

Cunningham 1917 Henry Cunningham (ed.), The works of
Shakespeare -- Macbeth, 2nd ed. (1917), vii--l. "The
Arden Shakespeare"

i

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE
GENERAL EDITOR: W. J. CRAIG
1899-1906: R. H. CASE, 1909

MACBETH

ii

<blank>

iii

THE WORKS
OF
SHAKESPEARE

MACBETH

EDITED BY
HENRY CUNINGHAM

METHUEN AND CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET: STRAND
LONDON

Second Edition

iv

First Published February 23rd 1912
Second Edition January 1917

v

.
.
.

vi

<blank>

vii

INTRODUCTION

I. Prefatory

The Editor is not responsible for the text of this play as printed in this edition. The text, he is informed, is substantially that of Delius as edited by the late W. J. Craig in his "Little Quarto Shakespeare," first published in 1905. It is admitted by all competent scholars that the text of *Macbeth* has been more or less vitiated by the interpolations or additions of some dramatist other than Shakespeare; and that the only real question is as to the extent of these interpolations; but hardly any editor has had the courage of his convictions by venturing to express, in the only adequate way in which it can be done, these convictions in his printed text. Of recent English (including American) editors, Mr. E. K. Chambers and Mr. Mark Harvey Liddell (*Macbeth*, 1903) are, I think, the only exceptions; the latter in a somewhat hesitating way; while the same remark applies to a recent German editor, Hermann Conrad (1907). But at any rate these editors have, in a measure, indicated their views in the text itself by means of brackets, obeli, or other perfectly usual and allowable methods. The segregation of the spurious work of other dramatists from the authentic text of Shakespeare is all the more important and necessary in view of the enormous output of editions during the past twenty years, and also in view of the fact that there is no subject of Shakespearian study more important or more difficult than the ascertainment and settlement, so far as this is, humanly speaking, possible, of his text. "As our knowledge grows," say the editors of *The Cambridge Shakespeare* in their preface (vol. ix. p. xxi, 1893), "so also our admiration and our pleasure in the study increase, dashed only by a growing sense of the textual imperfections and

viii

uncertainties which stand between the author and his readers. For, besides the recognised difficulties, we are convinced that there are many passages, still easily scanned and construed, and therefore not generally suspected of corruption, which nevertheless have not been printed exactly as they were first written. Some ruder hand has effaced the touch of the master." It is greatly to be regretted therefore that the want of courage already referred to should mar the excellence of so many otherwise reputable editions; and to no play of Shakespeare does this remark apply with so much cogency as to *Macbeth*. For example, the so-called "Clarendon" editors (i.e. the editors of the *Cambridge Shakespeare*), in

their well-known and excellent edition of this play (1869) were of opinion that many scenes and passages were not written by Shakespeare, but they failed to substantiate this view by any indications in their text. The unthinking reader who never perhaps looks at an introduction or note, is allowed by editors and publishers to go on reading the adulterating trash as if it sprang from Shakespeare's lawful parentage. Slavish admiration for the Folio cannot go much further; and it makes one almost despair of ever seeing an authentic and unadulterated text of the plays.

These remarks apply with peculiar force to *Macbeth*. For example, there is not a single scholar of any repute, with the exception perhaps of Mr. A. W. Verity, who would now attempt to defend the authenticity of Act III. scene v.; or, in fact, the introduction of the absurd and superfluous character of Hecate. Yet what do we find in every page of *dramatis personae*, on every stage where *Macbeth* is played? We find Hecate admitted as an authentic character, we find her playing her supererogatory part, sponsored by the interpolator of the so-called "witch scenes" -- whether Middleton, or Rowley, or Wilkins. Why should these pantomimic characters of "witches" continue to disfigure this noble tragedy? Shakespeare's ministers of fate and supernatural aid are weird sisters, not "witches." In no single authentic passage of the play does he refer to a "witch," with the sole exception of his reference to "witches' mummy" in IV. i. 23. And, as mentioned in the general introduction, the references to "witchcraft celebrating pale Hecate's offerings" (II. i. 51) and "black

ix

Hecate's summons" (III. ii. 41) are merely references to night. They have nothing to do with the scheme of the tragedy.

The question of the extent of the interpolations in *Macbeth* has been fully dealt with in the general introduction. Putting the matter briefly here, this editor is of opinion that the spurious portions are, in Act I. scenes i., ii., and iii. 1-37 (i.e. the first 118 lines of the play); in Act III. scene v.; and in Act IV. scene i. 39-43 and 125-132, -- in all about 167 lines; and that these interpolations are only concerned with the "weird sister" scenes. He is further of opinion that the only adequate means of emphasising these views is to indicate spurious passages by the use of brackets or obeli, as is in fact done by every competent scholar, both in classical and modern texts; or by the use of smaller type, if not indeed preferably by both methods. Another point occurs in connection with Shakespeare's weird sisters as opposed to the conventional "witches." Shakespeare's authentic tragedy is concerned with his weird sisters alone, and therefore the "witches"

should be deleted from the dramatis personae. For example, I. iii. 48-69 should be printed in the text as follows: --

1 Sister. "All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!" (48)
2 Sister. "All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!"
3 Sister. "All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be king hereafter!" (50)
Ban. "Good Sir, . . . Your favours nor your hate."
1 Sister. "Hail!" (62)
2 Sister. "Hail!"
3 Sister. "Hail!"
1 Sister. "Lesser than Macbeth and greater!" (65)
2 Sister. "Not so happy yet much happier!"
3 Sister. "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:"
All. "So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo,
Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!" (69)

The last two lines should undoubtedly be assigned to *all* the sisters, and not to the "3 witch" and "1 witch" as in the text adopted in this edition. This view is of course quite "revolutionary" in the minds of all adherents of a "conservative" text. Let any reader ask himself if it is really so. Is Shakespeare's text altered? Not a jot. And that is all we are concerned with. If any authority be wanted for such a change, reference may be made to Act I. scene i. where the

x

changes made in the Folio have been universally accepted. It is well known that little or no reliance is to be placed on stage directions, or names of characters; and alterations have been made in these by almost every editor since Rowe (1709). Similarly, in the great incantation scene in Act IV. alterations of the like character should be made. These are mentioned in their places in the notes, but they cannot adequately be brought home to the mind of the reader unless he has the altered text before him. And this important question is concerned with specific points of difficulty in the Folio text occurring in respect of words corrupted, misprinted or omitted; and the equally important matter of the re-arrangement of faultily printed lines. The Editor has attempted to deal with these in their places in the notes; but the only adequate method of dealing with them is by setting them out in the text itself. A few of these may be mentioned in this place by way of illustration -- (I) Emendations, etc.: (a) Corrections of the text: IV. ii. 22, "*Each way amoved*"; IV. iii. 136, "*the grace of Goodness Betide*," etc.; V. iii. 5, "*consequence*"; V. iii. 44, "*sluff*"; V. iv. 10, "*sitting down*." (b) Words or letters added to or removed from the text: I. iv. 35, "sons [and] kinsmen"; I. v. 40, "Come you [ill] spirits"; I. vi. 30, "continue [in] our graces"; II. iii. 80, "Banquo, [up]!"; II. iii. 125, "where[out] our fate"; III. ii. 16, "[become] disjoint, . . . suffer [dissolu-

tion]; IV. ii. 23, "[It] shall not be long"; IV. iii. 44, "of goodly thousands [ten]"; IV. iii. 218, "all [my children]"; V. v. 32, "Well say [it], Sir"; V. vii. 89, "[Hail!]." (II) Re-arrangement of faultily printed lines: I. iii. 7, 8, "Her husband's to Aleppo gone, Master o' the Tiger" (in two lines); II. iii. 107, 108, "they stared . . . them"; II. iii. 126-8, "Let us away . . . foot of motion"; III. i. 45, "Sirrah . . . men our pleasure?"; III. ii. 16, 17, "But let . . . [dissolution]"; III. iii. 9-11, "Then it is he . . . Are in the court"; III. iv. 4-6, "And play . . . Her welcome"; III. vi. 29, 30, "Thither Macduff's gone To pray," etc.; III. vi. 39-40, "Sent he To Macduff," etc.; IV. i. 124, "And points . . . is this so?"; IV. iii. 15-17, "Something . . . an angry god"; IV. iii. 238, "the powers above put on Their instruments"; V. v. 29, "Thou comest . . . Thy story quickly."

