



SHAKSPEARE.

ADMIT _____ a Subscriber,
to view the Shakspeare Papers, at
No. 8, *Norfolk Street, Strand.*

Day of _____ 1795.

Once again presented,
one hundred eighty-six years later,
in the gallery of the
Princeton University Library

Mondays through Saturdays

9 AM until 5 PM

Sundays

2 PM through 5 PM

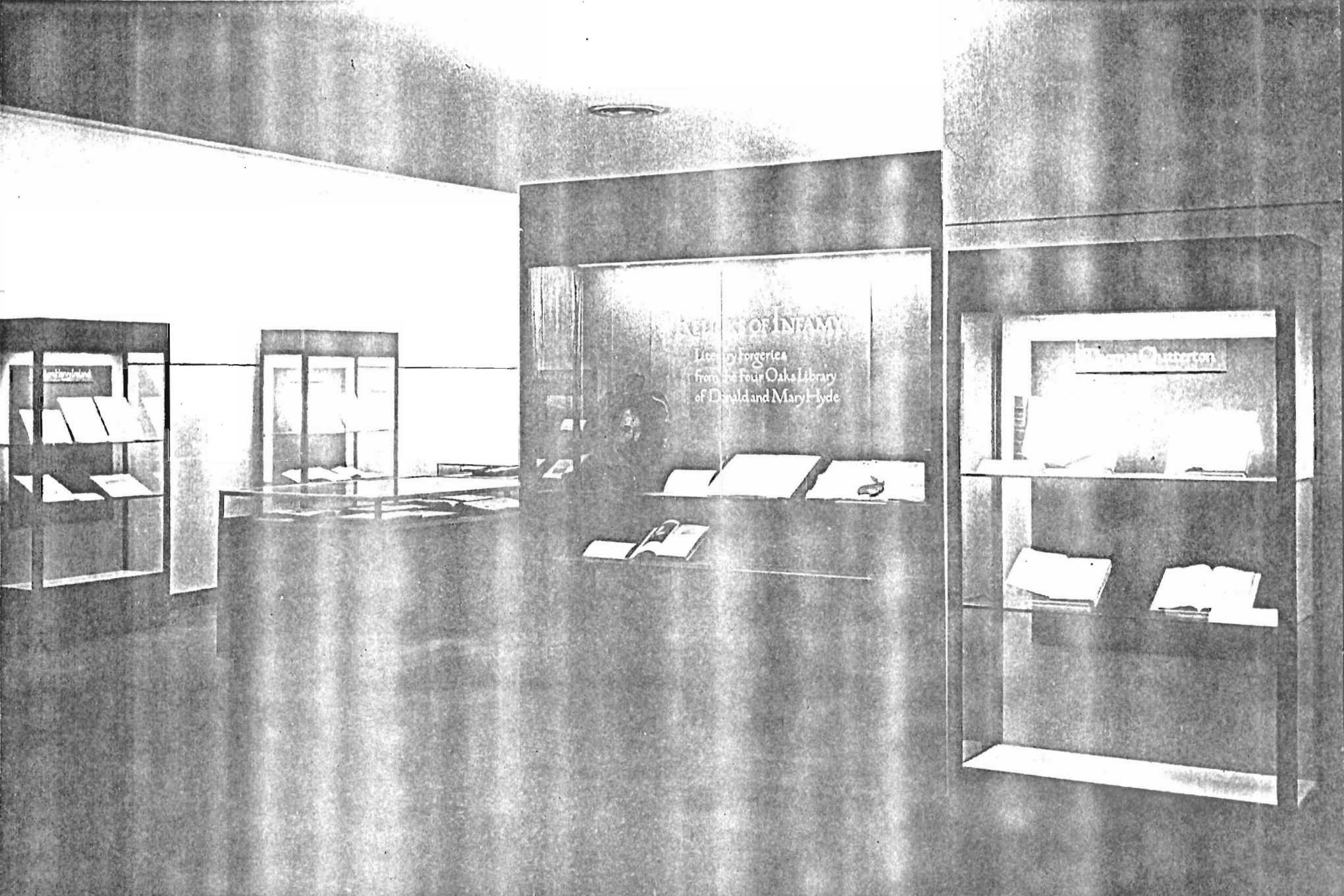
The original ticket admitting viewers to the
Shakespeare forgeries is in the album of
William Henry Ireland's confessions in the
Four Oaks Library

The Council of the Friends
of the
Princeton University Library
requests your presence
at the opening of
RELICKS OF INFAMY
Literary Forgeries from the
Four Oaks Library
of Donald and Mary Hyde

The Exhibition Gallery
The Princeton University Library
Friday evening
30 October 1981
Eight until eleven o'clock

The title page of "A Full and explanatory Account
of the Shaksperian Forgery by myself the Writer
William Henry Ireland"

From the Four Oaks Library
Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

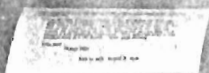
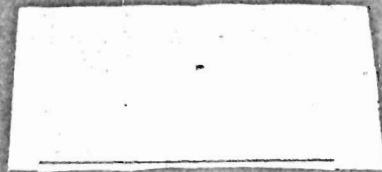


LETTERS OF HENRY
Letters Forgeries
from the Four Oaks Library
of Donald and Mary Hyde

Thomas Chasterton

RELICKS OF INFAMY

Literary Forgeries
from the Four Oaks Library
of Donald and Mary Hyde



No life portrait of Shakespeare has ever been found. The Martin Droeshout engraving on the title page of the 1623 folio was made seven years after Shakespeare's death.

The letter at right, written by Charles Lamb in 1822, says a visitor at dinner told him he "picked up, as I believe, an authentic portrait of Shakespeare. He paid a Broker about £40 English for it . . . It may be a forgery . . . I am confident no Painter either side the Channel could have painted anything like the face I saw."

This "bellows" portrait has a long "history". It is reputed to have been the property of Queen Elizabeth. It once did belong to Talma, Napoleon's favorite actor. It was sold and resold throughout the last 150 years, most recently in Glasgow and then in New York. The oil portrait is on an oval canvas fastened by tiny pegs to one of the sides of an ancient bellows. The painting itself is now thought to be a genuinely old portrait of an unidentified woman (whose hairline can be seen emerging from "Shakespeare's" forehead), bearded and transformed by an 18th century painter into the Elizabethan playwright.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

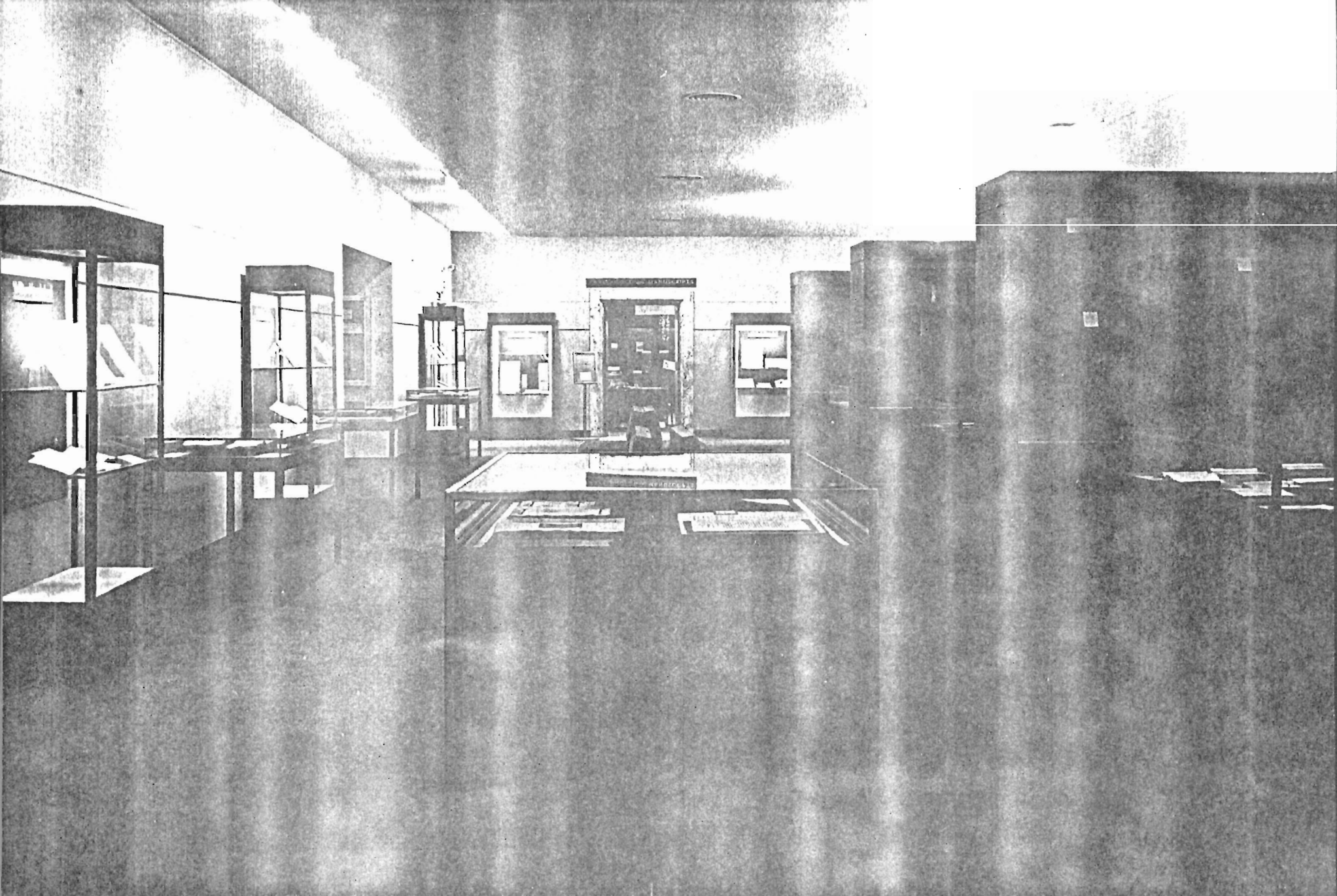
On the final leaf of this discussion of Shakespeare portraits is the following manuscript note:

"At the sale of Talma's effects it was stated that the "Bellows" Portrait was painted by a Flemish artist of the name of Porbus; that Talma had refused a thousand Napoleons for the portrait, and that on one occasion when he had been visited by Mr. Charles Lamb, the latter being shown the picture fell upon his knees and kissed it with idolatrous veneration. This dexterous forgery was knocked down at 3,100 francs - about £130 sterling.

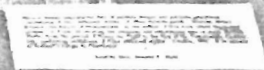
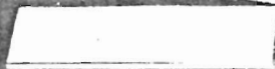
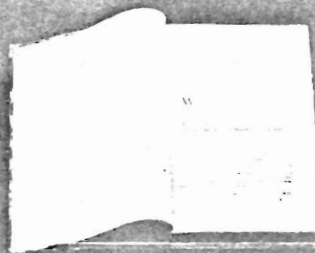
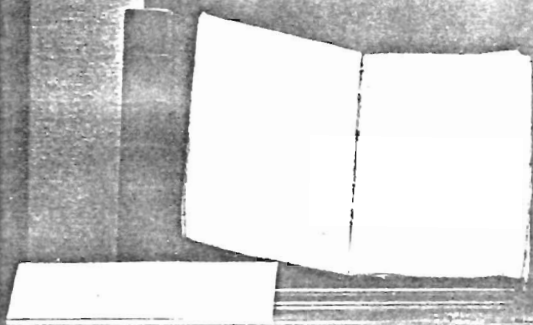
John Bull

16 Sept 1827"

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde



Thomas Chatterton



Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770) fabricated a body of work purporting to be that of a 15th century Bristol poet and monk, Thomas Rowley. One of these fabrications, "History of Painting in England," was sent to Horace Walpole, who was temporarily deceived. The fraud was exposed by T. Tyrwhitt in his Poems Supposed to have been written at Bristol by Thomas Rowley, 1777 and 1778. A single Rowley poem, published in Town and Country in 1769, was the only piece to appear in print in Chatterton's lifetime. In despair over his poverty, he poisoned himself with arsenic, and died 24 August 1770, at only 18 years of age. In 1803, his innate literary genius recognized, his collected works appeared and have been frequently reprinted.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

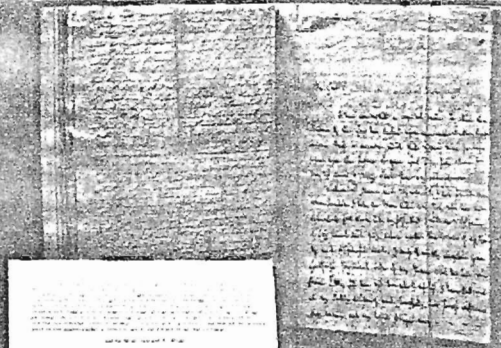
Here a forger laments the fate of another forger and publicly practices "imitations of [the] different styles" of other British poets. William Henry Ireland, the forger of Shakespeare, is the author of this book titled Neglected Genius. A Poem illustrating the untimely and unfortunate fate of many British Poets; from the period of Henry the Eighth to the Era of the Unfortunate Chatterton, containing imitations of their different styles, London, 1812. It is opened to Ireland's eulogy to Chatterton.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

Dr. Dodd



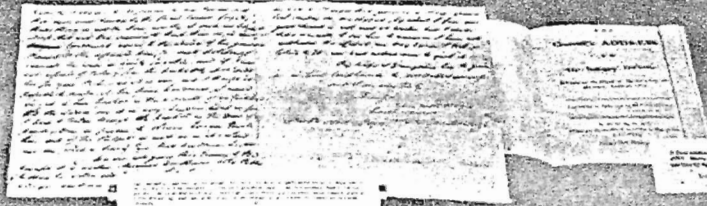
Portrait of Dr. Dodd, painted by [unclear] in [unclear]. The portrait shows Dr. Dodd seated and holding a child. The painting is a reproduction of the original, which is now in the collection of the [unclear].



Handwritten text, likely a letter or a manuscript, displayed side-by-side.



Open book or document with a circular seal on the left page and handwritten text on the right page.



Large, unfolded document with multiple columns of handwritten text.

Dr. William Dodd (1729-1777), rector of Hockcliffe and vicar of Chalgrove, and author of numerous literary works, forged a bond for £4,200, in the name of a former pupil, the fifth Lord Chesterfield, and was executed in spite of many petitions on his behalf by friends as distinguished as Dr. Johnson. It was these efforts by his fellow literati that gave Dr. Dodd's case a permanent place in the literary annals of the 18th century.

Here in Thomas Rowlandson's record of Dr. Dodd's execution, Lord Chesterfield watches the hanging from his coach.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

This collection of manuscripts, all concerning Dr. Dodd's celebrated forgery, contains ten manuscripts in Samuel Johnson's hand: Dodd's petition to the King, his petition to the Lord Chancellor, his Declaration left with the Ordinary of Newgate, a petition on his behalf from the City of London to the King, Observations for the Press, a petition to the Queen and four signed letters from Johnson concerning the case. Through the printer friend of both Dodd and Johnson the author of the dictionary worked diligently for Dodd's pardon, writing petitions in Dodd's and Dodd's wife's names to a host of distinguished officials from the King on-down. In all of this Johnson took care to conceal his own part in this effort, but the manuscript material shown here confirms his determined behind the scenes part in the unsuccessful scheme to save the forger from the gallows.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

The piety that convinced many of Dodd's friends is here fulsomely recorded on the flyleaf of a book he once owned: Christ the Sum and Substance of All the Holy Scriptures, London, 1732. Bound into this same book are four leaves of The Sayings of Old Mr. Dod. Fit to be treasured up in the Memory of every Christian.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

Dr. Dodd's esteem in the most elevated circles is indicated here in this letter from the English painter, Thomas Gainsborough. On November 2nd 1773 he wrote: "If grateful feelings could but make their appearance upon paper with a little Drawing instead of Writing, I should be more likely to express myself clearly . . ."

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

A first edition of Dodd's The Convict's Address,
1777. Much of the text is thought to have been
written by Samuel Johnson.

