Davies 1783 Thomas Davies, Dramatic miscellanies: consisting of critical observations on several plays of Shakspeare, vol. 2 (London, 1783).

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DRAMATIC MICELLANIES:
CONSISTING OF
CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS
ON SEVERAL
PLAYS OF SHAKSPEARE:
WITH
A REVIEW OF HIS PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS, AND
THOSE OF VARIOUS EMINENT WRITERS,
AS REPRESENTED
By MR. GARRICK, AND
OTHER CELEBRATED COMEDIANS.
WITH ANECDOTES OF DRAMATIC POETS, ACTORS, &c.

By THOMAS DAVIES,
Author of MEMOIRS of the LIFE of
DAVID GARRICK, Esq.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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Macbeth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Conjectures on the author's design in writing the tragedy of Macbeth. -- Dr. Johnson's observations on witchcraft. -- Shakspeare's use of vulgar errors. -- Davenant's alteration of Macbeth. -- Taste for rhyming plays in the reign of Charles II. -- Betterton obliged to

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pared to a sponge. -- Burbage. -- Betterton. -- Mills unequal to Macbeth. -- Anecdote of a country gentleman. -- Quin. -- Mossop. -- Garrick. -- Cashel. -- Anecdote of him and an insidious rival. -- Both died about the same time.

The author had more than one thing in view when he wrote the tragedy of Macbeth. James I. loved the muses, and, to his own and the poet's honour, distinguished our Shakspeare by particular marks of favour. His plays, we have the authority of Ben Jonson to aver, gave the king great delight; and our best editors speak of a letter which James wrote to him in his own hand: a very singular mark of royal favour, and an evident proof of the king's good taste, humanity, and condescension.

To compliment his royal master as the descendant of Banquo, and the first of our monarchs,

'That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry'd,'

was one main motive to the choice of the subject. James's belief of witchcraft, and his pretended knowledge of dæmonology, on which subject he published a volume, was, I believe, another inducement in order to gain his prince's favour. In an account Sir James Harrington has given of a long conference he had with James, he

informs us that a considerable part of the king's discourse turned upon witchcraft. I farther believe that there was another, and a political, reason which prevailed upon Shakspeare to make a part of the Scottish history the subject of the play. The English and Scotch, united under one king, was a splendid novelty, as well as a matter of great consequence to both. The perpetual wars, which had been carried on with great animosity, for above five or six hundred years, between the inhabitants of the northern and southern parts of the island, had contributed to embitter the spirits of both, and the sudden establishment of government under one prince could not im-

mediately remove that displeasure which had so long irritated them. Shakspeare, therefore, chose a subject which he thought would render the Scots important in their own eyes, and in the opinion of their new allies and fellow subjects. He has, besides, very happily contrived to celebrate the humanity, courage, and generosity, of his own countrymen, in the same piece. The lawful heir to the crown of Scotland is honourably maintained and supported, in the court of an English king, by the bravery of whose subjects the banished prince is restored, and the usurper defeated. This was a fair and honourable method of making court to both English and Scotch.

Dr. Johnson's observations on witchcraft are learned and instructive: nothing can be added to them, at least by me.

The impressions made on the mind of Shakspeare, respecting witches, fairies, and inchantment, produced, in his riper years, such amazing descriptions of the supposed powers, manners, and magic charms, of

these imaginary beings, as were wonderfully suited to the credulous age in which he lived. Like other great poets, he took

advantage of the popular superstition to create such phantoms of the imagination, which the weak and credulous believed as implicitly as the articles of their creed, while the more sagacious considered them as efforts of fancy and effusions of genius, which contributed to the main design of the poet, -- to delight.

At the Restoration, few of our author's plays were written to the palate of the court and those who assumed the direction of the public amusements. After Macbeth had been thrown aside, or neglected for some years, Sir William Davenant undertook to refine and reduce it, as near as possible, to the standard of the taste in vogue. He likewise brought it, as well as he could, to the resemblance of an opera. In the musical part he was assisted by Mr. Locke, an eminent master of music. It must be confessed the songs of He-

cate, and the other witches, have a solemn adaption to the beings for whom they were composed. Dances of furies were invented for the incantation-scene in the fourth act, and near fifty years since I saw our best dancers employed in the exhibition of infernal spirits. Had Davenant stopped here, it had been well for his reputation, but this ill-instructed admirer of Shakspeare altered the plan of the author's design, and destroyed that peculiarity which distinguishes Macbeth from several of our author's pieces. The jingle of rhyme delighted the ears of our court critics, for no other reason, which I can discover, but because the plays of the French nation, and especially their tragedies, wore these chiming fetters; but the dramatic poets of France knew that their language was too weak for blank verse, or for lines of twelve feet, without the assistance of rhyme, and therefore, what was mere necessity in them, the false judges of our language considered as an essential beauty.

In the Memoirs of Mr. Garrick I have quoted some part of a scene between Macbeth and his lady, upon the most serious and important subject, where poverty of sentiment is only exceeded by wretchedness of rhyme. Davenant had, indeed, disfigured the whole piece, yet, notwithstanding all his added deformities and sad mutilations, so much of the original Macbeth was still retained, that it continued, from the revival in 1665 to 1744, a very favourite entertainment of the stage. Betterton, who was then at the head of the duke of York's company, under Sir William Davenant, whatever his own taste might be, was obliged to fall in with the views of his master and the fashion of the times.

Happily for the lovers of Shakspeare, Mr. Garrick, some years before he was a patentee, broke through the fetters of foolish custom and arbitrary imposition: he restored Macbeth to the public almost in the same dress it was left us in, by the author. A scene or two, which were not

conducive to the action, he threw out in representation; others that were too long he judiciously pruned; very few additions were made, except in some passages of the play necessary to the better explanation of the writer's intention. He composed, indeed, a pretty long speech for Macbeth, when dying, which, though suitable perhaps to the character, was unlike Shakspeare's manner, who was not prodigal of bestowing abundance of matter on characters in that situation. But Garrick excelled in the expression of convulsive throes and dying agonies, and would not lose any opportunity that offered to shew his skill in that part of his profession.

Act I. Scene I.

FIRST WITCH.

When shall we three meet again?

It has been an old complaint of stage critics, that the parts of the witches are always distributed amongst the low comedians, who, by mistaking the sense of the

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author, render those sentiments ridiculous which were designed by him to be spoken with gravity and solemnity. Should we suppose this charge to be well founded, it would not be a very easy task to remove it; for the tragedians are all employed in various parts of the drama, suited to their several abilities, so that none but the comic actors are left to wear gowns, beards, and coifs. But, I confess, I do not see the propriety of the accusation. There is, in the witches, something odd and peculiar, and approaching to what we call humour. The manners bestowed on these beings are more suitable to our notions of comic than tragic action, and better fitted to Yates and Edwin than Henderson and Smith. Nor do I see any impropriety in the manner adopted by the present comedians, who have too much understanding to sacrifice sentiment to grimace, or propriety to buffoonery. From the dramatis personæ of Davenant's Macbeth, we see the parts of the witches given to the low comedians of those

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times, and in this the alterer, who had seen plays at the Globe, and in Blackfriers, long before the civil wars, followed, in all probability, the practice of the old stage.

WITCH.

Weary sev'nnights nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.

The Highlands of Scotland seem to have been the favourite resort of witches and inchanters, where they are supposed to have performed their most powerful charms and diabolical incantations; and more particularly at the town of Foris, near which place Macbeth was first accosted by

these beings. A waxen image of King Duffus, says Buchanan, was found roasting at a fire, in that town, before some infernal hags, who were immediately seized and punished; upon the destroying the image, the king, it is said, recovered. Buchanan did not rely much on the truth of the story, but gave it as it was related by former writers, though he could not find it

authenticated by ancient record. This strange power, of weakening or killing the bodies of men at a distance, is of very ancient date. Lambard, in his Topographical Dictionary, mentions a curious girdle, which was so strongly poisoned as to kill a man at a considerable distance; it was intended, by a certain person, or persons, to dispatch the Dean of York. The girdle was brought to Smithfield, and there burnt, as guilty of heresy.