xi

When a word is of necessity introduced into the text to supply something which is missing in the scansion of a line, its inclusion in brackets or its printing in italics or both is quite sufficient to put the reader on his guard as to its occurrence or omission in the text of the Folio. And this is entirely the modern practice. For example, it is quite common in Churton Collins's edition of Greene's works (Clarendon Press, 1905), see vol I. p. 100, line 725, in the play of *Alphonsus*, where Collins, following Walker, restores, in his text, the lost word "the," but is careful to enclose it in brackets: "And giue thee that [the] which thou well hast wonne"; remarking that the reading "is certainly supported by the fourth line of the speech, and I therefore introduce it into the text." See also page 121, line 1433, where he adopts *in his text* Dyce's reading, Turkie-[land]. It is needless to multiply examples or to offer further comment. One might only be told that Collins was a rash and incompetent editor.

References to plays of Shakespeare other than the present play are to the well-known *Globe* edition, on the ground of its general acceptance for purposes of reference.

A note or comment well written in the first instance tends to become permanent and need not be repeated in another form. In his notes the Editor has striven to give honour to whom honour is due and to acknowledge indebtedness to previous editors and commentators. It is too much the custom to "convey" from the great eighteenth century editors without any acknowledgment of the debt.

For the "aesthetic appreciation" of the leading characters in *Macbeth* the Editor is greatly indebted to Dr. A. C. Bradley's admirable volume, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904). No more valuable contribution to the study of the great tragedies has

ever been published in either hemisphere. The Editor is indebted to Mr. W. J. Lawrence of Dublin for his communication of a valuable and interesting paper, published by him in the German periodical *Anglia*, on Lock's (or Purcell's) music to *Macbeth*; and he regrets that space will not permit of at least a summary of the paper in the general introduction.

Lastly, the Editor is indebted to the General Editor, Pro-

xii

fessor Case, for many useful notes and suggestions, some of which he has been able to incorporate in the notes; and in particular for the note on "breached with gore," II. iii. 119, which he states was sent to him by the late W. J. Craig, editor of the *Oxford Shakespeare*, and formerly general editor of the *Arden Shakespeare*.

xiii

INTRODUCTION

II. General

The Tragedie of Macbeth appears to have been first printed in the Folio of 1623, being then entered in the books of the Stationers' Company as follows: "Nov. 8, 1623. Mr. Blounte and Isaak Jaggard.] Mr. William Shakespeere's Comedyes, Histories, and Tragedyes, soe many of the said Copies as are not formerly entered to other men. viz. . . . Mackbeth." In the Folio it occupies twenty-one pages, viz. 131 to 151 inclusive, in the division assigned to the Tragedies, coming after *Julius Caesar* and before *Hamlet*. The Folio indicates the acts and scenes throughout, but not the *dramatis personae*, which were first given by Rowe in modern form, although "The Persons' names" were prefixed to Davenant's version of 1674.

It is, unfortunately, somewhat carelessly printed, especially as regards the metrical arrangement. It may have been printed from dictation and from a stage transcript, which, sometime subsequently to its first production in 1606, had certainly been re-handled by another dramatist; and this transcript may have suffered from the wear and tear incidental to frequent performances by the King's company of players between the date of Shakespeare's retirement from London, perhaps in 1611, and the printing of the Folio in 1623. Traces of the blunders and irregularities caused by an imperfect printers' copy of some kind are especially noticeable in the second scene of Act III. In this respect I do not refer in particular to the interpolated matter which masquerades as the second scene of Act I.

Incidentally, in respect of the production of the Folio, it may be remarked that a great deal of misconception seems to exist as to the duty performed by Shakespeare's "friends and fellows," John Heminge and Henry Condell. We are forever

xiv

indebted to them for such share as they did take in its production; and we need not reproach their memory with the failure to perform a duty which they did not undertake. They were not editors as modern editors are. Speaking of the plays in their dedication of the Folio to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, they expressly say: "We have but collected them . . . we cannot go beyond our own powers." And in their well-known Address *To the Great Variety of Readers*, they state, "But it is not our province who onely gather his works, and give them you, to praise him." Heminge and Condell therefore beyond question conceived their duty to be done when they had obtained all the available "copy," whether in the form of MSS., quartos, transcripts, or players' parts of Shakespeare's plays from the archives of the King's company, or other sources, and entrusted them to the undertakers or promoters of the Folio, "Wm. Jaggard (and Isaac Jaggard), Ed. Blount, I. Smithweeke and W. Aspley," at whose "charges" it was printed in 1623, and who were responsible for the printing and "overseeing," which, in the case of *Macbeth* and other plays, were so carelessly performed. Such as it was, the duty of press correction was doubtless apportioned amongst the promoters, and this may account, in part at least, for the unequal amount of care and capacity shown in the printing of the various plays. Be this as it may, the settlement of the authentic text of *Macbeth* is a matter of very great difficulty, and one factor in this is the absence of any antecedent copy, which, as in the case of many other plays printed in quarto form before the date of the Folio, could be used for purposes of comparison. Nevertheless I think the difficulty is not so entirely insuperable as would at first sight appear.

The most important question, and one of surpassing interest, in relation to the text of *Macbeth* is the question of its alteration or interpolation after the MS. left Shakespeare's hand. It is now almost universally admitted that the play has been to some extent re-handled, but to what extent and by whom are points on which there has been and is great diversity of opinion.

In the text as we have it in the Folio, there is a certain foundation of fact for the theory that the interpolator of *Macbeth* was Thomas Middleton (c. 1570-1621), a dramatist partly

xv

contemporaneous with Shakespeare, of whom he was a frequent imitator. His work is distinguished by much inequality, but also by touches of "strange and sudden power." Middleton is placed by such an experienced critic as Saintsbury (see his *Elizabethan Literature*, 1888), at any rate in respect of his first class work, in the front rank of dramatists immediately second to Shakespeare himself. He wrote for the King's company (i.e. the company to which Shakespeare belonged), between 1614 and 1624 or thereabouts; and he is the author, amongst other plays, of *The Witch*, which is generally supposed to have been written about 1614, and the MS. of which was only discovered by Steevens in 1779. In this play occur two songs referred to by their first lines in the stage directions of *Macbeth*, viz. at III. v. 33, "Come away, come away;" and at IV. i. 43, "Black spirits and white." These songs are found in full in *The Witch*, III. iii. 39 and V. ii. 60 (ed. Bullen) respectively; and the inference is almost irresistible that Middleton had been employed by the players to adapt Shakespeare's text in some small measure to the changing taste of the time, and that he had eked out his work with these songs from his own play. The songs had evidently thenceforth become part of the stage version of *Macbeth*, as they were also included by Sir William Davenant in his extraordinary recast of the play in 1674. Confirmation is lent to this theory by the fact that *The Witch* contains several other points of resemblance to *Macbeth*, points the significance of which need not, of course, be too strongly insisted on, although of much significance when read in connection with the other facts of the case. Compare, for instance, the remark of Hecate in *The Witch*, I. ii. 180, "I know he loves me not," with *Macbeth*, III. v. 13 (a scene which is now universally recognised as interpolated), "Loves for his own ends not for you";