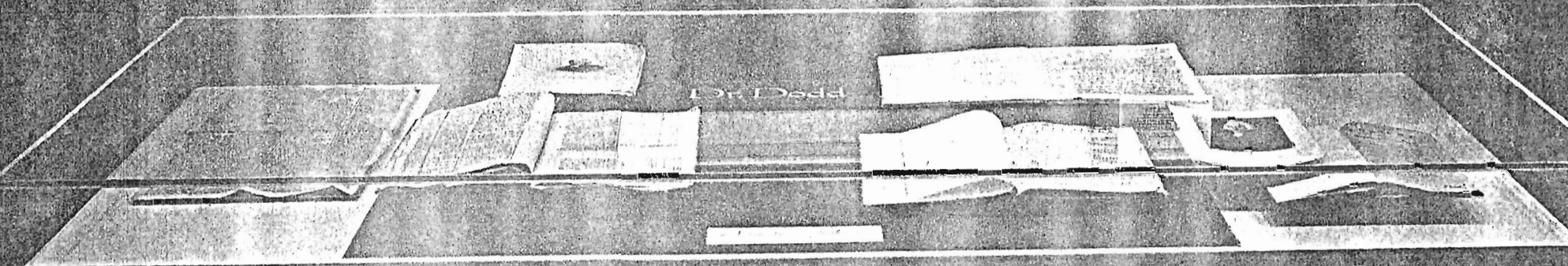
Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

The newspaper accounts (some of which were authored by Samuel Johnson), the proliferation of portraits, the publication of the court proceedings and detailed accounts of Dr. Dodd's execution, all document the unusual controversy his case engendered, and the distinguished cast it involved.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde



THE GREAT GAY
1911
THE GREAT GAY
1911
THE GREAT GAY
1911



FINGAL AND CONBANCARGLAS

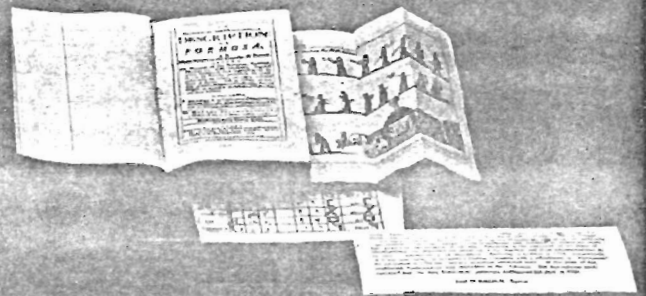
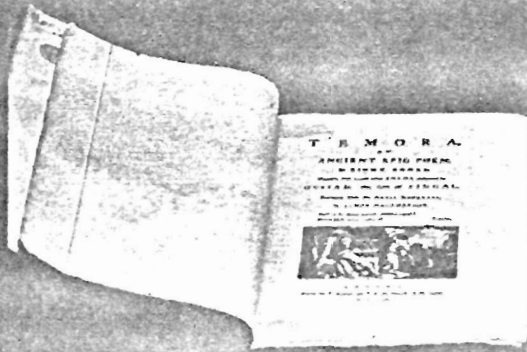
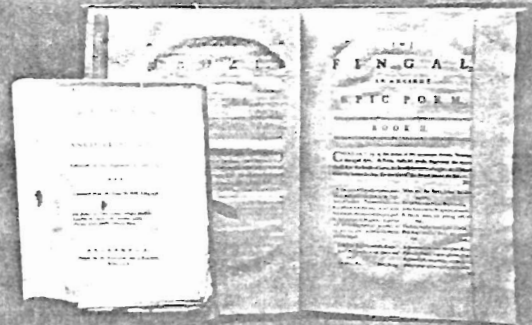
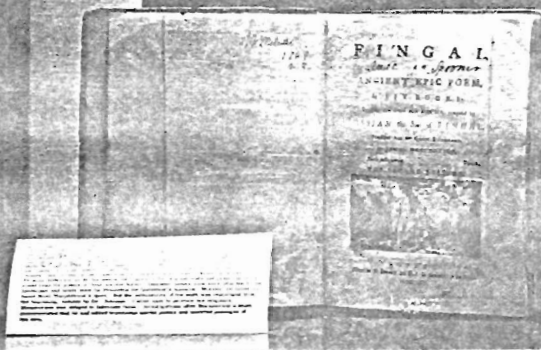
by

Richard Westall
(1765-1836)

A genuine watercolor, c. 1795-1805,
depicting a scene from James Macpherson's
Ossian poems, 18th-century forgeries
shown in the case at the right

Lent by Robert H. Taylor

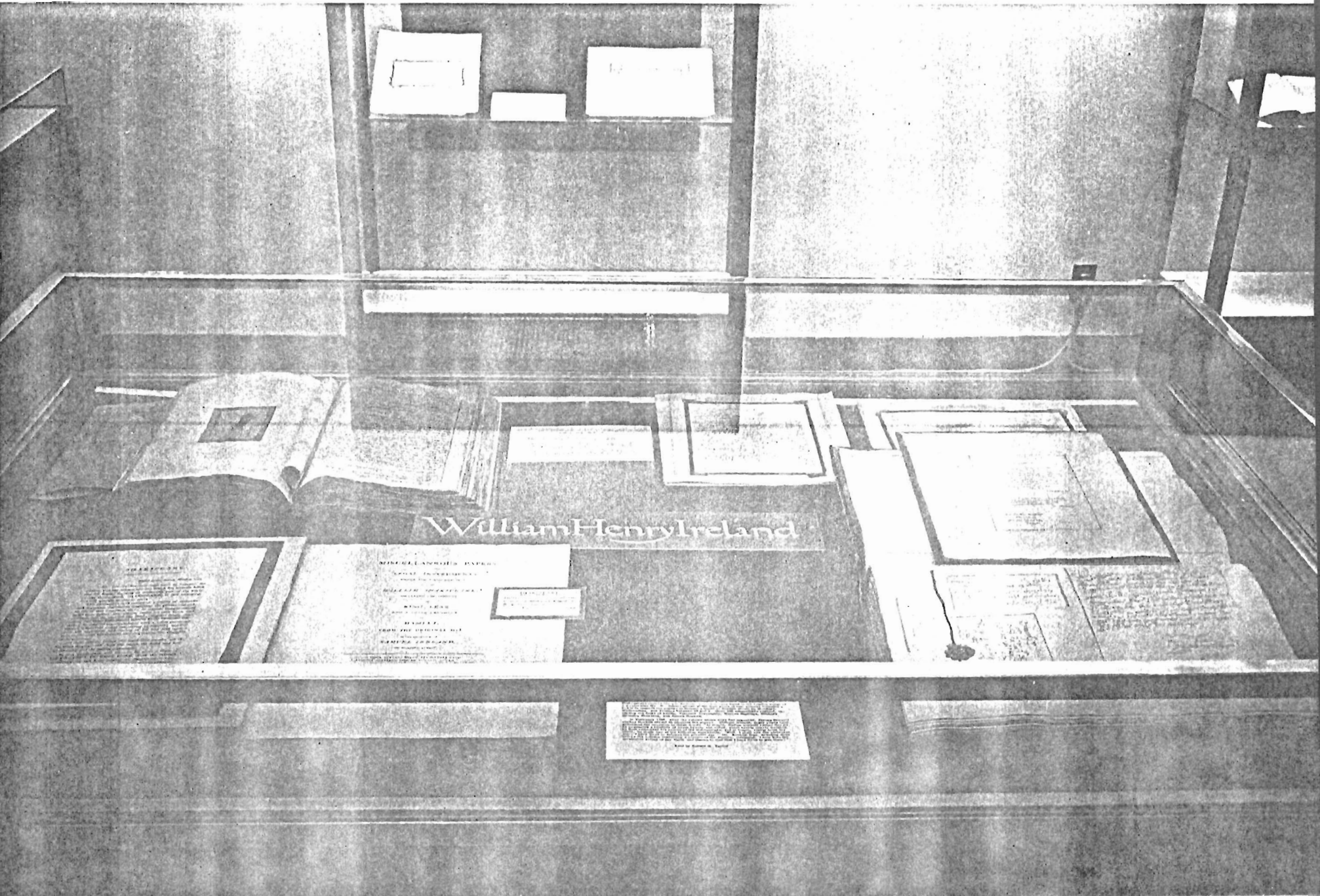
James Macpherson



James Macpherson (1736-1796), a poet of considerable ability, with some knowledge of Gaelic poetry popular in the district of his birth, published in 1760 Fragments of Ancient Poetry (the copy shown here is lent by Robert H. Taylor). Then, with the assistance of "several gentlemen in the Highlands" produced in 1762, Fingal, an ancient epic poem in six books (the copy shown here was once owned by Herman Melville) and in 1763, Temora, another epic. Both purported to be translations from the Gaelic of a poet called Ossian. The poetry was an instant sensation both in Europe (where even Goethe lavishly admired its romantic spirit) and in America (where Thomas Jefferson wrote the author for copies of the original texts and grammar so he could read the poems in their ancient form). Ossianic names soon were attached to the landscape and newly born (in Princeton the Governor's mansion "Morven" received its name from Macpherson's epic). But the authenticity of the work was challenged from the beginning, notably by Dr. Johnson. Called upon to produce his originals, Macpherson was obliged to fabricate them. Investigations after Macpherson's death demonstrated that he had edited traditional Gaelic poems and inserted passages of his own.