WITCHES.

The weïrd sisters, hand in hand.

To the learned notes of Dr. Warburton and Mr. Steevens, upon the word weïrd, I shall only add, that the glossarist of Douglas's translation of Virgil derives weïrd from the Anglo-Saxon wyr'd, fatum, fortuna, eventus; Wwyrde, Fata, Parcæ. The old Scotch curse, of 'waeworth him,' is apparently derived from weïrd, or weyward. These weyward sisters seem to be akin to the Eumenides of the Greeks. The

Furies are prototypes of the northern Parcæ.

BANQUO.

---- What are these,
So wither'd, and so wild in their attire?

When James I. asked Sir John Harrington, 'Why the devil did work more with ancient women than others?' Sir John re-

plied, 'We were taught hereof in Scripture, where it is told, that the devil walketh in dry places.'

WITCH.

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

In the relation of this part of the history, Buchanan differs entirely from Hollingshead, who copied the translator of Boetius. He relates, that, when he was at a distance from the court, Macbeth, on a certain night, dreamt that he saw three women, of an august and more-than-human form, who saluted him by the several

titles of Angus and Murray, and, lastly, of King.

MACBETH.

---- My dull brain was wrought
With things forgot.

'I was ruminating on matters not worth your hearing or my remembrance.'

Scene IV.

MALCOLM.

As one that had been study'd in his death.

'Studied in his death' is a phrase borrowed from the theatre: to be studied in a part is to have got it by rote, or to have made yourself master of it. Mr. Steevens hath, with great probability, supposed, that, in the description of Cawdor's death, the author had a retrospect to the behaviour of Essex at his execution. He was, by James himself, esteemed to be one of his martyrs; and it is not improbable that Shakspeare was personally acquainted with the dear

and unfortunate friend of his patron, Southampton.

MACBETH.

Which do but what they should, by doing every thing
Safe towards your love and honour.

The several proposed emendations of this passage, by Mr. Theobald, Dr. Warburton, Dr. Johnson, and Dr. Kenrick, are by no means satisfactory. Dr. Johnson candidly doubts his alteration of safe to shapes; the fiefs, or fief'd, of Dr. Warburton, is not admissible; and Kenrick's ward, though the most plausible, does not, I believe, come up to the intention of the author. I have before me a copy of Shakspeare in folio, the second edition, which formerly belonged to Mr. William Thompson, of Queen's College, Oxford, author of a poem on Sickness: in the margin he puts a question, whether it should not be life and honour instead of love and honour? and this conjecture is submitted to the reader, as at

least preferable to any emendation as yet advanced.

MACBETH.

The prince of Cumberland! -- that is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'er-!eap.

The mind of Macbeth had been greatly agitated by the preceding prophecies of the witches, and the completion of part of them. His fancy had presented to his mind the accomplishment of the whole, by an act, the thought of which alone had struck him with reluctant horror. He seems to have resembled Hazael, in the Scriptures, who, being told, by the prophet Elisha, he should bring terrible calamities upon the people of Israel, cried out, 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things?' But the poet artfully throws in fresh fuel to stimulate his ambition, by the King's nominating his son Prince of Cumberland. The crown of Scotland was not, as Mr. Steevens has observed, hereditary; and every reader of

Scottish history will be convinced, tbat prudence and necessity both co-operated to prevent a regular succession of the son to the father in that kingdom. The kings of Scotland were so often immaturely destroyed, by foreign wars, factious nobility, or private treachery, that it was wisely ordered the crown should devolve on the next of kin arrived to maturity of age and ripeness of understanding, and not to the son of the deceased monarch under age. This was the practice in that kingdom for many ages. Duncan, by appointing his son, then a minor,/* Prince of Cumberland, a dignity like that of Prince of Wales with us, cut off all Macbeth's hopes of gaining the crown in case the King should have died before Malcolm arrived to years of maturity. Buchanan says <>expresily, that, by this action, Duncan had given him sufficient cause of discontent.

/* Vixdum puberem. Buchan. Hist. lib. 7.

Scene VII.

MACBETH.

---- But, in these cases,
We still have judgement here, that we but teach
Bloody instructions.

The best comment on this passage is to be read in the preface to Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World, and more particularly in the following quotation from it: 'For those kings, which have sold the blood of others at a low rate, have but made a market for their own enemies to buy of theirs at the same price.'

IDEM.

---- Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office ----

The only fault, attributed by historians to the unhappy Duncan, was excess of humanity and gentleness of disposition. --

'Vir summa humanitate,' says Buchanan, 'ac majore erga suos indulgentia quam in rege par erat.'

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IDEM.

And Pity, like a naked new-born babe
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in ev'ry eye,
That tears shall drown the wind.

The author, not satisfied with presenting us with that tender and beautiful image of pity, a new-born babe, rises to the more sublime idea of an angel mounted on the wings of the wind, to communicate the disastrous news of a monarch's murder to the world. The thought seems to have been borrowed from the eighteenth psalm: 'He rode upon the cherubim and did fly; he came flying upon the wings of the wind!'

Fenton, in his tragedy of Mariamne, in the following lines of Sohemus to Salome, makes Pity young and short-lived:

---- In distant ages past,
Pity dy'd young, of grief, they say, to see
An eagle wreck his malice on a wren.

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LADY MACBETH.

---- Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dress'd yourself?

In other words, 'Were you sober when you first entertained the conception of killing the king?'

The undaunted spirit and determinedly-wicked resolution of Macbeth's wife are no where to be matched, in any female character of the ancient Greek drama, except in the Clytemnestra of Æschylus. Their situations are different, but their characters bear a great resemblance. Both are haughty and intrepid, artful and cruel, in the extreme: Clytemnestra plans the murder of Agamemnon, her husband, and is herself the

assassin; Lady Macbeth not only encourages her husband to kill the King, but enjoys the fact when it is done; the remorse of the murderer she considers as pusillanimity, and helps to remove the appearance of guilt from him by smearing the faces of the sleeping grooms.

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LADY MACBETH.

---- What not put upon
His spongy officers?

Men drenched in liquor are with great propriety compared to sponges. When Æschines praised Philip King of Macedon for his abilities in drinking, Demosthenes told him, 'that was a commendation fit for a sponge.'

Of the original actors in Macbeth we can form no judgement; for nothing is to be found relating to them in books, nor has tradition handed down any thing concerning them. We may indeed conjecture, that Burbage, who exhibited Richard III. was, by the author, selected to represent Macbeth. Not only because he was the first tragedian of the times, but, from his performing characters of a similar cast, we may suppose him to have been better adapted to it than Taylor, (another eminent actor in tragedy,) or any player of that age.

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The Tatler has celebrated Betterton for his excellence in Macbeth as well as other principal tragic parts. Cibber has not particularly distinguished this great comedian for his performance of this character; that he acted it to the very verge of his life, I learned in conversation with Mr. Ryan. Though Booth was one of the company of comedians who obtained a licence in the year 1711, soon after the death of Betterton, Wilks, with great partiality, gave Macbeth to Mr. John Mills, a player whom he patronised. But Mills was deficient in genius to display the

various passions and turbulent scenes of the character. Mills was, in person, inclined to the athletic size; his features large, though not expressive; his voice was manly and powerful, but not flexible; his action and deportment decent. In voice and person he was not very unlike Mr. Edward Berry, whom Colley Cibber used to term a second old Mills. I have seen him in Macbeth; but neither his manner of

speaking, his action, nor his deportment, made any impression on my mind greatly to his advantage. He spoke, indeed, the celebrated soliloquy on the progress of time, beginning with 'Tomorrow! tomorrow! and tomorrow!' with propriety and feeling, and it produced considerable effect on the audience.