The Witch, IV. iii. 17:

"For the maid servants and the girls o' th' house,
I spic'd them lately with a drowsy posset,"

with *Macbeth*, II. ii. 6: "I've drugg'd their possets";

The Witch, V. ii. 85:

"Hec. Come, my sweet sister, let the air strike our time,"

with the interpolated passage of *Macbeth*, IV. i. 129:

xvi

"I'll charm the air to give a sound
While you perform your antique round";

The Witch, IV. iii. 47: "the innocence of sleep,"
with *Macbeth*, II. ii. 35: "the innocent sleep";

The Witch, IV. iii. 78: "there's no such thing,"
with the same expression in *Macbeth*, II. i. 47;

The Witch, v. i. 16: "I'll rip thee down from neck to navel,"
with the interpolated i. ii. 22:

"Till he unseam'd him from the navel to the chaps";

The Witch, III. ii. 145:

"Why shak'st thy head so, and look'st so pale and poorly?"

with *Macbeth*, II. ii. 64: "To wear a heart so white";
and l. 71: "Be not lost so poorly in your thoughts";

The Witch, III. iii. 33: "I'm for aloft,"
with *Macbeth* (interpolated) iii. v. 20: "I am for the air";

The Witch, III. iii. 62: "Malkin my sweet spirit and I,"
with *Macbeth* I. i. 8: "I come, Graymalkin";

and *The Witch*, V. ii. (stage direction), "A caldron in the centre,"
with *Macbeth*, IV. i. (stage direction): "In the middle, a boiling cauldron."

These coincidences of expression, many of them no doubt simply "conveyed," together with other traces of similarity, are enough to emphasise the strong probability that the dramatist of *The Witch* was the person who had a hand in the adaptation of *Macbeth*. The view of Steevens that Shakespeare was indebted to Middleton is utterly inadmissible and need not be discussed. It is enough to make the bare statement that after his earliest efforts in refashioning English historical plays, Shakespeare was *never* indebted, at any rate beyond the outline of a plot or story, to any other writer or dramatist of his time for collaboration or other help in his plays. What may have happened to some of his later plays, such as *Macbeth*, *Timon*, *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, after the MSS. left his hand and he retired from active participation in the work of the stage, is quite another matter. Besides, the most casual perusal of *The Witch* is sufficient to show its immeasurable inferiority to Shakespeare's great tragedy.

It is also possible, though far from being so probable, that the interpolator may have been William Rowley or George Wilkins, and whether or not using Middleton's material. Wilkins, who flourished about 1607, was associated as a playwright with the King's company, and was mainly employed

(possibly in association with Rowley) is responsible for the gross scenes in *Pericles*. Rowley (1585-1642) we know collaborated with Middleton in *A Fair Quarrel* (1614), and with him and other playwrights in many other plays. His verse is distinguished for its harshness, irregularity and extravagance, but occasionally for much pathos and dignity.

The earlier editors and commentators appear generally to have accepted the authenticity of the text of *Macbeth* as it is found in the Folio; but even at the beginning of the nineteenth century indications are not wanting of shrewd opinions and conjectures as to the presence of interpolated matter. For instance, Seymour in his *Remarks* (1805), speaking of the very first scene, says: "The witches here seem to be introduced for no other purpose than to tell us they are to meet again; and as I cannot discover any advantage resulting from such anticipation, but, on the contrary, think it injurious, I conclude the scene is not genuine" (vol. i. p. 72). Again, referring to Act I. scene iii.: "As Macbeth is the great object of the witches, all that we hear of the sailor and his wife is rather ludicrous and impertinent than solemn and material; I strongly suspect it is spurious" (p. 175). In truth, there is no effective answer to these "remarks."

More recent authorities have advanced opinions as to the extent of these interpolations which opposing critics have styled "revolutionary." For example, the Clarendon editors (Clarke and Wright), in the Introduction to their edition of *Macbeth*, 1869, reject the following passages or lines: I. ii.; I. iii. 1-37; II. i. 61; II. iii. 1-46; III. v.; IV. i. 39-47, 125-132; IV. iii. 140-159; V. iii.; V. v. 47-50; V. vii. 61, 62, 64-105; and Fleay in his *Shakespeare Manual*, 1876, was of opinion that even longer portions were to be condemned; but in his *Life and Work of Shakespeare*, 1880, he appears to have very considerably modified these views and to reject only III. v. and IV. i. 39-43. Chambers, in his edition of *Macbeth*, suspects, and therefore rightly brackets. III. v. and IV. i. 39-43 and 125-132. Dr. A. C. Bradley in his *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1904, p. 466, seems to assume that "almost the whole of *Macbeth* is genuine," though he leaves his opinion in great measure unsupported and relies on the arguments of Chambers. Two

xviii

passages, however, seem to him "open to serious doubt," viz. III. v., and IV. i. 39-43.

I am of opinion that the spurious passages are the following, viz. I. i.; I. ii.; I. iii. 1-37 (that is to say the first 118 lines of the play -- its figurehead, so to speak, as we find it in the Folio); III. v.; and IV. i. 39-43 and 125-132, -- in all about 167 lines. I quite agree with Seymour's remark, already

quoted, as to the dubious character of Act I. scene i. Long familiarity with this scene need not blind us to the fact that it does not rise above the ordinary Elizabethan level. Further, the references to "Graymalkin" and "Paddock" would appear to be simply "conveyed" from the great incantation scene, IV. i.; and the line "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" merely reproduces the opening line of the authentic play, viz. I. iii. 38, Macbeth's utterance on his first appearance, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen." But if the scene be genuine, it is probable that Shakespeare intended it to be transacted from the balcony above the stage, so as to represent the weird sisters hovering in the air, preparatory to their sudden appearance to Macbeth and Banquo in scene iii. line 39. I think it is merely fanciful to say, with Spalding (*Elizabethan Demonology*, p. 102), that "this first scene is the fag-end of a witches' sabbath, which, if fully represented, would bear a strong resemblance to the scene at the commencement of the Fourth Act." Spalding is much more to the point when he says that "a long scene on the subject would be tedious and unmeaning at the commencement of the play." The short answer to the idea that the first scene is the "fag-end of a witches' sabbath," is that this was nothing to Shakespeare's dramatic purpose, which was simply and solely the announcement of the prophecies by the weird sisters, as we find them in scene iii.

As to I. ii. and I. ii. 1-37, I am in entire accord with the Clarendon editors in their belief that these scenes were not written by Shakespeare. In respect to scene ii. they very aptly remark: "Making all allowance for corruption of text, the slovenly metre is not like Shakespeare's work, even when he is most careless. The bombastic phraseology of the sergeant is not like Shakespeare's language even when he is most bombastic. What is said of the Thane of Cawdor, lines 54, 55, is inconsistent with what follows in scene iii. lines 72,

xix

73 and 112 sqq. We may add that Shakespeare's good sense would hardly have tolerated the absurdity of sending a severely wounded soldier to carry the news of a victory." With every word of the above, and chiefly for the reasons assigned, I am in entire agreement; and I think that even stronger arguments against the genuineness of these scenes might easily be adduced.

