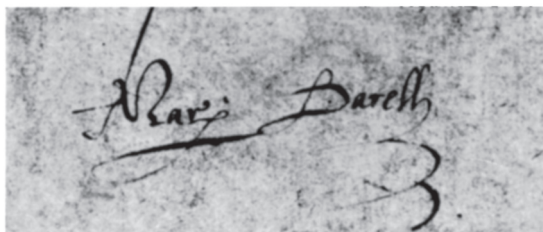
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(a) William Shakespeare: The Court of Requests signature
(P.R.O. Req. 4/4)



(b) Signature of Marmaduke Darell
(S.P. 46, Vol. 44, f. 91)

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by
C. J. SISSON

VOLUME ONE
INTRODUCTION
THE COMEDIES
THE POEMS

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PREFACE

This book is an attempt to survey the principal proposals made during the lifetime of its readers for the restoration of the true text of Shakespeare. It includes an explanation and defence of the readings put forward in my own recent edition, some of which certainly require explanation, though I hope none is indefensible.

The Introduction discusses some aspects of the methods and principles governing the approach to the task of emendation. The book is not designed as a substitute for Variorum editions of Shakespeare's plays and poems, to which textual editors owe so much. But one of its main purposes is to furnish material for the consideration of the new generation of scholars at work upon the text, in a number of enterprises now in progress or about to be begun, on the long way leading to a new Authorized Version of Shakespeare. It is not generally realized that the 'standard' edition of Shakespeare is almost a hundred years old. Of no more recent edition can it be said as yet that it has the established authority for all ordinary purposes of the Cambridge-Globe text of 1863-6.

It is hoped further that the book will serve the interests of the wider circle of readers and lovers of Shakespeare, and help to satisfy their critical curiosity concerning the chief problems of his text and the meaning of difficult passages. The illustrations are designed to stimulate such curiosity, to illuminate these problems, and to furnish examples of the appeal from a printed text to the underlying copy in Shakespeare's own writing.

I am grateful to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, who maintain in difficult days their long tradition as a house of learning, not least of Shakespearian scholarship, and whose colleagues and servants uphold so worthily that

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rare survival of ancient craftsmanship, the art of printing and the making of books. Professor Dover Wilson, the General Editor of their *Shakespeare Problems* series, has shown a lively interest in these volumes which I am happy to acknowledge. I have once again to declare my debt to the watchful eye and critical care with which Miss Winifred Husbands has read the typescript and proofs of a book of mine, to my great advantage beyond matters of form and technique. I have had many suggestions, to which I owe much, from other friends and colleagues interested in the text of Shakespeare. I have had nothing but kindness from the authorities of the British Museum, the Public Record Office, the Victoria and Albert Museum (including permission to reproduce parts of MS. Dyce 9), and the Folger Library. Dr J. G. McManaway, on several occasions, was good enough to report to me the results of his expert examination of Folger copies at my request. And I acknowledge gratefully the help of a research grant from the University of London which enabled me to work with photostat facsimiles of plays and of documents from public archives cited in the book.

The plays have been referred to throughout, as in my edition, according to the Globe numbering of acts, scenes, and lines, though these are not always consistent, for the sake of ease of reference to standard works of scholarship.

C. J. SISSON

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

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ILLUSTRATIONS

FRONTISPIECE

- (a) William Shakespeare: The Court of Requests signature (P.R.O. Req. 4/4)
- (b) Signature of Marmaduke Darell (S.P. 46, Vol. 44, f. 91)

PLATE I *The Honest Man's Fortune* (act 3, sc. 1, ll. 135–48)

- (a) From MS. Dyce 9, f. 18
- (b) The same passage in F. 1, 1647
facing p. 23

PLATE II *Ibid.* (act 2, sc. 1, ll. 12–31)

- (a) From MS. Dyce 9, f. 9^v
- (b) The same passage in F. 1, 1647
facing p. 24