It was a matter of concern, to judges of theatrical merit, to see such actors as Booth and Powell condemned to represent the inferior parts of Banquo and Lenox, when Mills was so improperly set over their heads. Roberts the player, author of a letter to Mr. Pope concerning some passages in his preface to Shakspeare, told me that the indignation of a country gentleman broke out one night, during the acting of this play, in a very odd manner. The 'squire, after having been heartily tired with Mills, on the appearance of his old compapion, George Powell, in the fourth act, cried out, loud enough to be heard by the audience, 'For God's sake, George, give us a speech and let me go home.'

Quin's figure and countenance, in this character, spoke much in his favour; but he was deficient in animated utterance, and wanted flexibility of tone. He could neither assume the strong agitation of mind before the murder of the king, nor the remorse and anguish in consequence of it: -- much less could he put on that mixture

of despair, rage, and frenzy, that mark the last scenes of Macbeth. During the whole representation he scarce ever deviated from a dull, heavy, monotony.

Mossop's power of expression, in several situations of Macbeth, commanded attention and applause. Had he been acquainted with variety of action and easy deportment, he would have been justly admired in it. Barry ought never to have attempted that which was so opposite to his natural manner. He was not formed to represent the terrible agonies of Macbeth.

The genius of a Garrick could alone comprehend and execute the complicated passions of this character. From the first

scene, in which he was accosted by the witches to the end of the part, he was animated and consistent. The tumult raised in his mind, by the prophecy of the witches, was expressed by feelings suitable to the occasion, nor did he suffer the marks of this agitation to be entirely dissipated in the presence of Duncan, which he discovered to the audience in no obscure manner; more especially when the king nominated Malcolm prince of Cumberland.

Before I conclude my account of the several actors who personated Macbeth, I must take notice of a piece of stage perfidy which had like to have produced disagreeable consequences to a performer of that character.

Oliver Cashel was by birth an Irishman, well educated, and of a good family. His inclination to the profession of acting brought him first to the stage of Drury-lane, and afterwards to that of Covent-Garden, where he met with such encouragement from Mr. Rich, that he excited the

jealousy of an actor who had been for a considerable time advancing equally in the favour of the manager. Cashel was bred

in high tory principles, which he took no pains to conceal, but indiscreetly threw out his notions of government and political affairs in mixed companies. The man was innocent of any intention to disturb the state; he was only rash in the use of expressions which might be interpreted to his disadvantage. The nation was, in 1746, involved in a French and Spanish war, and a rebellion had broken out in Scotland. The rival of Cashel, though not known by him to be such, took advantage of his unguarded warmth of temper, and secretly laid an information against him at the secretary of state's office. The accused person was taken up by a general warrant, and examined by the secretary of state. Nothing worthy the notice of government appearing in his disfavour, he was set at liberty. The first place he resorted to was the Bedford Cof-

fee-house, where he found his secret and perfidious enemy waiting the issue of his information. Cashel was going very innocently to relate his unexpected adventure to him; but the other, shocked at his sight, ran out of the coffee-house in great haste, to shun the man whom he had so basely endeavoured to injure. Soon after this transaction, news arrived from Scotland of the battle at Falkirk, where, it was supposed, the rebels had gained some slight advantage. The king was advised to go to the theatre and to command the tragedy of Macbeth. Cashel's examination before a minister of state was known to the public, and Rich doubted whether it would be prudent to permit him to act the principal character before the king. Quin heard of the manager's scruples, and offered his service without any expectation of reward. But the king being asked if he had any objection to Mr. Cashel's acting before him, answered, "By no means, he would be altogether as acceptable as

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any other player." A few months after, Cashel was seized with an apoplectic fit, as he was acting on the stage at Norwich, which he did not long survive; his enemy died, I believe, much about the same time.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

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BANQUO.

---- And shut up
In measureless contentment.

Banquo's description of Duncan's full enjoyment of his entertainment presents a most amiable picture of a benevolent mind. The words measureless contentment give an idea of unbounded goodness and complacency.

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MACBETH.

Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready, she strike upon the bell.

In the times of the feudal system, kings, princes, barons, and all persons of distinguished birth and rank before they went to rest, partook of a collation called the wines, consisting of delicate cates and wine, warmed and mixed with certain spices. Froissart esteemed it a great piece of good fortune that he had spent the greatest part of his life in the courts of princes, for thereby he had gained an opportunity of drinking the wines, which, he says, contributed much to his comfort and repast./* This is the cordial which we may reasonably suppose Shakspeare meant by the drink.

IDEM.

Is this a dagger which I see before me!

Many stage critics suppose this to be one of the most difficult situations in acting. The sudden start on seeing the dagger

/* Froissart. Tom. ii. Chap. 81.

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in the air, -- the endeavour of the actor to seize it, -- the disappointment, -- the suggestion of its being only a vision of the disturbed fancy, -- the seeing it still in form most palpable, with the reasoning upon it, ---- these are difficulties which the mind of Garrick was capable of encountering and subduing. So happy did he think

himself in the exhibition of this scene, that, when he was in Italy, and requested by the duke of Parma to give a proof of his skill in action, to the admiration of that prince, he at once threw himself into the attitude of Macbeth's seeing the air-drawn dagger. The duke desired no farther proof of Garrick's great excellence in his profession, being perfectly convinced, by this specimen, that he was an absolute master of it.

IDEM.

---- Now o'er one half the world
Nature lies dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep.

This is not unlike a passage in the Coœphoræ of Æschylus:

For, in the still and midnight hour,
When darkness aids his hideous power,
Affright, that breathes his vengeance deep,
Haunts with wild dreams the curtain'd sleep.
Potter's Æschylus.

IDEM.

With Tarquin's ravishing strides.

Mr. Steevens has, from Spencer and Harrington's Ariosto, brought instances to prove that the word stride does not always convey the idea of violent motion. Notwithstanding this, I believe that almost every body, who reads the line as above quoted, will suppose the word to import, something like tumult and noise. But all disputes, about the word strides, may easily be determined by restoring what, I think, is the genuine reading, sides, which was first removed by Mr. Pope, who, in its stead, substituted strides. 'I am now, says Macbeth, moving towards my purpose with the cautious steps of the ravishing Tarquin, or the silent pace of a ghost.' The sides of a man, in our language, like

the latera or humeri of the Latins, signify his power and ability.

In Twelfth Night, the duke tells Viola,

---- There is no woman's sides
Can bide the beating of so strong a passion
As love doth give my heart.

By a very common figure, the sides of a man stand for the man himself.

IDEM.

---- Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a bell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell!

The thought is solemn, though, I believe, every reader wishes there had been no chime on an occasion so tremendous. But Davenant lessens the gloom of the idea still farther, by an alteration very improper:

---- Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a bell
That rings my coronation and thy knell!

Upon Macbeth's going off the stage to perpetrate the murder, the author of the Connoiseur observes, that the actor's feelings must have been disturbed by his wi-

ping the paint from his face to look more ghastly on his re-entrance, besides the disordering of his wig to give the appearance of bustle and distraction. Would not the same author, if the actor had returned from the supposed murder as unruffled in dress and as florid in look as before, have justly remarked that he had forgotten the situation in which his author had placed him, for he bore no outward signs of a man concerned in the business of assassination? He might as well, too, have remarked that the player must have employed some of his time in dipping the stage-daggers in blood. But there is no end of such criticism; I am only sorry that remarks of this kind should escape a writer not more remarkable for candour of

spirit than force of genius.

LADY MACBETH.