It was decidedly no part of Shakespeare's scheme to enlarge on Macbeth's victories against Sueno and Macdonwald; and scene ii. of the Folio is in fact nothing but an amplification, and an amplification by the interpolator from Shakespeare's own authority, Holinshed, of scene iii. 90 sqq., where Ross and Angus announce to Macbeth the king's reception of the

news of his success and of his title or "addition," viz. the thaneship of Cawdor. It is very significant that in line 90 Duncan *reads* of Macbeth's "venture in the rebels' fight." The posts come as thick as hail. What dramatic necessity was there for the absurd and ridiculous device of a verbal report by the "bleeding captaine" (or sergeant)? I am quite aware that "reads" in this passage may have, as it frequently had in Elizabethan English, the inferential sense of guessing or surmising; but having regard to the expression in I. iii. 100, "*poured them down* before him," the ordinary sense seems essential. It is quite impossible also to get over or explain the gross and staring inconsistency, staggering as it does even Mr. E. K. Chambers, between what is said of the Thane of Cawdor in lines 54, 55, and what follows in the authentic portion of scene iii. lines 72, 73 and 112 sqq. Dr. Johnson's remarks hereon are unanswerable, and well deserve to be quoted at length. He says: "The incongruity of all the passages in which the Thane of Cawdor is mentioned is very remarkable. Ross and Angus bring the king an account of the battle, and inform him that Norway, assisted by the Thane of Cawdor, 'gan a dismal conflict. It appears that Cawdor was taken prisoner, for in the same scene the king commands his present death. Yet though Cawdor was thus taken by Macbeth, in arms against his king, when Macbeth is saluted, in scene iii., Thane of Cawdor, by the witches, he asks, 'How of Cawdor? the Thane of Cawdor lives, A prosperous gentleman,' and in the next line considers the promises that he should be Cawdor

xx

and king as equally unlikely to be accomplished. How can Macbeth be ignorant of the state of the thane whom he has just defeated and taken prisoner, or call him a *prosperous gentleman* who has forfeited his title and life by open rebellion? He cannot be supposed to dissemble, because nobody is present but Banquo, who was equally acquainted with Cawdor's treason. However, in the next scene his ignorance still continues; and when Ross and Angus present him with his new title, he cries out, 'The Thane of Cawdor lives, Why do you dress,' etc. Ross and Angus, who were the messengers that informed the king of the assistance given by Cawdor to the invader, having lost, as well as Macbeth, all memory of what they had so lately seen and related, make this answer, 'Who was the thane . . . have overthrown him' (see I. iii. 109-116). Neither Ross knew what he had just reported, nor Macbeth what he had just done. This seems not to be one of the faults that are to be imputed to transcribers, since, though the inconsistency of Ross and Angus might be removed by supposing that their names were erroneously inserted, and that only Ross

brought an account of the battle, and only Angus was sent to Macbeth, yet the forgetfulness of Macbeth cannot be palliated, since what he says cannot have been spoken by any other." Indeed, to be quite perfect in this common-sense criticism, Dr. Johnson had only to add that Shakespeare was not responsible for this gross and careless piece of incongruity. When scene ii. is rejected, all inconsistency disappears. Even Mr. E. K. Chambers (*Macbeth*, "Warwick Shakespeare") admits the inconsistency and thinks that "confusion is more likely to be due to compression than to interpolation." But why assume "compression"? There is no ground for such assumption, and still less for the view, which is supported by critics like Brandes and Craig, that the play has been much "cut down" or that "many scenes are wanting."

Dr. Bradley (*Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1904, p. 467, note AA) carefully considers this question of compression; and he thinks it not improbable that *Macbeth*, as we have it, is slightly shorter than the play Shakespeare wrote. (1) His first ground is that we have no quarto, and that generally where we have a quarto or quartos we find them longer than the Folio text. No doubt, but this argument is merely negative, and the sub-

xxi

ject of *Macbeth* simply did not admit of more lengthy treatment than Shakespeare has allotted to it. In fact, all the evidence, particularly with respect to the interpolations of the "witch scenes," goes to show that the play was expanded and not compressed. (2) Secondly, he thinks there are perhaps a few signs of omission in our text (over and above the plentiful signs of corruption), and he gives as an example the passage I. iv. 33-43, where, after thanking Macbeth and Banquo for their victories, Duncan proceeds, by a rapid transition, to name Malcolm the Prince of Cumberland; and he thinks the matter, "considering its importance," is disposed of very briefly. But surely, at this stage of the action, the elevation of Malcolm is of comparatively small importance except as furnishing an additional motive or incentive to Macbeth to commit a murder which he had already pondered if not determined on. The matter of primary importance for Shakespeare's purpose is the announcement by the weird sisters of Macbeth's elevation. And besides, Shakespeare himself disposes of the point, very briefly, but sufficiently, when he makes Macbeth say (I. iv. 48-50) --

"That is a step
On which I must fall down or else o'erleap,
For in my way it lies."

Moreover, a very similar transition occurs at the end of

the play, viz. in V. vii. 92-94, where Malcolm "names" the, first Earls of Scotland. (3) Dr. Bradley also instances the striking abruptness and brevity of the sentence in which Duncan invites himself to Macbeth's castle; but he himself supplies the most effective answers to any argument in favour of omissions when he remarks hereon that Shakespeare may have determined to sacrifice everything possible to the effect of rapidity in the first act; that there is no internal evidence of the omission of anything essential to the plot; that Forman, who saw the play in 1610, mentions in his MS. *Book of Plaies and Notes thereof*, nothing which we do not find in our play; and that it is only in the first part of the play (the rest being full enough) that such omissions could occur. And he also very aptly remarks that anyone who wanted to cut the play down would have

xxii

operated, say, on Macbeth's talk with Banquo's murderers, or on III. vi. or on the very long dialogue of Malcolm and Macduff, instead of reducing the most exciting part of the drama. If I may say so, I entirely agree with Dr. Bradley in his view that the play was always an extremely short one; and, as above mentioned, I think it was certainly shorter than the interpolated version as it stands in the Folio. Further, Dr. Bradley thinks it possible, as Malone thought, and rightly, that the play was not composed originally for the public stage, but for some private, perhaps royal, occasion, when time was limited; the presence of the passage about touching for the evil (IV. iii. 140 sqq.) supporting this idea; that some of the scenes (e.g. the "witch scenes" /1 and the battle scenes) would take longer to perform than ordinary scenes of mere dialogue and action; and that a play like *Macbeth*, written in a kind of fever heat from beginning to end, offering very little relief by means of humorous or pathetic scenes, ought to be short and would be unbearable if it lasted so long as *Hamlet* or *Lear*. And Dr. Bradley might, in my opinion, have added another argument, and probably not the least effective, viz. that the subject, simple in itself, did not admit of more lengthy treatment. Strong proof of this appears in the construction of the fourth act, which is unduly lengthened in scenes ii. and iii.; and even in Act III. itself. The scenes (IV. ii., iii.) seem to have been composed with evident effort, as if Shakespeare *felt* the necessity of stretching out his material to the ordinary length of a five-act tragedy, and found lack of dramatic material, which was certainly wanting in his authority, Holinshed. Hence his introduction in Act V. of the famous "sleep-walking scene" of Lady Macbeth, and the magnicently irrelevant soliloquies of the great protagonist himself.

But in truth this idea of compression is entirely gratuitous, and no solid ground can be adduced in support of it. Shakespeare would not be guilty of "compression" if it militated against clearness. What dramatic necessity could there be for "compression" in a play which was obviously found too short for *public* representation; and, in the players' opinion at any rate, had to be enlarged by the botching work of an

/1 This is only applicable to Act IV. scene i.

xxiii

interpolator? Nor is it a case of "explanatory links dropping out," as Professor Herford (Introduction to *Macbeth*, p. 152) puts it, but distinctly a case of excrescent links dropping in; it points by no means to "compression," but to gross and careless interpolation; even though the interpolation be the work of a competent dramatist like Middleton, who was quite capable of adding any number of "Shakespearian touches," if he so willed, and took sufficient pains, in dealing with the work of Shakespeare.