George Psalmanazar (1679?-1763) is the fabricated name for a literary impostor whose real name and origins have never been fixed with certainty. He is thought to have been a native of France. Renouncing his Dominican education, he suddenly represented himself as a pagan, lived primitively and invented an elaborate alphabet, grammar and religion of his own. Enlisting in the regiment of the Duke of Mecklenburg, he attracted the attention of its chaplain and soon persuaded him to become a confederate in his imposture. Arriving in London in 1703, purportedly of Formosan birth, he presented Bishop Compton with a catechism in "Formosan". He published in 1704 the literary invention exhibited here. At the peak of his reputation Psalmanazar was venerated by Dr. Johnson. But his esteem soon vanished and "the fake Formosan" publically renounced his past in 1728.

Lent by Robert H. Taylor



[Small document label]

[Small document label]

[Long horizontal label]

[Long horizontal label]

[Open book or document on the left side of the case]

[Stack of documents in the middle-left area]

[Small document label in the middle]

[Small document label in the middle-right area]

[Large document or book on the right side of the case]

William Henry Ireland

MIRAGE MANUSCRIPT PAPERS

THESE MANUSCRIPT PAPERS
WERE FOUND IN THE
MANSION OF SIR JOHN
CAMPDEN, BARONET, AT
MANSION HOUSE, LONDON,
IN THE YEAR 1768.
BY
WILLIAM HENRY IRELAND,
THE GREAT IMITATOR.

[Small label below the list]

[Document on the bottom left]

[Document on the bottom center]

[Document on the bottom right]

AT LEFT AND CENTER: Five love poems created by William Ireland under the pretense that they were written for enclosure in the letter shown next to it. But of course this letter, from William Shakespeare to Ann Hathaway, was also one of Ireland's forgeries.

AT RIGHT: A folio volume containing, in addition to many other "treasures," a transcription in Ireland's natural handwriting of the love letter Shakespeare was supposed to have sent to Ann Hathaway. Not content with forging the letter, he also includes "The Remaining part of the Lock of Hair." What happened to the original part he does not reveal.

Extruding from the folio volume is portion of a genuine 16th-century deed (sewn into this book) on which Ireland signed Shakespeare's name in one of the blank spaces. Matching the ink must have been one of his many problems as a forger.

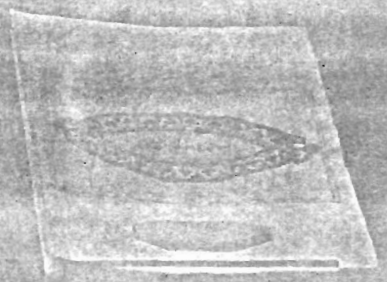
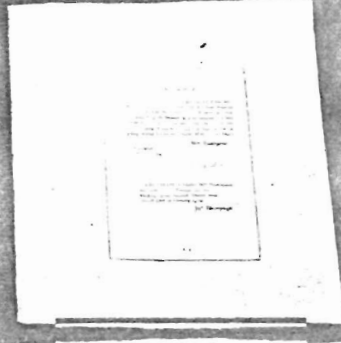
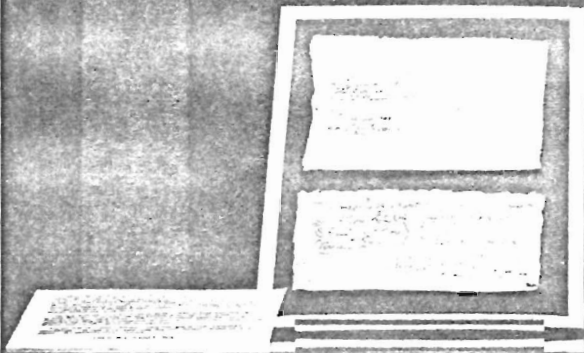
Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

In March 1795, Samuel Ireland announced a facsimile folio edition of the Shakespeare papers his son William claimed to have found in the London house of a mysterious Mr. H. Subscriptions at the high price of four guineas included a ticket to inspect the papers at Samuel's house in Norfolk Street on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 12 and 3. Over 120 subscribers replied, including the Duke of Leeds, Viscount Torrington, Warren Hastings, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and James Boswell.

In February 1796, after the volume shown here had appeared, James Boswell visited Norfolk Street to examine the papers. William Ireland, many years later, described the occasion in these words: "At length, finding himself rather thirsty, he requested a tumbler of warm brandy and water; which having nearly finished, he then redoubled his praise of the manuscripts; and at length, rising from his chair, he made use of the following expression: 'Well, I shall now die contented, since I have lived to witness the present day.' Mr. Boswell then, kneeling down before the volume containing a portion of the Papers, continued: 'I now kiss the invaluable relics of our Bard: and thanks to God that I have lived to see them!'"

Lent by Robert H. Taylor

William Henry Ireland

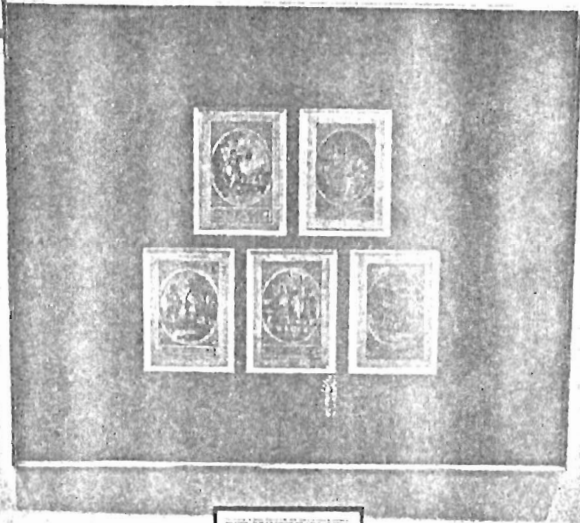


On December 16, 1794, at the age of 19, William Henry Ireland presented his father Samuel Ireland, the London artist, with the first of many Shakespearean forgeries. It was modestly conceived. The young man merely wished to please his father by "discovering," in the house of a "gentleman of fortune" living in London, a lease between William Shakespeare and Michael Fraser. The lease and its seal have not survived, but on the shelf below are two similar parchment documents flanked by Ireland's tracery of an authentic Shakespeare signature and the superscription of Michael Fraser's signature, executed with his left hand. Samuel Ireland was easily deceived.

On this shelf are more ambitious projects: a Note of Hand from Shakespeare to John Heminge, promising him five guineas at the end of the month, and Heminge's receipt dated October 1589. Samuel Ireland apparently was not disturbed that Shakespeare misspelled the name of his native town. Again, young William used his left hand for the Heminge forgery.

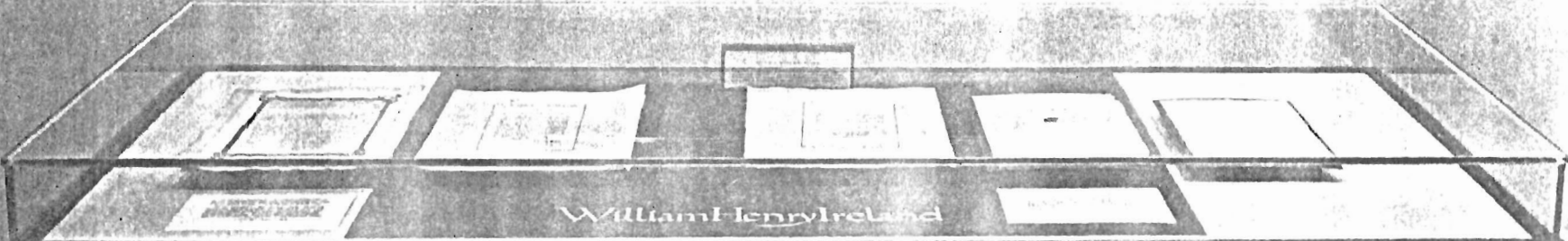
For the next 18 months, literary London was agog at these miraculous "discoveries." In eight more cases along this wall, Ireland's handiwork is on display. His ambitions knew no bounds.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde



Small rectangular label with illegible text, positioned below the wall-mounted panel.

