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Edited by W. W. Greg

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### **Shakespeare's Hand in the Play of *Sir Thomas More***

First published in 1923, this book consists of a series of papers written by Pollard, W.W. Greg, E. Maunde Thompson, J. Dover Wilson, and R.W. Chambers, all advocates of the then newly-established New Bibliography. The book was assembled with the intention of strengthening the argument that three pages of *Sir Thomas More* in the Harleian Manuscript at the British Museum were written in Shakespeare's own hand. The well-established scholars examine the case from several different angles, considering the handwriting in comparison to the known versions of Shakespeare's signature, the bibliographical links between these three pages and the 'good' quartos, and the content of the pages in relation to political ideas expressed elsewhere in Shakespeare. The volume also includes plates of Shakespeare's signatures, analysis of individual letter shapes and parts of the manuscript, and a special transcript of the pages in question.

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SHAKESPEARE'S HAND IN  
*The* PLAY of SIR THOMAS MORE

PAPERS by ALFRED W. POLLARD

W. W. GREG E. MAUNDE THOMPSON

J. DOVER WILSON & R. W. CHAMBERS

*with the text of the Ill May Day Scenes*

*edited by W. W. Greg*

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## PREFACE

THE object of this book is to strengthen the evidence of the existence (in the Harleian MS. 7368 at the British Museum) of three pages written by Shakespeare in his own hand as part of the play of *Sir Thomas More*. The contributors have tried not to be over-eager in pressing their contention, or to claim more than they can make good. They would not have their readers less critical than they have tried to be themselves, and are aware that from one quarter at least searching criticism is to be expected, since if Shakespeare wrote these three pages the discrepant theories which unite in regarding the "Stratford man" as a mere mask concealing the activity of some noble lord (a 17th Earl of Oxford, a 6th Earl of Derby, or a Viscount St Albans) come crashing to the ground. It is here contended that the writing of the three pages is compatible with a development into the hand seen in Shakespeare's considerably later extant signatures and explains misprints in his text; that the spelling of the three pages can all be paralleled from the text of the best editions of single plays printed in Shakespeare's life, and that the temper and even the phrasing of the three pages in the two crucial points involved, the attitude to authority and the attitude to the crowd, agree with and render more intelligible passages in much later plays. In the Introduction it is shown that the most likely date at which the three pages were written is one which easily admits of their composition by Shakespeare for the company for

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## PREFACE

which he habitually wrote. All these contentions may be mistaken; but the Editor may at least claim for his contributors that they have earned a right to their opinions and that their conclusions cannot lightly be dismissed. While there has been some friendly interchange of criticism each contributor must be understood as taking responsibility only for his own paper.

Grateful acknowledgement is offered to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press for their kindness in allowing use to be made of the facsimiles of the six signatures in Sir E. Maunde Thompson's book on *Shakespeare's Handwriting* published by them in 1916.

A. W. POLLARD.

*June* 1923



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