With regard to the metre of Act I. scene ii., no adequate reason can be assigned for the existence of the numerous faulty lines which deface it except sheer hasty and careless workmanship on the part of the interpolator; for the printers of the Folio could not, I am convinced, have blundered so abominably in such a short scene. What other unadulterated play of Shakespeare shows the like at its very commencement? Besides, why should the printers have gone out of their way to wreak a corruptive vengeance on *this* particular scene? Scene ii. of Act III. is also corrupt in its text. But there we have merely verbal omissions, due, beyond doubt, only to some defect in the "copy." As for the phraseology, the mere comparison of the bombastic and extravagant language with the impressive and dignified authentic opening of the play at the entrance of Macbeth and Banquo, iii. 38 sqq., ought to be sufficient to convince any reader or hearer whose ear is not too indurated or elongated for the adequate comprehension of Shakespeare's blank verse, that Shakespeare's hand never rested here. Are we to believe for one moment that the turgid bombast of lines 9-23, for example, immediately preceded the absolutely perfect and splendid versification of the speeches of Macbeth and Banquo, and the latter's in particular, in scene iii.? --

"My noble partner
You greet with present grace and great prediction
Of noble having and of royal hope,
That he seems rapt withal."

If so, the first act, as we find it in the Folio, was begun by Shakespeare drunk and continued by Shakespeare sober. Can it be believed that the mighty poet, at the height of his powers and in the perfection of his dramatic workmanship, started this

xxiv

immortal work with the "swelling bombast" and bloody imagery of scene ii.,^{/1} and followed this up with the trivial, "ludicrous and dramatically impertinent" episode of the "sailor's wife," only to cast them aside in the succeeding solemn and impressive dialogue between Macbeth and Banquo and the weird sisters? The truth of the matter is that the interpolator, be he Middleton or Rowley or Wilkins, had formed no adequate idea of the great conception of the weird sisters. The opening lines (i.e. 1-37) of scene iii., as they stand in the Folio, are dragged in for the purpose of exploiting a "witch scene" and of displaying some of the usual powers attributed to "witches." Not that some of these lines are not admirable lines in themselves, e.g. lines 19-26. As Professor Herford (Introduction, p. 151) puts it, "verses otherwise stamped with genius jostle rudely with every canon of metre, and the magnificent and inexhaustible poetry forces its way through daring anomalies of speech." Exactly; only the verses are not Shakespeare's and the anomalies are not Shakespeare's. It seems to be forgotten by some commentators that Middleton, or in fact almost any other Elizabethan dramatist, was quite capable of attaining to their level, and even of surpassing it. The nervous and incisive diction to be found, for instance, in the chief scenes of Middleton's *Changeling*, will serve to uphold the justice of this opinion. The mingling of different metres too in this spurious part of scene iii. is not in Shakespeare's manner; and having regard to the first entry of Macbeth and Banquo, some of the expressions and stage directions are clumsily introduced. For example, line 30 mentions a drum. It is quite clear that, as Holinshed also states ("they went sporting by the way together, without other companie save only themselves"), Macbeth and Banquo were, on their entry, journeying on horseback alone and unattended. They did not "Enter," as usual, "with drum and colours." (Compare V. v. init.). They simply "Enter." In the face of Forman's account it is idle to say that Shakespeare himself may have introduced the "drum." I doubt if he was responsible for any of the stage directions of the Folio, which would naturally be

^{/1} The schoolboy epithet of "buggy," which has been applied to some recent romances of "slaughter grim and great," exactly expresses the reeking atmosphere of this scene.

xxv

left by him to the stage management; and some of which no doubt were introduced subject to his advice. Again, line 37 speaks of "the charm." No "charm" was necessary here, and Shakespeare never intended any: the idea of a "charm" and the number "thrice" being transparently conveyed by the interpolator from IV. i. in the effort to give a touch of reality to a "witch scene."

As to II. iii. 1-22, commonly called "the Porter's scene," I see no valid reason for rejecting it. Coleridge's well-known criticism has not been generally accepted, and rightly so. He says: "This low soliloquy of the Porter and his few speeches afterwards I believe to have been written for the mob by some other hand, perhaps with Shakespeare's consent; and that, finding it take, he with the remaining ink of a pen otherwise employed just interpolated the words 'I 'll devil-porter it . . . everlasting bonfire.' Of the rest, not one syllable has the ever-present being of Shakespeare." On this Professor Raleigh remarks (*Shakespeare*, 1907, p. 5): "This is the very ecstasy of criticism, and sends us back to the cool and manly utterances of Dryden, Johnson, and Pope with a heightened sense of the value of moderation and candour." The Clarendon editors consider this scene to have been interpolated by Middleton, and they think it to be "strangely out of place amidst the tragic horrors which surround it." But the porter undoubtedly belongs to the family of Shakespeare's "fools," though not perhaps to the highest class. It would seem as if the supreme playwright in him felt the vital necessity of some adequate relief from the awful tension of the murder scene, that he acted up to this necessity and composed the scene, hurriedly perhaps, and, whilst, conceding something to the "groundlings," with a keen anxiety to get on with the main action of the play. None the less too did the practical playwright in him feel the dramatic necessity of allowing time for Macbeth to retire, change his dress and recover his composure. The scene has been so adequately defended by De Quincey in his famous essay *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth* (*Works*, 1863, vol. xiii. p. 192), and also by Hales in his *Notes and Essays on Shakespeare*, 1884, that it is unnecessary and almost impossible to adduce any new argument in support of its authenticity.

xxvi

It may be well, however, to remind the reader of the five points submitted by the latter essayist "as to whether the porter is not, after all, a genuine offspring of Shakespeare's art." (1) The porter's speech is an integral part of the play. (2) It is necessary as a relief to the surrounding horror. (3)

It is necessary according to the law of contrast elsewhere obeyed. (4) The speech we have is dramatically relevant. (5) Its style and language are Shakespearian.

Act III. scene v. and Act IV. scene i. 39-43 and 125-132 are universally condemned as spurious, and justly so. It has already been mentioned that these scenes contain stage directions for two songs which are found in *The Witch* and in Davenant's version of 1674; they can be eliminated from the text without leaving the least trace of their presence; and above all, they contain lines and sentiments utterly alien to and incongruous with the atmosphere of the two great scenes of the weird sisters (I. iii. and IV. i.). Shakespeare had no need for the utterly superfluous character of Hecate in the working out of his simple conception of Macbeth's temptation and ultimate ruin by the instrumentality of the weird sisters. "The instruments of darkness" tell Macbeth truths in the third scene of Act I. only to betray him in deepest consequence in the great first scene of Act IV., and this is the whole scope and purport of the tragedy. What had "a wayward son, spiteful and wrathful" loving "for his own ends" to do with the brave general of Duncan? Why should Shakespeare's dignified sisters dance "like elves and fairies in a ring"? Again, if the "charm" were "firm and good" (l. 38), why should further enchantment be necessary? (l. 43). Why should Macbeth's "sprites" want "cheering up" by the performance of an "antic round"? (l. 130). Finally, the iambic rhythm of these passages is not in accord with the trochaic movement of the remaining (and authentic) portions of Act IV. scene i.