Small rectangular label with illegible text, positioned above the glass display case.



William Henry Ireland

The Earl of Southampton was reputedly Shakespeare's patron. Samuel Ireland wondered if his son's "mysterious gentleman" did not have a document that would supply the crucial evidence. Young William, always obliging, spent an afternoon writing the poet's letter of appreciation to his patron, and Southampton's friendly reply.

ABOVE: Shakespeare's letter was easy to forge. But just before he gave it to his father, Ireland realized his serious mistake: how could a letter sent by Shakespeare have remained in his own correspondence? Ireland solved the problem by adding at the top of the page he had just forged: "Coye of mye Letter toe hys grace offe Southampton Mye Lorde." No one in London, least of all Samuel Ireland, worried about the sentimental 18th-century tone of Shakespeare's formal valedictory, supposedly written in the 16th century.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

Southampton's reply should have exposed William Ireland immediately. Unaware that specimens of his lordship's handwriting existed in his own city of London, young William wrote the brief response with his left hand, carefully omitting any reference to the precise amount of Southampton's "bounty" in case there were records in Stratford or London of what this sum had been. Samuel Ireland and his friends were astonished at the illiteracy of Southampton's scrawl, but they wanted to believe. It was over a year later that a critic, for the first time, took the trouble to make a comparison of the genuine with the forged.

ABOVE CENTER: The Ireland forgery.

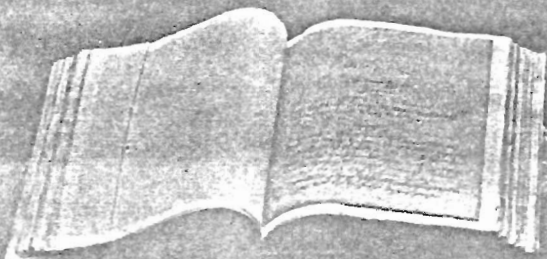
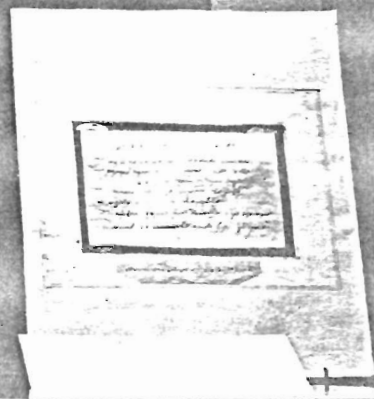
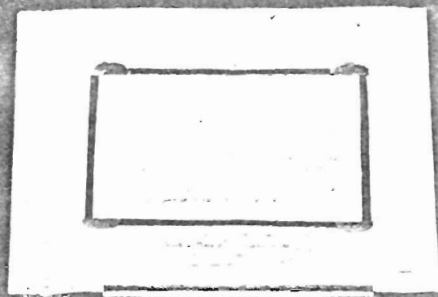
ABOVE RIGHT: A genuine Southampton document, now in the Four Oaks Library.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

Five drawings by Thomas Stothard (1755-1834) illustrating James Macpherson's tales of Ossian. The text of the illustrations mentions Morven -- Macpherson's fictitious locale whose name was attached by the Stockton family to their Princeton house -- now the New Jersey's Governor's mansion -- during the height of the fashion of Ossian.

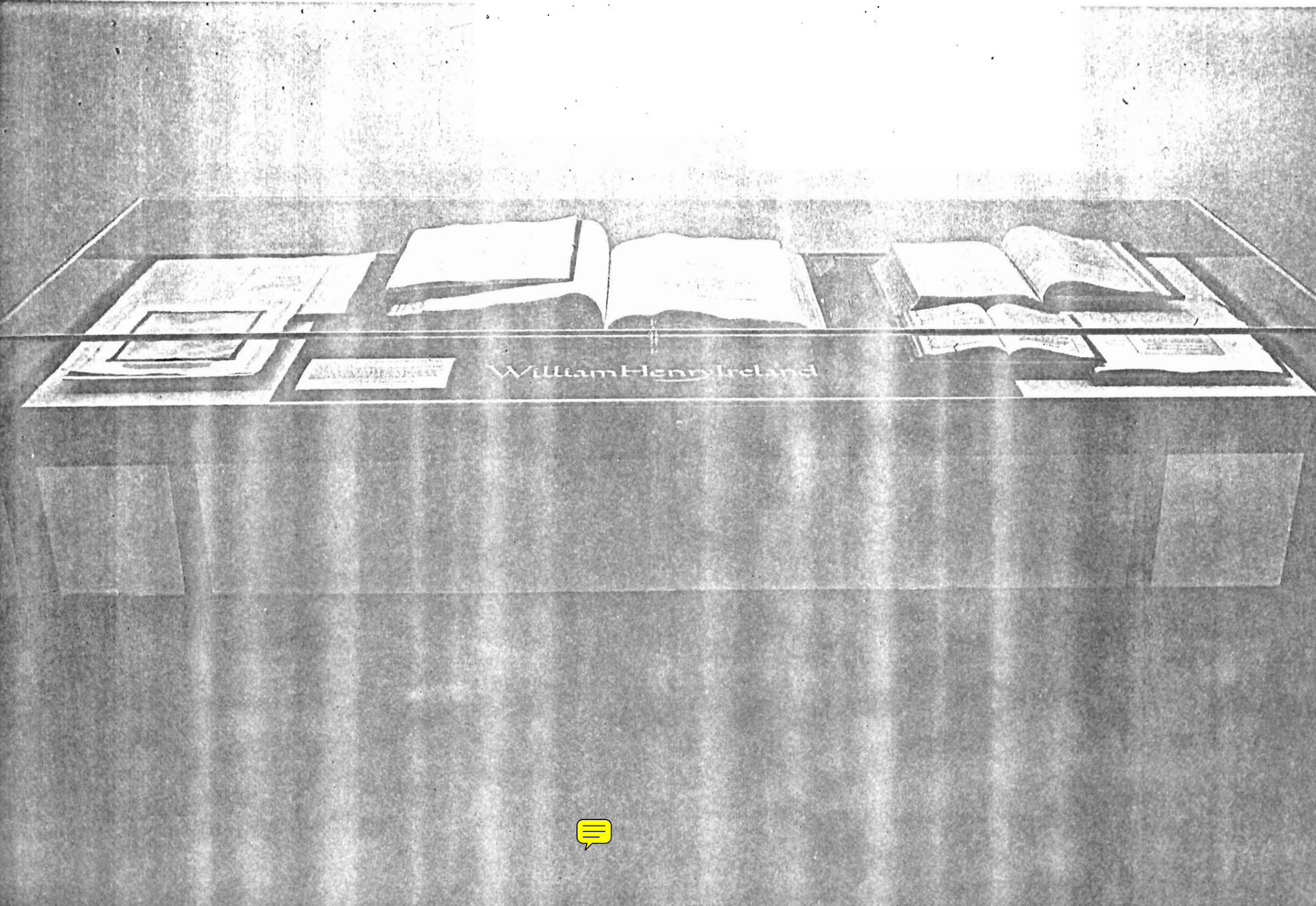
Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University

William Henry Ireland



William Ireland wished to clear Shakespeare's name of the "slander of being a Roman Catholic" and prove beyond a doubt that he was "a sincere votary of the Protestant religion." In one afternoon he found 16th-century paper without water-marks, composed this Profession of Faith, and transcribed it in Shakespeare's hand. Neither the pietism of the composition nor the sentimentality of referring to God as "the sweete Chickenne" deterred Samuel Ireland from calling in the eminent Doctors Joseph Wharton and Samuel Parr to hear the Profession. Young William held his breath while they debated its authenticity. Then Dr. Wharton said solemnly: "Sir, we have many beautiful passages in our Litany, and in many parts of the New Testament, but this great man [Shakespeare] has distanced them all." Young William had triumphed once again.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde



William Henry Ireland



When Ireland discovered the rare 1608 quarto of King Lear in his father's library, he transcribed the whole play "in the old hand" and interpolated new lines wherever he wished. It was one of his most outrageous creations. He was literally trying to improve on Shakespeare.

AT LEFT: The title page, as Ireland wrote it, acknowledging Shakespeare's debt to Holinshed's chronicles.

ABOVE RIGHT: The famous mad scene on the heath. Fortunately Ireland did not alter Lear's great tirade beginning "Blow winds and crack your cheeks," but he did alter Kent's lines just preceding, as can be seen in the transcription.