That, which hath made them drunk, hath made me
bold!
What hath quench'd them hath given me fire!

By these lines being put in the mouth of Lady Macbeth, Shakspeare seems unwilling

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to suppose that one of the tender sex could be wrought up to become an associate in murder, without some preparation for it, by a degree of intoxication.

MACBETH.

But they did say their pray'rs, and address'd them
Again to sleep.

By 'saying their prayers,' the author means, they poured out such short addresses to the divine Being as men disturbed by troublesome dreams, or frightened by sudden apprehension of danger, generally ejaculate: such as imploring heaven's protection, begging forgiveness of sins, and the like. This will give us the true meaning of what Macbeth says immediately after.

MACBETH.

---- I could not say amen,
When they did cry, Heaven bless us! ----
I had most need of blessing.

Macbeth could not, even in his then distracted state of mind, suppose that heaven would sanctify murder by giving a blessing to the

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murderer. Blessing is here put for pardon: 'I had most need of forgiveness.'

IDEM.

Macbeth doth murder sleep! -- the innocent sleep! --
Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care.
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast! ----

These attributes of sleep greatly resemble some beautiful lines in the Hymns of Orpheus to Night and Sleep:

<four lines of greek, from hymn no 3> &c.

<four more lines of greek, from no 85>

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IDEM.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous sea incarnadine!

The Chorus, in the Coœphoræ of Æschylus, breathes sentiments not unlike this of Macbeth:

---- Were all the streams, that wind
Their mazy progress to the main,
To cleanse this odious stain, in one combin'd,
The streams combin'd would flow in vain.
Potter's Æschylus.

IDEM.

To know my deed 'twere best not know myself.

'Whilst I am conscious of having committed this murder, I cannot but be miserable; I have no remedy but in the total forgetfulness of the deed, or, to speak more plainly, in the loss of my senses.'

The merit of this scene transcends all panegyric. Amongst the many discourses, which, from the earliest time to the present hour, have been composed on the subject

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of murder, it will be difficult to find so powerful a dissuasive or dehortation from that dreadful crime as the tragedy of Macbeth exhibits. In drawing the principal character of the play, the author has deviated somewhat from history; but, by abating the fierceness of Macbeth's disposition, he has rendered him a fitter subject for the drama. The rational and severe delight, which the spectator feels from the

representation of this piece, proceeds, in a great measure, from the sensibility of the murderer, from his remorse and agonies, and from the torments he suffers in the midst of his successful villainy.

The representation of this terrible part of the play, by Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard, can no more be described than I believe it can be equalled. I will not separate these performers, for the merits of both were transcendent. His distraction of mind and agonizing horrors were finely contrasted by her seeming apathy, tranquillity, and confidence. The beginning of the scene after

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the murder was conducted in terrifying whispers. Their looks and action supplied the place of words. You heard what they spoke, but you learned more from the agitation of mind displayed in their action and deportment. The poet here gives only an outline to the consummate actor. -- I have done the deed! -- Didst thou not hear a noise? -- When? -- Did you not speak? -- The dark colouring, given by the actor to these abrupt speeches, makes the scene awful and tremendous to the auditors! The wonderful expression of heartful horror, which Garrick felt when he shewed his bloody hands, can only be conceived and described by those who saw him! The expression of 'sorry sight!' is certainly not happy now. Words, which were highly expressive and energetic above one hundred and fifty years since, have, by length of time, lost their importance. ---- Davenant, fifty years after, altered sorry to dismal; but perhaps a better word than that might still be substituted.

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> PORTER.
>
> Who's there? -- Here's an English tailor, come hither for stealing out of a French hose.

The archness of the joke, says Dr. Warburton, consists in the French hose being

very short and strait, for that tailor must be master of his trade who could steal any thing thence. Mr. Steevens declares freely, that Dr. Warburton made this objection at random, and quotes an old pamphlet of Stubbs to prove, 'the Gallick hosen are made very large and wide, reaching down to their knees.' Dr. Farmer, in favour of Dr. Warburton, observes, that Mr. Steevens had forgotten the uncertainty of French fashions, and quotes from an old book a passage to prove that French hose answered in length to their short-skirted doublets. As a farther proof that our neighbours, the French, in the reign of Louis IV. were fond of short doublets, I shall present the reader with a stage-anecdote from honest Downs, the theatrical historian, who

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relates, 'That, when King Charles II. and all his court, met his sister, the Duchess of Orleans, at Dover, the comedy of Sir Solomon Single, acted before both courts, pleased her grace and all the spectators extremely. The French wore, at the same time, short laced coats, some scarlet, some blue, adorned with broad waist-belts. Nokes had on, in the part of Sir Arthur Addle, one shorter than the rest; the Duke of Monmouth gave him his sword and belt from his side, and buckled it on himself, on purpose to mimic the French. Nokes looked more like a dressed-up ape than a man; so that, on his first entrance upon the stage, he put the king and the whole court into an excessive fit of laughter; at which, the French were very chagrined to see themselves aped by such a fool as Sir Arthur. Mr. Nokes kept the duke's sword to his dying day.'

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MACDUFF.

---- Up, up, and see
The great doom's image!

'A picture of horror not to be parallelled but in the universal ruin of the world at

the last day.'

LADY MACBETH.

What's the business?

The players have long since removed Lady Macbeth from this scene. A London audience we may suppose not to be so critical as that of Athens, or such an one as Oxford or Cambridge could supply. ---- Many years since, I have been informed, an experiment was hazarded, whether the spectators would bear Lady Macbeth's surprize and fainting; but, however characteristical such behaviour might be, persons of a certain class were so merry upon the occasion, that it was not thought proper to venture the Lady's appearance any more. Mr. Garrick thought, that even so favourite an actress as Mrs. Pritchard would not, in that situation, escape derision from the gentlemen in the upper regions. Mr.

Macklin is of opinion, that Mrs. Porter alone could have credit with an audience, to induce them to endure the hypocrisy of Lady Macbeth.

MACBETH.

O, yet I do repent me of my fury,
That I did kill them.

MACDUFF.

---- Why did you so?

The murder of Duncan's chamber-grooms, by Macbeth, justly raises suspicion in Macduff. I have seldom seen an actor of this character, who rightly understood his situation: his eye ought to pursue and examine Macbeth's demeanour during the remainder of the scene, though not in such a manner as to discover what passed in his mind to the suspected person.

MACBETH.

Unmannerly breech'd with gore.

Propriety of expression was not the principal study of Shakspeare. He frequently

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lays hold of the first word that meets his fancy; though I see no reason to cavil with unmannerly, which Mr. Warton supports very forcibly. The word, with compounds of the same import, are in good authors to be found in a sense not very remote from this in Shakspeare. In Dryden, unmannered signifies uncivil, rude, and brutal; unmannerliness, in Locke, is indecent behaviour and breach of civility. Unmannerly, in this quotation, means indecently in the highest degree! brutally! shockingly! ---- The propriety of the word unmannerly, in this place, may be justified by a like freedom taken by Greek and Latin authors in words seemingly as remote from their original meaning: -- Dr. Clarke in a learned note upon <Algēsas d' achreion idōn>, in the second book of Homer's Iliad, l. 279, observes, that <achreion idōn> elegantissime dictum est, et tam significanter ut nil possit supra. Latine dicens inutile tuens, sicuti torvum tuens, &c. Observandum autem <achreios> apud Græcos, quum de homine

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malo dicitur, non utique eum exhibere qui simpliciter sit non utilis, sed qui sit maxime nequam. Similiter apud optimos linguæ Romanæ auctores, inutile legitur id, non quod non utile modo, sed quicquid utili maxime est contrarium. The whole note I would recommend to the perusal of the judicious reader.