I see no reason for suspecting, with the Clarendon editors, what is commonly called the "king's evil" scene, IV. iii. 140-159. The vocabulary, the style, and the rhythm are absolute Shakespeare; and the inclusion of the passage is exactly what we should expect from the author of the magnificent compliment to Elizabeth in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in a drama like *Macbeth*, written, beyond doubt, for production at Court,

xxvii

and by a player of the King's company. I believe the passage was part of the original draft of the play, written specially for a Court representation, and if this were not so and it were afterwards added, then I believe it was added by Shakespeare himself.

Nor is it necessary to suspect anything in Act V. I cannot find, as the Clarendon editors do, any "singular weakness" in V. v. 47-50, although perhaps Shakespeare himself might, on a revision, have struck out the lines. Nor do I find, as the same editors do, that the last forty lines of the play show a hand other than Shakespeare's. No reliance is to be

placed on the evidence of a stage direction; and the double stage directions "*Exeunt fighting -- Enter fighting, and Macbeth slain*" prove nothing more than that the stage arrangements of this act, whether contemplated by the dramatist or not, may have been modified from time to time by stage managers before the printing of the Folio in 1623. In V. vii. 61, 62, the words "Before my body I throw my warlike shield" certainly do contain a suggestion of bombast, at least to modern ears, but I think not necessarily so to Elizabethans; and the true explanation of their presence *may* be that which is suggested in the notes *ad loc.*

"Shakespeare," say the Clarendon editors, "who has inspired his audience with pity for Lady Macbeth, and made them feel that her guilt has been almost absolved by the terrible retribution which followed, would not have disturbed this feeling by calling her a 'fiend-like queen' (V. vii. 99); nor would he have drawn away the veil which with his fine tact he had dropt over her fate by telling us that she had taken off her life by 'self and violent hands' (100). But surely Malcolm's conception of Lady Macbeth no more expresses the conception which Shakespeare intended to convey to his hearers than, for example, Roderigo's abuse of Othello as 'thick-lips' (*Othello*, I. i. 66) conveys the conception of Othello as a pure negro instead of an Arab or Mauretanian."

Such are the arguments in support of the theory of the interpolation of Shakespeare's work. Neither Heminge nor Condell, nor the promoters, nor, least of all, the printers of the Folio, would be concerned to interfere with or in any way

xxviii

to re-edit the MS. in 1623, or to question the authenticity of any part as not being the work of Shakespeare. The MS. would simply be set up as it stood; and if so, and I submit that it is quite impossible that it should be otherwise, then we shall not be far wrong in assuming, in exact accordance with Forman's account, that the authentic play begins at I. iii. 38. The simple explanation of the introduction of the antecedent scenes of 118 lines would seem to be that after the play became popular, it was discovered that the "characters" of the weird sisters might be exploited to more advantage for spectacular purposes; and that when the interpolator was entrusted by the King's company with the re-handling of the play his chief aim was to expand Shakespeare's weird sister scenes and to lower their tone to the comprehension of the grosser public appetite for spectacle and sensation. It was not difficult for him to prefix the first 37 lines of scene iii. as it stands in the Folio; but in doing so he destroyed the solemnity and

impressiveness of Shakespeare's own opening lines by the introduction of the ludicrous and impertinent episode of the "sailor" and his "wife." In order to work in another "witch scene," or rather, perhaps, to divide his introductory "witch scene" into two parts, the interpolator referred to the only authority, Holinshed (just as Shakespeare had done); and there, and in Shakespeare's own account by Ross and Angus, he found enough material for the amplification of scene ii. which he sandwiched in, so to speak, between scenes i. and iii. *In exactly similar fashion* he introduced another "witch scene" (viz. III. v.) *before* scene vi. of Act III., so as to lead up to the great cauldron scene of Act IV.; scene vi. necessarily coming between to separate them. It is a striking fact that the interpolator does *not presume to interfere* with any other part of the play -- certainly not with the great scenes in which Macbeth and Lady Macbeth appear, or with the later scenes of Act IV., or with Act v. His interpolations are introduced *solely with reference to the two scenes in which the weird sisters appear.*

This, I submit, is a clear and definite account of the interpolator's probable method of procedure, and entirely substantiates the theory that Shakespeare's own play was not interfered with to any greater extent than was necessary for the immedi-

xxix

ate purpose in hand, i.e. to render Macbeth a more spectacular and therefore a more popular draw by the extension and amplification of the scenes originally allotted by Shakespeare to his weird sisters. This purpose was effected by the simple expedient of prefixing a "witch scene" to each of the two scenes in which (and in which only) the "weird sisters" appear. Even the hint for the dances of "the witches" in the interpolated lines 39-47 and 125-132 of Act IV. scene i. is obtained from Shakespeare's own words, "Round about the cauldron go" (line 4). Shakespeare, I am convinced, never intended this "round" of his weird sisters to be anything but slow, dignified, and impressive; the interpolator degraded it into the "antic" performance of "elves and fairies in a ring."

Leaving textual matters for the moment the next important question relating to the play is the date of its composition. The date of the Folio imprint is, of course, no index to the date of composition or of first production on the stage. This is now almost universally assigned, and beyond doubt correctly, to the year 1606. It is well known that Shakespeare's sole authority for the chief events of the tragedy was *The Chronicles of English and Scottish History* compiled by Raphael Holinshed, and first published in 1577. A second edition, which Shakespeare probably used, was published in

1587. Apart from this, the first actual reference in Shakespeare's own time to the subject appears to be an entry in the Stationers' Register, dated August 27, 1596, of Thomas Millington being "likewyse fyned at ijs vjd for printinge of a *ballad* contrarye to order . . . Md. the ballad entituled The taming of a shrew. Also one other *Ballad of Macdobeth*." It is possible, therefore, that this entry may refer to an older interlude or drama of some kind on the subject of *Macbeth*; but probably it was merely a kind of simple story or interlude accompanied by dances, perhaps in the manner of the interludes in Greene's *King James the Fourth*. The comedian Kempe, in his *Nine daies Wonder*, 1600, an account of his morris dance to Norwich (ed. Dyce, Camd. Soc., 1840, p. 21), has a somewhat obscure reference to this "ballad" subject: "I met a proper vpright yovth, onely for a little stooping in the shoulders, all hart to the heele, a penny Poet, whose first making was the miserable stoln story of Macdoel or Macdobeth or

xxx

Macsomewhat, for I am sure a Mac it was though I never had the maw to see it"; and he proceeds to advise its author to "leave writing these beastly *ballets*, make not good wenches prophetesses for little or no profit." The expression "to see it" would seem to refer to a public representation of some kind, and the mention of "good wenches" as "prophetesses" to the weird sisters of the tragedy. But it was beyond question the accession of James I. in 1603 which directed the attention of the purveyors of stage plays to Scottish affairs. Farmer, in his *Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare* (3rd ed. p. 56, 1789), was the first, I believe, to refer to King James's visit to Oxford in 1605, when he was met and addressed on his entry by three students of St. John's College, who alternately accosted him, reciting Latin verses evidently founded on the predictions of the weird sisters relating to Macbeth and Banquo, and thence to infer that Shakespeare may have got the hint for his play from that source. Versions of this interlude are given (1) by Sir Isaac Wake, the diplomatist, in his *Rex Platonicus* (Oxford, 1607), a description in Latin of the king's entertainment at Oxford in 1605, referred to by Farmer in his *Essay*; (2) in a MS. account of the visit in the Museum (MSS. Baker, 7044); and (3) in Anthony Nixon's *Oxford Triumph*, 4^o 1605.

