

**THE NAME OF WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE: A STUDY
IN ORTHOGRAPHY**

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The name of William Shakespeare: a study in orthography by John Louis Haney

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE NAME OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A STUDY IN ORTHOGRAPHY

BY

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TO
MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE
PROFESSOR ERNEST LACY

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PREFACE

It is useless to dismiss the orthography of Shakespeare's name as a trivial matter. We may spell Lyly, Wycliffe and a half-score of other names as we please, but there will be no peace in literary realms so long as a single critic or scholar of repute persists in employing any variation in the name of our greatest poet. The general reader, unaware of the fact that Shakspeare and Shakespear still have their champions, may imagine that the controversy has narrowed down to a determination of the relative merits of Shakespeare and Shakspere. All four of these forms are still used, though the first two are obsolescent and there will be few to mourn their departure.

At this day it would be folly to consider the form Shakspere as a dangerous rival of the more popular Shakespeare. With all respect for the few scholars who still advocate its use as the poet's spelling of his own name, we can only repeat, probably for the one hundredth time, that there are more trustworthy guides at hand than the five

wretched scrawls which a reluctant world is constrained to accept as the autographs of its greatest poet. The champions of Shakespeare have repeatedly cited the precedents for that form; they have dwelt on the fact that none previous to 1780 and few since then have cast their decision for Shakspeare; they have emphasized the futility of seeking to change the authoritative spelling upon the meager evidence of five signatures which the Shakspeareites themselves admit they cannot read. Madden and Knight based their contention for Shakspeare mainly upon the Florio Montaigne autograph, which is now generally rejected as spurious; Dr. Furnivall feels certain of the spelling of only one of the five genuine signatures; yet scholars who usually submit matters in dispute to the closest scrutiny and severest tests accept the shorter spelling. It is significant that most of the men whose opinions are quoted in the following pages do not consider uniformity in spelling the poet's name as important.

This study, therefore, should not be regarded as a controversial document on the relative merits of the various spellings. The sentiment of the learned world is so overwhelmingly in favor of the accepted form that we may fairly consider the ques-

tion settled as far as the existing evidence admits of any satisfactory conclusion. The following pages seek simply to present in convenient form the principal facts that have been elicited concerning the origin and etymology of the name and the vicissitudes of its orthography at various periods of its history.

None will deny that it is far more important to study and to seek to appreciate the greatness of Shakespeare's literary utterance than to wrangle (though good-naturedly) over the e's and a's in his name. At the same time, it is widely held that the present lack of uniformity in that matter is discreditable to the English world of letters, and that any sincere effort to correct this condition cannot be wholly in vain.

I wish to acknowledge my obligations to the scholars and librarians who have replied to my request for information concerning their preferences in the orthography of the name. As their replies are incorporated in the text I trust it will not be necessary to enumerate their names here. The best Shakespeare-men, like Dr. Furness, Mr. Sidney Lee and Dr. W. J. Rolfe, were already on record in print and are cited at the proper places in the study. The present generation of Shakspeare-