Dr. Warburton's reech'd, instead of breech'd, is plausible; but the old reading is well justified by Mr. Steevens, and still more forcibly by Dr. Farmer. Breech'd was certainly a common word, in our author's time, applied to the covering of any thing, as well as a part of a man's body. Sometimes it signifies the direct contrary, as in Massinger's Guardian, act I. Durazzo,

speaking of his nephew's distant and bashful courtship of his mistress:

> How he looks like a school-boy that had play'd
> The truant, and went to be breech'd!

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> BANQUO.
>
> And, when we have our naked faculties hid,
> Which suffer in exposure ----

In such a cloud of words, Mr. Steevens is afraid lest the meaning should escape the reader; and therefore he informs them, that they are to understand by them, ---- 'When we have clothed our half-dressed bodies, which may take cold from being exposed to the air.' Shakspeare understood not only the propriety and decorum of the stage, but the genius of his audience, and would never send on his characters half-dressed. Such a ludicrous sight, which no skill could prevent, would have excited loud bursts of laughter. This appearance certainly would be very natural; for the ringing of a bell, and a loud outcry of murder, must, in a palace, or any house, have drawn together the highest and lowest of its inmates, some armed with one weapon, some with another: but, at such a motley sight, surely,

> To be grave exceeds all power of face.

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In the more advanced state of the stage, Mr. Garrick would not risk the appearance of half, or even disordered, dress, though extremely proper, and what the incident of the fable and situation of the characters seemed to require. But the words will, I think, very easily bear another meaning: 'When we have recovered ourselves from that grief and those transports of passion, which, though justifiable from natural feeling and the sad occasion, do but expose the frailty and imbecility of our nature.'

Extreme grief and loud lamentations, however natural, and to be indulged in

private, are surely not graceful in public, and are always there endeavoured to be suppressed. Our Shakspeare is very careful to restrain excessive grief in the presence of others. In Julius Cæsar, act III. the servant of Octavius, on seeing the dead body of Cæsar, cries 'O Cæsar!' and bursts into tears: Mark Antony checks his sorrow, in that place, by saying, 'Thy heart is full; get thee apart and weep.' And Kent, in King

Lear, act IV. describing Cordelia's behaviour, when told of the cruelty of her sisters to her father:

---- Then she shook
The holy water from her heav'nly eyes,
And clamour moisten'd her. -- Then away she started,
To deal with grief alone.

MACBETH.

Let's briefly put on manly readiness,
And meet in the hall together.

This scene of strong perturbation and deep sorrow requires, in the representation, the nicest and most accurate management. -- The guilty Macbeth, though struggling to assume the appearance of innocence and deep concern, dares not meet the eye of any person. The rest walk up and down as if sighing and lamenting; only Macduff and the sons of Duncan seem, by their looks, to point out the murderer.

ROSS.

---- By the clock 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp. --

-- Darkness doth the face of earth entomb,
When living light should kiss it.

From the history of King Duffus's murder, by Donald, governor of the citadel of Foris, Shakspeare has borrowed some incidents and some embellishments for his fable. Duffus, having determined

to bring to justice some robbers, who had laid waste Murray, Ross, and Caithness, caused them to be seized and brought to Foris, there to receive condign punishment. Donald was greatly offended that the king would not be prevailed upon to pardon some friends of his associated in the robberies. His wife, who, in violence of disposition, greatly resembles Lady Macbeth, stimulated her husband to murder the king from the conveniency of doing it; for, having the command of the castle, she told him, he had the power of executing the design in his own hands. This, I take it, is Shakspeare's time and place agreeing. Mr. Steevens has already produced the tale of the hawk and the mousing owl

from the same source with the killing of Duffus's grooms./*

The description of darkness obscuring the hemisphere, by Ross, is borrowed from the same history. Buchanan says, indeed, there was a general darkness, over all Scotland, after the murder of Duffus, that neither sun nor moon were to be seen for the space of six months after.

Act III. Scene I.

MACBETH.

Acquaint you with the perfect spy of the time.

Dr. Johnson thinks, by the perfect spy is meant the third Murderer, whom Macbeth sends to join the other two. But one of the two first who were employed did not so understand it, by questioning the third.

/* Something, similar to this story of the hawk and mousing owl, we read in the Persæ of Æschylus.

Atossa. -- An eagle I beheld
Fly to the altar of the sun: -- aghast
I stood, my friends, and speechless; when a hawk
With eager speed runs thither, furious cuffs
The eagle with his wings, and with his talons
Unplumes his head: mean time th'imperial bird
Cow'rs to the blows, defenceless. -- Potter's Æschylus.

'The perfect spy of the time' is well explained by the words which folllow, 'the moment of it,' that is, the very instant you are to begin your bloody business. At the same time the King dismisses them, commanding them to stay within till he calls them. The sending a third murdering assistant is an after-thought, proceeding from Macbeth's anxious impatience to have the business finished.

LADY MACBETH.

---- Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content.
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
Than, by destruction, dwell in doubtful joy.

The Lady is willing to enjoy the fruits of the abominable crime which her husband, by her instigation and assistance, had committed; but, seeing discontent lay hold of his mind, and all their hopes of happiness abortive, she now begins to think it would be safer, that is, in our author's intention, more eligible, to be the

murdered than the murderer. She was approaching to that state of mind which is so beautifully described in the Tempest, where the good Gonsalvo, speaking of Alonzo and his guilty associates, says,

---- Their great guilt,
Like poison giv'n to work a great time after,
Now 'gins to bite their spirits.

LADY MACBETH.

---- Why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making?

'Sorriest fancies' do not here, as Dr. Johnson imagines, signify worthless, ignoble, and vile, imaginations; but, doubtless, black, gloomy, and melancholy, reflections. Mr. Steevens admits, that sorriest may possibly mean melancholy and dismal, and quotes a passage from the Comedy of Errors to prove it; but

he needed not have gone so far; as Macbeth, after committing the murder on Duncan, makes use of the word sorry in that sense: for, shewing his hands, in an agony he

cries out, 'This is a sorry sight!' this is a sight not to be viewed without horror!

MACBETH.

---- Unsafe the while that we
Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,
And make our faces vizards to our hearts.

Happy is it for the world, that the villain can seldom quietly and peaceably enjoy the fruits of his iniquity. He, who before found dissimulation and flattery his best conductors to the throne, is now surfeited with, and lothes, them. But safer signifies here, as in the preceding soliloquy of the Lady, preferable. He intends, by the word unsafe, likewise to express the disagreeable tenure by which he holds his life and crown, by being obliged to soothe and flatter those he mortally hates.

IDEM.

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck.

Chuck, from chick, or chicken; or perhaps a word of fondness borrowed from the

hen, who invites her little brood to partake of what she has snatched from the ground, and emits a sound resembling chuck or cluck. Othello, act III. makes use of the same term:

What promise, chuck?

Scene IV. Banquet.

LADY MACBETH.

---- The feast is sold
That is not often vouch'd while it is making.

'If you do not give due welcome to

your guests, by paying them proper attention, the feast will resemble a dinner at an inn, or ordinary, where every man pays for his share of the entertainment.'

The ghost of Banquo rises, and sits in Macbeth's chair.

It has been questioned, whether Banquo's ghost should not present itself to the imagination of Macbeth, as the dagger did before the murder of the King. The appearance of a ghost is thought by some a

mere trick, a jeu du théâtre; and Lloyd, in his excellent poem of the Actor, has ridiculed, in very animated lines, the mealy appearance of Banquo:

When chilling horrors shake th'affrighted King,
And guilt torments him with her scorpion-sting;
When keenest feelings at his bosom pull,
And fancy tells him that the seat is full;
Why need the ghost usurp the monarch's place,
To frighten children with his mealy face?
The King alone should form the phantom there,
And talk and tremble at the empty chair.