It is quite within the bounds of probability that the news of this Oxford interlude should have reached the ears of the King's company, and that Shakespeare should have been induced to take up the subject of Macbeth for the theme of a tragedy. Malone reminds us that in July, 1606, the King of Denmark came to England on a visit to his sister Queen Anne, a visit which was the occasion of many court festivities, and

that perhaps during this visit *Macbeth* was first exhibited. I think this is extremely probable, and that Shakespeare wrote the play under pressure of time and for a special court performance, availing himself of the opportunity of introducing his allusions to the Scottish king's descent from the latter's alleged ancestor Banquo, and also introducing what is usually termed the "king's evil" scene (IV. iii. 140-159).

Malone (see the *Variorum* of 1821, vol. ii. p. 407) also adduces various "notes of time," as he calls them, occurring in Act II. scene iii., which appear to him strongly to confirm the date 1606. (a) The expression "Here 's a farmer that hanged

xxxix

himself in the expectation of plenty" (l. 4) would seem to refer to the abundant harvest of that year. "The price of wheat," says Malone, referring to the audit books of Eton College, "was lower in that year than it was for thirteen years afterwards, being 33s. the quarter. In the preceding year (1605), as well as in the subsequent year (1607) it was 2s. a quarter dearer. In 1608 wheat was sold at Windsor market for 56s. 8d. a quarter; and in 1609 for 50s. In 1606 barley and malt were considerably cheaper than in the two years subsequent." (b) The expression in l. 9, "Faith here 's an equivocator that could swear," etc., beyond question alludes to the doctrine of equivocation avowed by Henry Garnet, superior of the order of Jesuits in England on his trial for the gunpowder treason on the 28th of March, 1606, which must have attracted universal public attention, and to his "swearing on both the scales against either scale," i.e. directly contradicting himself on oath. Malone might also have referred to the later prophecies of the weird sisters in Act IV., which Macbeth in his desperation characterises (V. v. 43) as "the equivocation of the fiend That lies like truth"; and also to the dialogue between Lady Macduff and her son (IV. ii. 46), "What is a traitor? . . . and must be hanged." (c) Again, the phrase "here 's an English tailor come hither for stealing out of a French hose," in l. 14, points, as Warburton remarked, to the fact that the French hose were then very short and strait, and that a tailor must be a master of his trade who could steal anything from them. French fashions were quickly adopted in England. Compare *Hamlet*, I. iii. 72: "For the apparel oft proclaims the man, And they in France of the best rank and station," etc. -- and the following passage in Anthony Nixon's *Black Year*, 1606, shows that this fashion had been then adopted: "Gentlemen this year shall be much wronged by their taylers, for their consciences are now much larger than ever they were, for where they were wont to steale but half a yard of brood cloth in making up a payre of breeches,

now they do largely nicke their customers in the lace too, and take *more than enough* for the *new fashion's* sake, besides their old ones." Further, the celebrated passage in IV. i. 121: "That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry," as Warburton pointed out, was intended as a compliment to King James the

xxxii

First, who first united the two islands and the three kingdoms under one head. See the note *ad loc. cit.* for the style and title assumed by James after October 24, 1604. The mention of an event of such importance would lose no point in 1606. The so-called "king's evil" scene, IV. iii. 140-159, is a direct and unabashed compliment to King James, and was beyond question written and inserted by Shakespeare himself, though it is merely excrescent on the action of the play. It is possible that Shakespeare, in speaking of "the *succeeding* royalty," may have remembered the passage in Camden's *Remaines*, 1605 (quoted by Chalmers), "that admirable gift *hereditary* to the anointed princes of this realm in curing the king's evil."

Such are the chief references antecedent to 1606 which have mainly induced critics and commentators to assign the composition of *Macbeth* to that year. But certain references in subsequent years are also of importance in confirming that date.

William Warner (1558?-1609) added an account of the *Historie of Macbeth* to the new edition of his *Albion's England* (first published in 1586) which appeared late in 1606. It is hardly possible to ascertain definitely whether this addition was made subsequently or previously to the appearance of *Macbeth* -- I think it was subsequently because it is much more probable that Warner had seen the play than that Shakespeare had read the new edition -- but in either event, the production of *Macbeth* and the 1606 edition of Warner's work lie extremely close together.

In the comedy of *The Puritaine or The Widdow of Watling Streete*, 1607, in which Marston, and not Middleton, must have had no inconsiderable hand, amongst other parodies and imitations of this and other plays of Shakespeare, there is a clear reference, first pointed out by Farmer, in IV. iii. 89, to the ghost of Banquo, when Sir Godfrey Plus says of one of the characters, Corporal Oath, masquerading as a "corpes" in a coffin, "and in stead of a Iester, wee le ha the ghost ith white sheete sit at vpper end a' th Table." This is probably the earliest reference to Shakespeare's play after its production.

Malone also mentions certain other indications of date, viz. (1) the following lines in the *Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey, or Caesar's Revenge*, 1607: --

"Why, think you, lords, that 'tis ambition's spur
That pricketh Caesar to these high attempts?" --

as a probable imitation of Macbeth's soliloquy in I. vii. 25-27; and (2) two passages in the life of Antony in North's *Plutarch*, which he has introduced into *Macbeth*, viz. in I. iii. 84, and III. i. 55; (a) at p. 932 (ed. 1631): "In the end they [i.e. the Roman soldiers in Parthia] were compelled to live of hearbs and roots, but they found few of them that men do commonly eate of, and were enforced to tast of them that were neuer eaten before: among the which, there was one that killed them, and made them out of their wits. For he that had once eaten of it, his memory went from him, and he knew no manner of thing, but onely busied himself in digging and hurling of stones from one place to another"; (b) at page 926 (ed. 1631): "With *Antonius* there was a Soothsayer or Astronomer of Egypt, that could cast a figure, and iudge of mens natiuities, to tell them what should happen to them. He either to please *Cleopatra*, or else for that he found it so by his art, told *Antonius* plainly, that his fortune (which of it selfe was excellent good, and very great), was altogether blemished and obscured by *Caesar's* fortune: and therefore he counselled him vtterly to leaue his company and to get him as far from him as he could. For thy *Demon*, said he, (that is to say, the good angell and Spirit that keepeth thee) is afraid of his; and being couragious and high when he is alone, becometh fearfull and timorous when he cometh neare vnto the other." From these passages it may with reason be inferred that Shakespeare was engaged in reading the life of Antony in North's *Plutarch* shortly before the composition of *Macbeth*.

Daniel seems to imitate *Macbeth*, I. v. 64, and III. ii. 27, in a passage in the 8th book of his *Civil Wars*, 1609: --

"He draws a traverse 'twixt his grievances,
Looks like the time; his eye made not report
Of what he felt within; . . .
Wore a clean face upon a cloudy heart."

Next, we have the well-known and oft-quoted account by Dr. Simon Forman of the performance of *Macbeth*, witnessed by him at the Globe Theatre in April, 1610. This was certainly Shakespeare's play, as the points of similarity between it and this account of Forman's are too striking to leave room

for any intelligible doubt on the matter. Forman was a quack physician of Lambeth who (*inter alia*) practised as an

astrologer and fortune-teller, but eventually succeeded in obtaining a licence to practise physic from Cambridge University, and died in 1611. He left, among other MSS., a record of certain plays which he had seen acted, styled *The Booke of Plaies and Notes therof per formans for Common Pollicie*, i.e. as affording useful lessons in the common affairs of life, now preserved in the Bodleian Library (Ashmolean MSS. 208).