FAR RIGHT: The [1608?] quarto and the 1623 folio are opened to the final lines of the play. Next to it is Ireland's most egregious rewriting. In the quarto and folio, Kent departs with two simple lines, befitting his character: "I have a journey, sir, shortly to go, / My master calls, and I must not say no." Ireland felt that "such a jingling and unmeaning couplet [was not] very appropriate to the occasion, " so he wrote seven new lines for Kent which he thought "would not injure the reputation of Shakespeare." They can be seen on the transcription at the far right.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

The 1623 Folio: Gift of the Family of William Augustus White

The Princeton University Library

After producing a complete and emended manuscript of King Lear, Ireland began a "copy in the old hand" of Hamlet. "As I soon became weary of this plodding business," he wrote some months later, "I only produced a few leaves of this second drama."

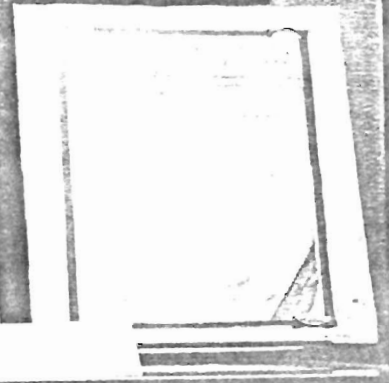
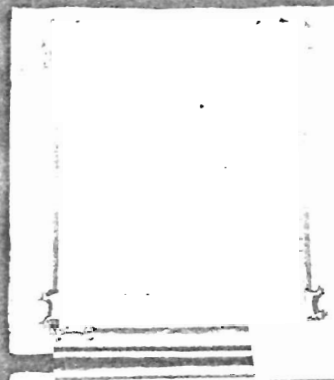
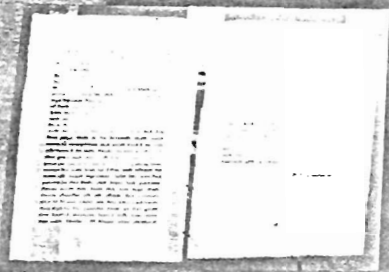
Shown here at right is one of the seven leaves, the lines immediately following the play within a play, the mousetrap scene, in which Claudius, Gertrude, and Polonius (shouting "Lights, lights, lights") flee the stage and Hamlet is left talking to Horatio.

The transcription above reproduces Ireland's "manuscript." To the left is the same scene in a genuine 1611 quarto in which Hamlet's lines are slightly different from Ireland's fabricated version:

Why let the stroken deere goe weepe,
The Hart ungauled play,
For some must watch whilst some must sleepe,
Thus runnes the world away.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

William Henry Ireland



These two memoranda for playing before Lord Leicester were supposedly kept by Shakespeare as receipts. The one at left reads:

In the Yeare o Chryste
Forre oure Trouble inne goynge toe playe before
the Lorde Leycesterre ats house ande oure greate
expenneces thereuponne 19 Poundes
Receyvedde ofs Grace the Summe o 50 Poundes

W^m Shakspeare

Just before he handed over this memorandum to his father, Ireland realized that he had dated it "two years subsequent to the demise of that nobleman." Rather than destroy his hard work, he simply tore off the erroneous numerals and called it "a torn document." Samuel Ireland was happy to have "even a scrap of the Bard's notes."

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

As early as January 1796, William Ireland knew that his "world of fabrication" was collapsing. He asked his friend Albany Wallis to draw up an affidavit (see far left) which he would sign and present to his father. Samuel Ireland refused to accept it.

In desperation, after the failure of Vortigern, young William published an advertisement in the London papers of May 24, publicly exonerating his father. On June 7, he fled his father's house. In December, he published 500 copies of a pamphlet (see near left) totally admitting his guilt, followed by a letter of apology to his father, part of which appears at far left.

Samuel Ireland died in July 1800, declaring almost on his death-bed that he was "ignorant of the deceipt and equally a believer in the authenticity of the manuscripts." What he truly doubted, and never admitted to himself, was his son's ability to write the plays and to fabricate the documents.

In 1805, William Ireland rewrote his pamphlet into a 300-page volume of Confessions. The last chapter contains a pathetic "General Apology" (see below). For the next 30 years, Ireland traded on his notoriety. As one scholar wrote, "he had ridiculed the criticism of his age by exploiting its deeper sensibilities, and the literary world could never really forgive him."

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

Having fabricated the manuscript of King Lear and created an "undiscovered" Shakespearean play called Vortigern, Ireland next turned to the histories and "found" still another manuscript, Henry the Second. "The plan of the play I formed from a thin folio containing the life and reign of that monarch: and I was about two weeks occupied in its composition." Contemporary opinion held it a better play than Vortigern both technically and poetically, but it was never produced and did not appear in print until 1799.

AT LEFT AND CENTER: Twelve lines in holograph manuscript and the transcription, beginning "Henry. Yes, sweet love! but Venus too was busy. . . ."

AT RIGHT: An Ireland acrostic on Richard the Second, aping the popular Elizabethan mode:

Ring a peal, whose doleful knell,
Injur'd prince, thy woes shall tell!
Come clear gem from Pity's eye:
Human feeling vents the sigh;
Angels, weep for charity.
Rueful chance that Death's dire frown
Doom'd the monarch and his crown!

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

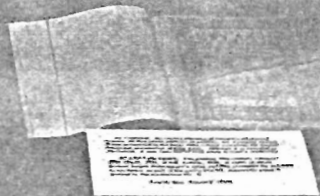
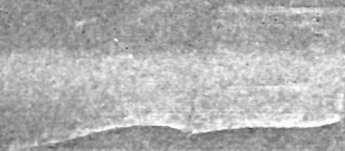
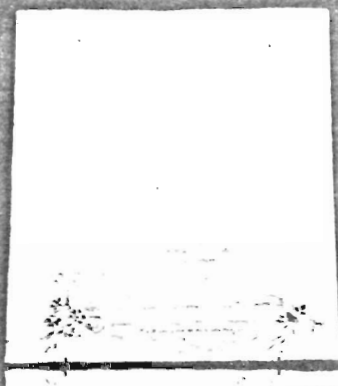
In the spring of 1795, William Ireland delivered to his father "a complete and hitherto unknown [Shakespearean] tragedy that surpassed all those that preceded it." He came to regret those words. Nevertheless, he had borrowed his father's copy of Holinshed's Chronicles, chose the story of Vortigern and Rowena, and in less than two months produced a play of 2800 lines. His father withheld it for many months, but never doubted its authenticity.

By September, Richard Brinsley Sheridan had contracted to produce the play at the Drury Lane Theatre before the end of the year. Delays ensued, and they were fatal. A single performance took place on April 2, 1796, with John Philip Kemble in the leading role, but by then Edmund Malone had published his violent attack on all of the purported Shakespeare papers. To counteract the rising storm, Samuel Ireland had to publish the handbill, shown at right, on the day of the opening, but to little avail. The performance was a debacle.

The holograph page begins with Vortigern's line "Shew them to our presence." Unfortunately there were further revisions of the text before it appeared in the edition shown at left, consequently collation is difficult.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

William Henry Ireland



Aware that his father was eager to "find" a portrait of Shakespeare, William made this drawing, to the best of his ability, modeled on the portrait in the Folios. To his dismay, his father ridiculed it as "an inexplicable paper and of no consequence." A few days later, William visited the "mysterious gentleman," by now called Mr. H., and returned home with this letter by Shakespeare to Richard Cowley, the actor, with which the drawing had supposedly been enclosed. It reads:

WORTHYE FREYNDE

Havyng always accountedde thee a Pleasaynte ande wittye
Personne ande oune whose Companye I doe much esteeme I have
sente inclosedde a whymsycalle conceyte whiche I doe suppose thou
wilt easylie discoverre butte shouldst thou notte whye thenne I shalle
sette thee onne mye table offe loggerre heades.

Youre trewe Freynde

W^m Shakspeare

Samuel Ireland and the Believers never did understand the "whimsical conceit," but they no longer doubted, so they said, the authenticity of the drawing.