It must be confessed, these visionary appearances are but helps to the unaccomplished actor and the ignorant spectator. Nothing can be pleaded in their behalf but prescriptive right, the constant practice of the theatre. Shakspeare lived in the infancy of the stage, when a rude audience demanded all the assistance which the poet could give them. He may be justified for calling up the spirit of Banquo, to raise feelings in the actor and terror in the spectator; but it is now time to try, at

least, what effect may be produced without such ghostly aid.

Before Mr. Garrick displayed the terrible graces of action from the impression of visionary appearances, the comedians were strangers to the effects which this scene could produce. Macbeth, they constantly

exclaimed, was not a character of the first rate; all the pith of it was exhausted, they said, in the first and second acts of the play. They formed their judgement from the drowsy and ineffectual manner of Garrick's predecessors, who could not force attention or applause from the audience during the three last acts. When Roscius was informed what judgement the players had conceived of Macbeth, he smiled, and said he should be very unhappy if he were not able to keep alive the attention of the spectators to the last syllable of so animated a character.

This admirable scene was greatly supported by the speaking terrors of Garrick's look and action. Mrs. Pritchard shewed ad-

mirable art in endeavouring to hide Macbeth's frenzy from the observation of the guests, by drawing their attention to conviviality. She smiled on one, whispered to another, and distantly saluted a third; in short, she practised every possible artifice to hide the transaction that passed between her husband and the vision his disturbed imagination had raised. Her reproving and angry looks, which glanced towards Macbeth, at the same time were mixed with marks of inward vexation and uneasiness. When, at last, as if unable to support her feelings any longer, she rose from her seat, and seized his arm, and, with a half-whisper of terror, said, 'Are you a man!' she assumed a look of such anger, indignation, and contempt, as cannot be surpassed.

MACBETH.

It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood!

So in the Coœphoræ of Æschylus:

There is a law, that for each drop of blood
Shed on the earth, demands that blood be shed.
Potter's Æschylus.

IDEM.

---- My strange and self abuse
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:
We are but young in deed.

This is one, amongst a thousand other instances, of our author's great knowledge of nature. The criminal agent, when he has recovered from the terrors of his afflicted conscience, rushes headlong into more guilt, by attributing his fears to any thing, except the real cause of them. Macbeth pacifies himself with this cordial, that his internal alarms are all owing to novelty of practice, and that persisting in evil would alone procure repose to his mind and stability to his government. So says Richard III.

Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.

Scene V.

---- Get you gone,
And meet me in the pit of Acheron.

Shakspeare, says Mr. Steevens, thought it allowable to bestow the name of Acheron on any fountain, lake, or pit, through

which there was supposed to be a communication between that river and the infernal regions; but Shakspeare, I believe, did not know that, in the woods of Calder or Cawdor, there was a brook very near in name to that of the hellish river. 'For, within those woods, says Mr. Pennant, there are deep rocky glens, darkened with trees round each side of the wood; one has a great torrent roaring at its bottom, called the brook of Acheneen: it well merits the name of Acheron, being a most fit scene for witches to celebrate their nocturnal rites in.'/*

Scene VI. Lenox and another lord.

This scene is left out in representation, supposed to be unnecessary to the plot of the play.

LENOX.

---- ---- Did he not strait,
In pious rage, the two delinquents tear
That were the slaves of drink and thralls of fear?

/* Pennant's Tour to Scotland. P. 124.

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Lenox was present when Macbeth killed the sleeping grooms, and, however better instructed he seems to be at present, he then justified the act, from the bloody daggers lying unwiped upon their pillows, and from their staring and distracted looks; at the same time, saying,

No man's life was to be trusted with them.

IDEM.

---- For, from broad hints and cause, he fail'd
His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear
Macduff lives in disgrace.

The story of Macduff and the tyrant's mutual jealousy is related after this manner by Buchanan:

'For his better security, Macbeth was resolved to build a castle on the high hill of Dunsinane, and to fortify it very strongly. He summoned the thanes to assist in erecting the fortifications by turns. Macduff suspected the king harboured some evil intentions towards him, and, though he sent abundance of materials and labourers, with certain friends to quicken their

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operations, yet he would not attend in person. Macbeth, one day inspecting the works, observed that a teem of oxen, sent by Macduff, was unequal to the task of reaching the summit of the hill: upon this he took occasion to say, that he was no stranger to the thane's contumacy and disobedience, which he was determined to conquer, by fixing a yoke upon his own neck. Macduff, as soon as he was infor-

med of this, immediately hired a vessel, and set sail to Lothian, and from thence he set out for England.'

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

Incantations of witches. -- Jonson's contention with Shakspeare. -- Quotations from his Queen's Masque. -- Speech of Macbeth to the presiding hags. -- Invocation. -- Hecate. -- Attire of Johnson's witches. -- King's evil. -- Why confined to them. -- Claim of the French kings from Clovis. -- Queen-consorts never touched for the evil. -- Lewis XI. and St. Francis of Paul, their meeting. -- Banishment of royal witchcraft. -- Macduff's character. -- Wilks, Booth, and Ryan. -- Hell is murky explained. -- English epicures. -- Old enmity between the English and Scots. -- Juvenal quoted. -- Deportment of Macduff criticised. -- Title of Thane, from Spelman, Buchanan, and Gurdon.

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Act IV. Scene I.

FIRST WITCH.

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

The incantation, in this act, has been greatly celebrated, and, for boldness of invention, strength of imagination, and propriety of conduct, is thought equal to any effort of our author's genius.

Mr. Malone has, with much probability, fixed the first representation of Macbeth to the year 1606. However that may be, we are certain it was acted before Ben Jonson produced his Masque of Queens, which was exhibited before the king and queen in 1609. In that composition, there are many evident imitations of the magical inchantment in Macbeth. The success of Shakspeare alarmed the jealousy of a man who fancied himself his rival, or rather his superior. In this masque, Jon-

son has measured swords with our inimitable poet, and, to be just, we must own he

has displayed abundance of reading, and no mean vein of poetry. But, lest I should fall under the charge of asserting what I cannot prove, I will present the reader with some extracts from the Masque, in which the imitator endeavours, though in vain, to conceal his obligations to the original.

Twelve hags bring their dame, who is substituted in the place of Hecate, an account of the ingredients which they have gathered to make the charm powerful. She sees them busy, and cries out, almost in the words of Shakspeare, 'Well done, my hags!' She bids them relate what they have done.

FIRST HAG.

I have been all day looking after
A raven feeding upon a quarter.
As soon she turn'd her beak to the south,
I snatch'd this morsel out of her mouth.

SECOND HAG.

I have been gathering wolves hairs,
The mad dog's foam, and the adder's ears.
The spurging of a dead man's eyes,
And all since the evening-star did rise.

SIXTH WITCH.

I had a dagger, what did I with that?
Kill'd an infant to have his fat.

TENTH.

I, from the jaws of a gardener's bitch,
Did snatch these bones, and then leapt a ditch.

ELEVENTH.

I went to the toad lives under the wall;
I charm'd him out, and he came to my call.
I scratch'd out the eyes of the owl before;
I tore the bat's wing: what have you more?

I shall close my proofs with two quotations more. The abrupt, but sublime, address of Macbeth to the witches, in this fourth act, and an imitation of it spoken

by the dame in the Masque. The merit of both will plead in their behalf.

MACBETH.

How now, you secret, black, and midnight, hags!
I conjure you, by that which you profess,
Howe'er you come know it, answer me;
Though you untie the winds, and let them fight
Against the churches: though the yesty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up:

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Though bladed corn be lodg'd and trees blown down:
Though castles topple on their warders heads:
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations: though the treasure
Of nature's germins tumble all together,
E'en till destruction sicken -- Answer me
To what I ask you!

The dame's invocation, from Jonson.

You fiends and furies, if yet any be
Worse than ourselves, you that have quak'd to see
These knots unty'd, and shrunk when we have
    charm'd.
You, that, to arm us, have yourselves disarm'd,
And to our pow'rs resign'd your whips and brands,
When we went forth the scourge of men and lands.
You that have seen me ride when Hecate
Durst not take chariot; when the boisterous sea,
Without a breath of wind, hath knock'd the sky,
And that hath thunder'd, Jove not knowing why.
When we have set the elements at wars,
Made midnight see the sun, and day the stars.
When the wing'd light'ning in the course hath staid,
And swiftest rivers have run back, afraid
To see the corn remove, the groves to range,
Whole places alter, and the seasons change:
When the pale moon, at the first voice, down fell,
Poison'd, and durst not stay the second spell --
You that have oft been conscious of these sights,
And thou, thrice-formed star, that, on these nights,

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Art only powerful, to whose triple name
Thus we incline, once, twice, and thrice, the same,
If now with rites profane and foul enough
We do invoke thee, darken all the roof,
With present fogs exhale earth's rott'nest vapours,
And strike a blindness through these blazing tapers, &c.

Notwithstanding Jonson, in the composition of this invocation, had the assistance of the antient poets whom he cites in his margin, it is little more than an

amplification, or extended paraphrase, of the speech of Macbeth which I have just quoted. The word Hecate, which Shakspeare abridges to two syllables, Jonson, to shew his learning, restores to its antient measure. The exordium of this piece, called the Masque of Queens, celebrated from the house of fame, is very curious; 'His majesty being set, and the whole company in full expectation, the part of the scene which first presented itself was an ugly hell, which, flaming beneath, smoked to the top of the roof.' This was beating Shakspeare's cauldron with a witness. The Witches were all differently attired, some with rats on their heads, some on their

shoulders; others with ointment-pots at their girdles; all with spindles, timbrels, rattles, or other venefical instruments, making a confused noise, with strange gestures. The incantations of Shakspeare, it is observed, are awfully tremendous; those of other poets generally ridiculous.

Scene III.

MALCOLM.

Let us seek out some desolate shade.

Mr. Steevens has quoted Hollingshead's abridgement of a long discourse between Malcolm and Macduff, from H. Boetius, on which this scene is founded. I think he might have shortened the margin very much, by transcribing Buchanan, who agrees with his countryman in the subject of the dialogue, but is more succinct in the relation.

MALCOLM.

Why in that rawness left your wife and child?

The King, in Hamlet, act IV. condemns his own conduct, in privately bury-

ing Polonius, in words of the same import:

> We have done but greenly.
>
> DOCTOR.
>
> ---- There are a crew of wretched souls
> That stay his cure. ----
> ---- ---- At his touch
> Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand,
> They presently amend.

As the poet here intended a compliment to his royal master, it is most probable, that King James had, before the acting of this play, touched for the king's evil; nor can we suppose he would long defer assuming this power inherent in his predecessors.

The privilege of curing the king's evil is attributed only to kings. No other sovereigns, of any degree, have laid claim to it. Why not give this power, says Voltaire, to emperors? and indeed, a fortiori, why is it not resident in the popes? they are something more than God's images upon earth; they are his vicars, his vicegerents. The same author supposes, that

some visionary, in order to make the bastardy of William the Conqueror more respectable, bestowed on him, as a gift from heaven, the power to cure the evil by a touch.

The kings of France could not, without a jealous eye, behold this extraordinary gift of celestial power in an English king, without putting in their claim to a similar influence. It was therefore pretended, that they also, from their ancestor, King Clovis, enjoyed the like gift of curing the king's evil.

Queen-consorts never pretended to this prerogative of the royal touch, because their hands, it seems, were not anointed like those of the kings; but Queen Elizabeth, being a sovereign in her own right, cured those, who were afflicted

with this distemper, with great facility. It was happy for his subjects, that Lewis XI. of France, was not a freethinker; his avarice, tyranny, and oppression, would then, perhaps, have been unlimited; but his

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gross superstition was a check to his more dangerous vices, and the fear of damnation, in all probability, saved many an innocent man. Lewis, in order to remove the consequences of an apoplexy, sent for a famous man, called St. Francis of Paul, to cure him. Behold, when the saint arrived, he was terribly afflicted with the king's evil. Here Lewis had an opportunity to do one good turn for another; but it appeared, to all the world, that the king could neither cure the saint nor the saint the king. The courtiers, if they durst, would have loudly laughed at them both.

The house of Brunswick renounced all pretensions to royal witchcraft; they claim no power of curing any distemper, by touch of hand, except avarice and ambition. Mr. Nichols, in his very entertaining notes to the anecdotes of Mr. Bowyer, has given, from undisputed authority, the origin of this imposture, which cost some of our princes 3000l. per annum.

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Queen Elizabeth was so pestered with evil patients in her progress through Gloucestershire, that she honestly told them, 'that God alone could relieve their complaints.' Our pious Charles II. touched no less than 92107 patients, between May 1661 and April 1682./* -- Vide Anecdotes of Bowyer, p. 200.

MACDUFF.

He has no children! ----

If unshaken loyalty, intrepidity of mind, and tenderness of heart, all united in an eminent degree, can distinguish a character,

with submission to Dr. Johnson, Macduff is by these qualities highly discriminated from others. He is, indeed, a proper contrast to Macbeth, whose courage degenerates into frenzy.

We are told, by Colley Cibber, that Wilks had once an intention to resign the part of Macduff, in which he had been much applauded, to an inferior actor, and that Booth had made an exchange of Banquo for this superior character; but that the

/* At a guinea a touch, this would amount to a pretty large sum; and hence we see the origin of this costly trick.

jealousy of Booth's abilities had caused Wilks to resume what he had so indiscreetly given away. In the strong expression of horror on the murder of the King, and the loud exclamations of surprize and terror, Booth might have exceeded the utmost efforts of Wilks. But, in the touches of domestic woe, which require the feelings of the tender father and the affectionate husband, Wilks had no equal. His skill, in exhibiting the emotions of the overflowing heart with corresponding look and action, was universally admired and felt. His rising, after the suppression of his anguish, into ardent and manly resentment, was highly expressive of noble and generous anger.

We must not forget Ryan's Macduff. -- In the representation of this part, he had nothing to struggle with but the harshness of his voice. He assumed such genuine terror and amazement, in the second act, as became the actor who was to impose on the spectator a belief of his having seen his royal master murdered! In the 4th act,

he felt the loss of his wife and children as became a father and a husband. Ryan, we must own, was inferior to Wilks, but not in a degrading distance.

MALCOLM.

---- ---- Macbeth
Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above
Put on their instruments.

This passage is not, I think, well understood by Mr. Steevens, who interprets it, 'the heavenly powers encourage or thrust forward their mortal instruments.' But the author had a sublimer meaning in this noble image; for it means,

Heaven itself is arming in our cause.

In the same sense says Richard II.

For, every man, that Bolingbroke hath prest
To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
Heaven, for his Richard, hath, in heavenly pay,
A glorious angel. Richard II. Act 3.

A similar thought we find in the Suppliants of Æschylus, from the Chorus, speaking of the inscrutable power and wisdom of Jove:

Though in majesty enthron'd,
Thick clouds, and dark, inclose him round,

As from the tower of heaven his eye
Surveys bold man's impiety;
Till, his ripe wrath on judgement bent,
He arms each god for punishment,
And from his high and awful throne,
Sends all his awful judgement down.
Potter's Æschylus, Vol. I. p. 98.

Act V. Scene I.

Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep.

LADY MACBETH.

Hell is murky!