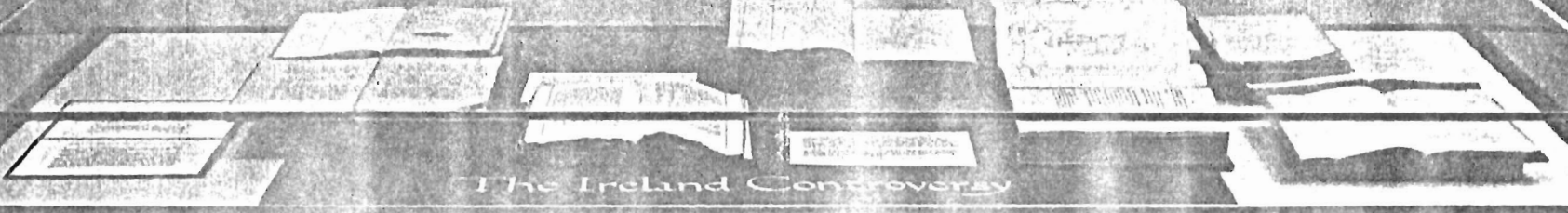
Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

AT CENTER: No record remains of Ireland's attempting to palm off this crude portrait as genuine, but strangely enough it was preserved in the large folio volume containing the forged holograph manuscript of King Lear. Although it is executed in parchment, it may have tested even young Ireland's credibility.

AT LEFT and RIGHT: Two genuine 16th-century volumes (The Hague, 1533, at left; London, 1595, at right) on which Ireland forged Shakespeare's name and then presented the volumes to his father as part of the poet's library, supposedly given to Ireland by the mysterious Mr. H.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

The Ireland Controversy



The severest critic among the many who attacked the Irelands was the noted Shakespearean scholar Edmund Malone, friend of Johnson and Boswell and enemy of sham and pretense. Immediately after Samuel Ireland published his Miscellaneous Papers with facsimiles of the purported manuscripts, Malone began gathering his evidence to prove all of them forgeries. The attack gathered so much of Malone's enthusiasm that the intended pamphlet turned into 400 vituperative pages. The book (see above) appeared on March 31, just two days before the opening of Vortigern at the Drury Lane Theatre. Every conceivable textual, historical, orthographic, and lexicographic error was brilliantly analyzed. The copy at right is opened to Malone's table comparing two authentic signatures of Queen Elizabeth with William Ireland's fabrication.

Six months later, Samuel Ireland replied with his Vindication of His Conduct (far right). It is a pathetic document, and both the Irelands knew it. Arguments ad hominem would not change public opinion. What no one could predict, in this public controversy, was the bitterness of the Believers vs. the Non-Believers, or the vacillations of critics like James Boaden (shown above right) who moved from one camp to the other within a few months.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde and Robert H. Taylor

AFFIDAVIT DRAWN OUT BY A. WALLIS ESQ.

In justice to my father, and to remove the odium under which he labours respecting the paper published by him as the manuscripts of Shakspeare. I do hereby solemnly declare, that they were given to him by me as the manuscripts of Shakspeare, and that he was totally ignorant and unacquainted with the source from whence they came, or with any matter relating to the same, or to any thing save what was told him by myself; and that he published them without any knowledge, or even the smallest intention of fraud or imposition, but under a firm belief and persuasion of their authenticity, as I had given him to understand they were so.

17th January, 1796

W. H. IRELAND

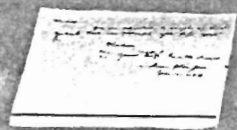
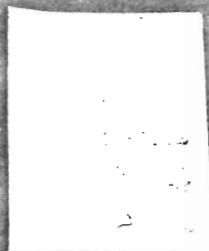
QUOTATION FROM MY SECOND LETTER TO MR. IRELAND

. . . That I have been guilty of a fault in giving you the manuscripts, I confess, and am sorry for it: but must at the same time assure you, that it was done without a bad intention, or even a thought of what would ensue.

As you have repeatedly stated that "truth will find its basis," even so will your character, notwithstanding every malignant aspersion, soon appear unblemished in the eyes of the world.

I must also appeal to the above expression: and although the style of my pamphlet may, when compared with my Vortigern, Henry the Second, etc. appear to be the production of a different person, and for the present confirm the public in the opinion that I am not the author of the papers; yet, sir, I do most solemnly appeal to my God that a day must come when the contents of my pamphlet will be allowed; and thereby never-erring "truth will find its basis. . . ."

Precursors



One of the many treasures of the Four Oaks Library is an extra-illustrated edition of Johnson's works, in which every conceivable illustration and manuscript was added to embellish the text on the slightest mention of a name, even as an allusion. Two of the manuscript items collected to embellish these many volumes proved, on later scrutiny, to not be holographs: lines originally thought to be in Michelangelo's hand and a Thomas Hobbes manuscript dedication. Both appear now to be contemporary transcriptions, rather than original manuscripts; perhaps, but not necessarily intentional forgeries.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

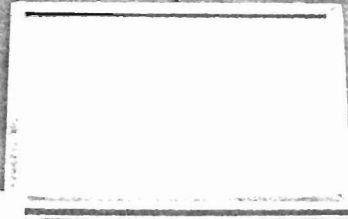
Forgery hasn't always been the result of scholarship, however vague. It can be based also on the knowledge that something that looks like something of value can also be of value. Here a meaningless scribble on a piece of papyri is meant to pass for a Greek text for some unwary collector of mementos of travel and antiquity.

The Manuscript Division
The Princeton University Library

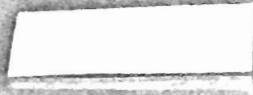
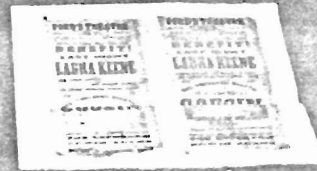
A "Sumerian" cylinder seal with a text incised by someone with no knowledge of the language indicates its modern manufacture rather than a genuine 3rd millennium B. C. date.

The Manuscript Division
The Princeton University Library

The 19th Century



A large, vertically oriented newspaper clipping or document with dense, illegible text, mounted on the display board.



A forged Lincoln letter is here framed next to
a genuine letter of Mrs. Lincoln.

Lent by the Scheide Library

Like several other Southern newspapers of the Civil War period, the stock of newsprint of The Daily Citizen of Vicksburg, Mississippi, was difficult to replenish, so the publisher resorted to the use of wall paper. On July 4 Vicksburg surrendered, the publisher fled, and the Union forces found the type of the Citizen still standing. They replaced two-thirds of the last column with matter already in type, added the following note and printed a new edition:

"Two days bring about great changes. The banner of the Union floats over Vicksburg. Gen Grant has 'caught the rabbit...' For the last time it appears on Wall paper. . . It will be valuable hereafter as a curiosity." The prophecy was fulfilled. Over thirty reprints of this issue were published -- and are still frequently confused with the genuine original. This is one of the reprints.

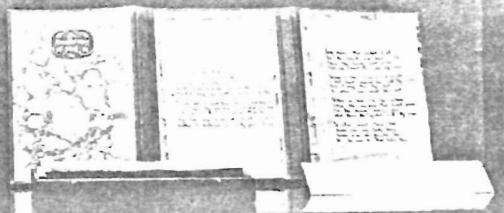
Lent by the Scheide Library

On the morning of April 14, 1865, Ford's Theatre received word that President and Mrs. Lincoln would attend that evening's performance, with General and Mrs. U. S. Grant as their guests. The first issue of the playbill had been run off by H. Polkinhorn & Son, Printers, and the same firm was directed to print a second issue containing the lyrics to a special song for General Grant, Honor to Our Soldiers, to be sung by the entire cast at the close of the play. Both playbills were distributed to members of the audience; neither mentioned Lincoln's presence at the theatre.

After the assassination another Washington printer, L. Brown, printed at least three variant issues of "programmes" for that performance of Our American Cousin. One of these "souvenir" playbills is shown here.

The Theatre Collection
The Princeton University Library

The 20th Century



In this genuine Max Beerbohm caricature titled "William Shakespeare, his method of work," the "fake" author is furtively handed the manuscript of Hamlet by Francis Bacon.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

The 18 manuscript poems shown here were sold at auction in London in 1958 as the unpublished love poems of George Bernard Shaw to Ellen Terry in which Shaw "attempted to disguise his normal writing, employing . . . a number of unnatural loops and flourishes, but the basic affinity with his natural hand shows through on every page." Later handwriting analysis has not supported the auctioneers' opinion. These manuscripts show none of the assurance of letter structure, the unflagging vitality and the characteristic proportions -- all elements one cannot disguise of Shaws hand.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

This forgery of an Oscar Wilde letter bears an annotation to that effect by A. Edward Newton, the distinguished collector and author of books on collecting. The gift of A. Edward Newton.

The Manuscript Division
The Princeton University Library

The most persistent and successful forger of American historical manuscripts was Joseph Cosey, the alias for Martin Coneely. When an autograph dealer refused to buy a genuine Franklin document from him in 1929, he was so angry at the affront that he retaliated by faking a Lincoln signature so well that the same dealer purchased it. He was thus launched on a career of forgery that lasted through 1947. Hundreds of his works, under names from Lincoln to the Earl of Essex lie in public repositories and private collections, many of them identified correctly as Cosey's work, but many more still under their misrepresentation. The Cosey "Washington note" shown here lies in front of the final page of a genuine Washington letter, showing that Cosey's assurance is not as convincing in the presence of the genuine hand.

The Manuscript Division
The Princeton University Library

This forgery of a letter to Thomas Jefferson from John Paul Jones is immediately suspicious by the lack of a docketing by its recipient, who religiously noted on the face of all letters the date he had received them.

The Manuscript Division
The Princeton University Library

The scholar with the essential knowledge for literary forgery, is also most keenly aware of the probability of exposure by colleagues. Despite this deterrant, this 1950 "scholarly edition" of Smollett's letters includes 4 fabrications. Despite the fact that Cordasco was careful to even manufacture provenances for his inventions, he was quickly exposed, in the July 1951 Philological Quarterly, by Lillian de la Torre and Louis M. Knapp.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde



Thomas J. Wise

(Handwritten note)
Dear Mother
I will give
you a new dress
the next time I see you
I hope you
will like it

GEORGE W. WISE

(Open notebook)

(Large document)
THOMAS WISE
1850

(Open notebook)

(Handwritten note)
Dear Mother
I will give
you a new dress
the next time I see you
I hope you
will like it

(Small document)

(Small document)

For all the ingenuity on the part of the literary forger and the will-to-believe on the part of his audience, the manufacture of fraudulent manuscripts has always been a more common activity than the forging of printed works. One can invent a manuscript in one's study with a little knowledge, a deft hand, a scrap of old paper and the appropriately color ink; but to invent a book, sophisticated machinery, and thus the operators of it, must be involved.

The title of the greatest forger of printed books belongs to Thomas Wise (1859-1937), collector, bibliographer and editor, who received during his lifetime practically every honor the world of books could bestow. It was, in fact, this pinnacle of esteem, which enabled him to carry out his extensive forgeries without suspicion.

1885 is now thought to be the earliest date of these productions. Here two Matthew Arnold works, Saint Brandan and Geist's Grave, dated "1867" and "1881" are now known to have been printed at Wise's direction in the 1890's.

The Browning items include the infamous Reading Sonnets, the forgery which implicated Buxton Forman as well as Wise. Robert Browning's Cleon of "1855" was most likely printed in 1890 at Wise's behest, as was the "1884" Gold Hair. Wise's position in the Bibliographical Society of London made it possible to direct printers in the production of legitimate facsimile reprints. It was an easy step to order the same printer to produce "facsimiles" that Wise had every intention of surreptitiously marketing as rare first printings of important pieces of English literature.

Ironically, the forgeries are themselves now eagerly sought after by collectors and in most instances are more valuable today as forgeries than they would be if they were genuine.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde

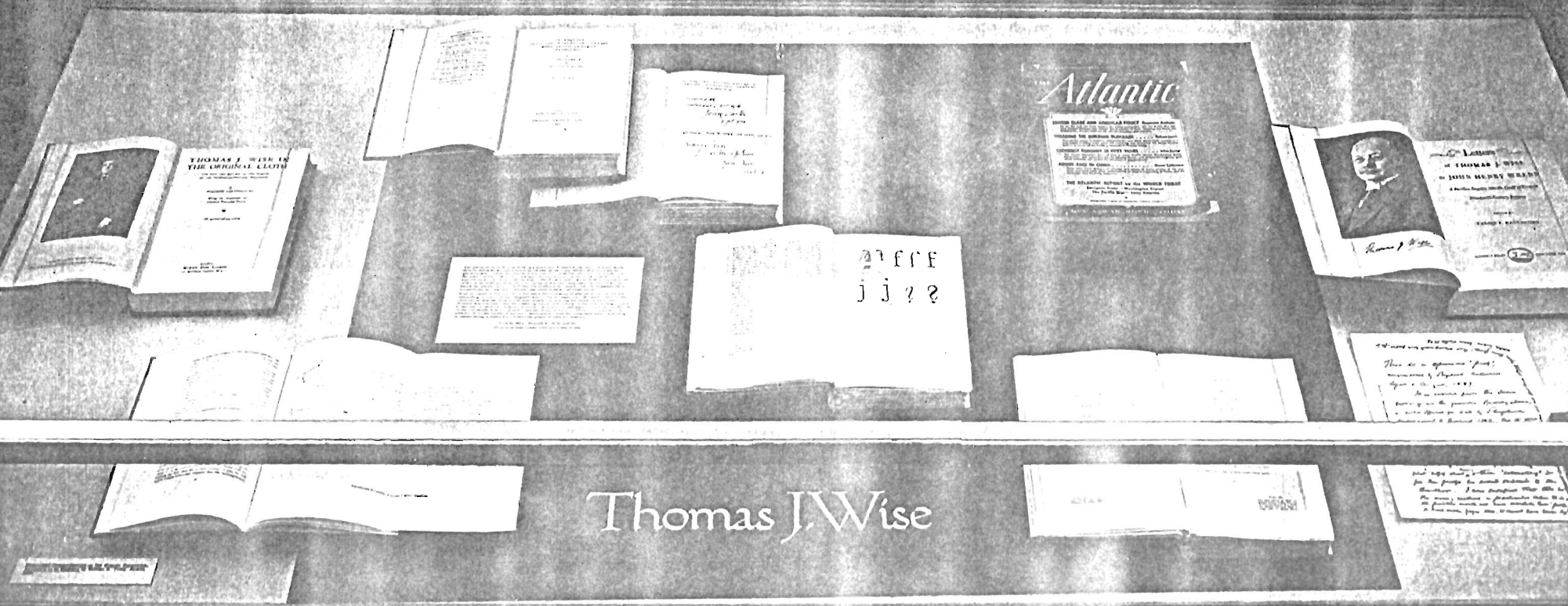
Thomas J. Wise



"The whole thing proves once more that, easy as it appears to be to fabricate reprints of rare books, it is in actual practice absolutely impossible to do so in such a manner that detection cannot follow the result." So wrote Thomas Wise himself in his Bibliography of Swinburne. Whether the statement was motivated by a fatalistic recognition that he would at some point be found out as the forger of 50 or 60 bogus imprints; or as an attempt to cover his own tracks, is impossible to determine.

Here "first printings" of William Morris, George Eliot and Swinburne are all productions which Wise had fabricated long before this statement and whose paper, type and provenance all waited to condemn him. The Tennyson In Memoriam was a fabrication of a different sort for Wise -- an invented title page was affixed to another edition, making the whole state of the book appear to be earlier than it really is.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde



THOMAS J. WISE IN THE ORIGINAL CLOTH

The Atlantic

Lectures on the History of the United States

by JOHN MURRAY WHITE

Thomas J. Wise

The publication in July of 1934 of Carter and Pollard's exposure of some thirty falsely dated books and a scrutiny of almost as many others that were highly questionable, initiated a spirited discussion in both the literary community and the public press. Wise was not specifically accused in the book, but the evidence was allowed to point directly to him. The book world, of which Wise was still one of the most distinguished citizens, proposed every imaginable argument for not following where Carter and Pollard's evidence so clearly led. In hindsight their accusations are not only correct, but even modest and restrained.

Wise insisted on his innocence but used deteriorating health as an excuse for not attempting to reply in any adequate way to the accusations. He died in 1937 in the realization that the book world was slowly recognizing the truth of the Carter-Pollard disclosures. But the enduring value of this book is the solid footing it gave to the use of physical evidence--scrutiny of typefaces and papers - and the careful use of the verifiable history of each imprint (none of them could be traced back to the authors or to the hands of anyone contemporary with the supposed dates of printing), in establishing a publication's precise place in literary history.

Lent by Mrs. Donald F. Hyde and the
Princeton University Library Collections

Suppressed Commentaries on The Wiseian Forgeries,
Addendum to an Enquiry by William B. Todd, Austin,
1969.