Mr. Steevens supposes the Lady is talking to Macbeth, and here repeats this expression as if it had come from him, in contempt of his cowardice! for, says he, she would not have even hinted the terrors of hell to one whose conscience she saw was too much alarmed already for her purpose. This is certainly very ingenious; but, if

we tread the ground over again, we shall find, that, in reasoning about committing the murder of the King, the fear of hell had no weight with Macbeth. He says positively, that if, without the risk of re-

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taliation, he could accomplish the murder, he would hazard all fear of future retribution, he would jump the life to come. But, though the murderer scorned to take the future world into his consideration, his Lady might think seriously of the pains of hell. Why else does she say, 'Out, damned spot!' why so pathetically speak of 'the smell of blood!' and tell us, that 'all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten her little hand!' and with 'a deep-fetched sigh!' To reason consequentially upon what escapes from a person, disturbed in imagination and distracted with guilt, is not an easy task: but, if we must apply, in this case, to sober argument, 'Hell is murky' would be a natural and fearful suggestion to one who had committed the worst of crimes, and had not quarrelled with her creed. The scene is composed of disjointed thoughts and unconnected ideas, like the picture of a storm, by a great master, where the wreck is variously scattered to shew its terrible effects.

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Scene II.

LENOX.

---- There is Siward's son,
And many unrough youths that even now
Protest their first of manhood.

Something very similar to this we read in Richard II. act the 3d, in Scrope's speech to the King:

---- Boys, with womens voices,
Strive to speak big, and clasp their female joints
In stiff unweildy arms against thy crown.

Scene III.

MACBETH.

---- ---- Then fly, false thanes,
And mingle with the English epicures.

It is an observation, that England is one great cook's shop; and our neighbours must confess, that in no other country are the means of gratifying the appetite to be obtained so plentifully. To a traveller, in England, no sights present themselves so frequently to his view as a variety of large

convenient inns, and houses that furnish good entertainment. Not to contradict any of the commentators, whose remarks on this passage are very reasonable, I shall only observe, that Macbeth lays hold of the vulgar prejudices of his countrymen, against their southern neighbours, to serve his present purpose. The reproach of epicures, in plainer terms, English poke-pudding tikes, or English bag-pudding dogs, is as old, I believe, as the enmity between the two nations, and one which the lower class, or vulgar Scots, used to throw on the English. The frequent skirmishes, between the borderers of both kingdoms, served to keep alive that hateful animosity which the Union itself could scarcely extinguish. The diversions of children were expressive of national strife. The young Scots had formerly a game called Englishmen and Scotchmen: one side was Scotch, and the other English. They took off their upper garments, and laid them severally in heaps; that side, which plundered the other of most clothes,

won the game. This indeed was particularly expressive of the war, for booty, carried on near the borders.

The English were a match for their neighbours in illiberal taunts and scurrilous reproaches, from which even our parliament was not entirely free; for, when James I. proposed to unite the two kingdoms, several members of the lower house

treated his offer in terms of the most significant contempt. In a sarcastic speech, which Osborne has preserved, the Scots were termed, 'sons of the locusts and daughters of the horse-leech.'

The Ombi and Tentyritæ, two nations of Egypt, were not more averse from one another, on account of the former loving crocodiles, and the latter hating them, than the English and Scots were, perhaps for a reason equally ridiculous.

Inter finitimos vetus atque antiqua simultas,
Immortale odium et nunquam sanabile vulnus,
Ardet adhuc, Ombos et Tentyra: summus utrinque
Inde furor vulgo, quod numina vicinorum

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Odit uterque locus, cum solos credat habendos
Esse deos quos ipse colit.
Juvenal, Sat. 15.

MACBETH.

---- She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word!

Macbeth's confidence of victory, in the ensuing contest with Malcolm, was raised to the highest pitch, by the prophecies of Birnam wood and his not being to be slain by one that was born of a woman. In consequence of this opinion, he seems to wish that his Lady had died at a more quiet and less busy time than the present. ---- 'There would have been a time for such a word,' is spoken in the same sense with that which Brutus speaks over the dead body of Cassius: 'Cassius, I shall find time, I shall find time.' 'Had she died after my victory, I could then have paid that respect to her memory which I ought.' This explanation is, in general, I believe, conformable to that of Dr. Johnson on the same passage.

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IDEM.

And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have!

Dr. Johnson thinks the courage of Macbeth preserves some esteem; but that quality he had in common with Banquo and others. I am of opinion, that his extreme reluctance to murder his royal master, his uncommon affliction of mind after he had perpetrated the crime, with the perpetual revolt of his conscience upon the commission of each new act of cruelty, are the qualities which render Macbeth, though not worthy of our esteem, yet an object not entirely unmeriting our pity, in spite of his ambition and cruelty.

MACBETH.

---- Fear not, till Birnam-wood
Do come to Dunsinane.

Birnam-wood, says Mr. Pennant, seems not to have recovered the march of its ancestors to Dunsinane; but there are still to

be seen some remains of Macbeth's castle on this high hill.

Scene VI.

MACDUFF.

Make all our trumpets speak, give them all breath.

This and the following line seem to be allotted to Macduff purely to support his consequence; for, according to the rules of propriety, the commanding officer, Malcolm, should have given this charge.

The most difficult part, an actor has to sustain, consists in proper action, look, and deportment, when he does not speak. I scarcely remember to have seen any exhibitor of Macduff who had not entirely forgotten, by the tranquillity and tameness of his behaviour, the storm which had shaken his whole frame in the preceding act. This is his first appearance after the sad information of his murdered wife and children: should he not, by his look, convince the spectators that he had not lost the

remembrance of all that was dear to him? should not his countenance be impressed with grief and resentment; nay, with impatience, too, to take revenge on the man who had so sensibly injured him? Wilks was the only Macduff I can recollect who seemed to have a tolerable notion of his situation; nor indeed did he, in deportment, answer the idea of what he should feel on the occasion.

MALCOLM.

---- ---- My thanes and kinsmen,
Henceforth be earls.

The title of thane was not confined to Scotland, but common to the southern, as well as northern, part of the island. ---- 'Thanorum appellatio in usu fuit post adventum Normanorum, ut a Domesday liqueat,' says Spelman in his Glossary. ---- Lesly, de Origine Moribus, &c. Scotorum, has the following passage, quoted by the same author: 'Nam in ipsis reipublicæ nostræ rudimentis, cum aliqua adhuc barbaries Scotiam occupasset, quosdam duces,

thanos, vernacula lingua vocabant; illustri familia ortos delegerunt, quibus se suamque familiam regendam committebant.' -- And Buchanan: 'Superioribus sæculis, præter thanos, hoc est, præfectos regionum, sive monarchas, &c. nullum honoris nomen equestri ordine altius.'

Gurdon, in his History of court-baron and court-leet, gives a very copious account of the origin and dignity of the English thane. I shall quote his definition of the word, and something relating to the thane's power and jurisdiction; but must refer the reader to the book itself for farther information:

'The Saxon word thane, or thegne, implies minister, or servant; one who was an honorary servant to the king in the field and in council, not a servant under abso-

lute command, but obliged, by fœderal union, to serve the king in war and council, of one and the other's property.' Gurdon's parliaments, &c. p. 537.

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'The thane had the same jurisdiction in his soke, or manor, as the king had in his great signiory; but neither of them were absolute. The king, in the great signiory, determined by and with the advice of his thanes, as original sharers with the king in the conquered lands; and the thane, in the court of his soke, or little signiory, determined all differences between his men in their civil rights, and also punished criminals, with the advice and consent of his freemen. Life and death were at first within the jurisdiction of the thane's hallmote.' Ibidem.

To pass by unnoticed the observations of the accomplished Mrs. Montague, on Macbeth, would be uncandid and unjust. Her reflections are the product of mature and solid judgement, embellished with language at once forcible and elegant.