His account of *Macbeth* is as follows: --

"In Mackbeth at the glod [i.e. glob], 16j0, the 20 of Aprill, ther was to be obserued, firste, howe mackbeth and Bancko, 2 noble men of Scotland, Ridinge thorowe a wod, the[r] stode before them 3 women feiries or Nimphes, And saluted Mackbeth, sayinge 3 tyms vnto him, haille mackbeth, king of Codon; for thou shalt be a kinge, but shall beget No kinge, &c. then said Bancko, what all to mackbeth And nothing to me. Yes, said the nimphes, haille to thee Banko, thou shalt beget kinges, yet be no kinge. And so they departed & cam to the courte of Scotland to Dunkin king of Scotese, and yt was in the dais of Edward the Confessor. And Dunkin bad them both kindly wellcome. And made Mackbeth forth with Prince of Northumberland, and sent him hom to his own castell, and appointed mackbeth to prouid for him, for he wold Sup with him the next dai at night, & did soe. And mackbeth contrived to kull Dumkin, & thorowe the persuasion of his wife did that night Murder the kinge in his own Castell, beinge his gieste. And ther were many prodigies seen that night & the dai before. And when MackBeth had murdered the kinge, the blod on his handes could not be washed of by any means, nor from his wiues handes, which handled the bloddi daggers in hiding them, By which means they became both moch amazed and affronted. the murder being knowen, Dunkins 2 sonns fled, the on to England, the [other to] Walles, to saue them selues. They beinge fled, they were supposed guilty ot the murder of their father, which was nothings so. Then was Mackbeth crowned kinge, and then he for feare of Banko, his old companion, that he should beget kinges but be no kinge him selfe, he contriued the death of Banko, and caused him to be Muredred on the way as he Rode,

xxxv

The next night, being at supper wzth his noble men whom he had bid to a feaste to the whiche also Bamco should haue com, he began to speake of Noble Banco, and to wish that he wer ther. And as he thus did, standing vp to drincke a Carouse to him, the ghoste of Banco came and sate down in his cheier be-hind him. And he turninge About to sit down A-gain sawe the goste of banco, which fronted him so, that he fell in-to a great passion of fear and fury, Vtteringe many

[many] wordes about his murder, by which, when they hard that Banco was Muredred they Suspected Mackbet.

"Then MackDove fled to England to the kinges sonn, And soe they Raised an Army, And cam into Scotland, and at dunston Anyse overthruwe mackbet. In the meane [mean] tyme whille macdoue was in England, Mackbet slewe Macdoues wife & children, and after in the battelle mackdoue slewe mackbet.

"Obserue Also howe Mackbetes quene did Rise in the night in her slepe, & walke and talked and confessed all, & the doctore noted her wordes."

The year 1610 is therefore the extreme limit of date in which the play could possibly have been produced for the first time. The Clarendon editors are of opinion (Introduction to *Macbeth*, 1869, p. vii) that "in all probability it was then a new play, otherwise he [Forman] would scarcely have been at the pains to make an elaborate summary of its plot." But having regard to the facts already stated, and particularly to the above-mentioned reference to *The Puritan*, 1607, this opinion cannot be supported. It may, indeed, in 1610 have been a comparatively new play, not yet witnessed by Forman, assuming that it was originally produced, as was almost certainly the case, at a Court performance in 1606, and between that date and 1610 "neuer stal'd with the Stage, neuer clapper-clawd with the palmes of the vulgar." (Compare the preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, 1609.) Besides, even if it had been produced on the public stage long prior to 1610, Forman, with every opportunity of seeing the play before that date, for many reasons may not have troubled to do so.

Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, 1611, V. i. 23-26, seems to contain another clear allusion to Banquo's ghost: --

xxxvi

"When thou art at thy table with thy friends,
Merry in heart, and filled with swelling wine,
I 'll come in midst of all thy pride and mirth,
Invisible to all men but thyself";

and Steevens points out Webster's imitation of *Macbeth*, V. i. in his *Vittoria Corombona*, 1612, V. i.: --

"Here's a white hand,
Can blood so soon be washed?"

The cumulative force of the above-mentioned references enables us with reasonable assurance to assign the composition of *Macbeth* to the year 1606; and in all probability to the summer or early autumn of that year.

The evidence of style and versification points to the same conclusion. It is impossible within the limits of this Introduction to furnish any argument on the tests which are usually applied to determine the date of any particular play: it need only be stated that with regard to the four great tragedies which admittedly come near each other in point of time, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth*, the chief tests usually applied, viz. (a) the speech-ending test, (b) the overflow test, and (c) the light and weak-ending test, entirely confirm the evidence from all other sources that *Macbeth* was the last composed of the four, and that the style is transitional between these and the latest plays, beginning with *Antony and Cleopatra*.

As already remarked, Shakespeare's sole authority for the chief events of the tragedy was the well-known *Chronicles* of English and Scottish History compiled by Raphael Holinshed and first published in 1577. A second edition was published in 1587, with a more modernised text and containing additional passages. This latter was probably the edition used by Shakespeare (see the Preface to Boswell-Stone's extracts). His narrative of *Macbeth* is taken from the twelfth book of the *Scotorum Historiae* of Hector Boece (1465-1536), Principal of King's College, Aberdeen, a "history" which comprised much that is fabulous as well as historical, and much that is taken from Fordun, who flourished in the last quarter of the 14th century, and wrote a *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* (see Skene's edition, 1871). Shakespeare did not find much to alter in Holinshed's story of *Macbeth*, but he did not treat it

xxxvii

as historical, nor does he restrict himself to following in continuous fashion the narrative of the Chronicle. In particular, for the murder of Duncan he adopts in many of its details and incidents Holinshed's narrative of the murder of King Duffe by Donwald, who had conceived a hatred against the king, owing to the execution of some of Donwald's kinsmen for participation in sorcery against the king, and whose wife counselled him to the murder. In this part of the Chronicle also Shakespeare found warrant for Duncan's presence as a guest in *Macbeth*'s castle; Lady *Macbeth*'s instigation of the murder; the king's drunken chamberlains and their slaughter by *Macbeth*; and the suspicions caused by his over-acted horror on the discovery of the crime. Shakespeare also probably got the hint for *Macbeth*'s remorse from still another part of the Chronicle, namely the story of King Kenneth III., who had secretly poisoned his nephew Malcolm. After the murder of Duncan and the flight of Malcolm and Donalbain, the Chronicler represents *Macbeth* as an able and vigorous

ruler for the space of ten years out of the seventeen during which his reign lasted; whilst he enacted many "wholesome laws and statutes." This, of course, dramatic exigencies forbade Shakespeare to enter into. Holinshed goes on to narrate how Macbeth's guilty conscience urges him on to the murder of Banquo and his son. Nothing prospers with Macbeth after this murder; "every man began to doubt his own life." Macbeth causes the thanes of each shire to superintend the building of his new castle of Dunsinane, Macduff refuses to attend and resolves to go to England and invite Malcolm to claim the crown. Macduff's meeting with him is freely paraphrased by Shakespeare in the long scene iii. of Act IV. For the digression commonly called the "king's evil" scene (IV. iii. 140-159) Shakespeare probably turned to Holinshed's first volume, the History of England, where an account of Edward the Confessor's miraculous gifts is to be found. Many of the succeeding passages illustrate the last act of *Macbeth*, of course with the exception of the sleep-walking scene, which is wholly Shakespeare's invention. So, too, is the dialogue on the entry of Duncan into Macbeth's castle, the dagger scene, the Porter's scene, Macbeth's dialogue with the murderers, the banquet scene with its introduction of Banquo's ghost, the

xxxviii

great incantation scene of Act IV., the conversation between Lady Macduff and her son, the wonderful speeches of Macbeth to the doctor, and to Seyton on the death of the queen during his last despairing stand against Malcolm and Macduff. The extracts from the Chronicles bearing on the plot of *Macbeth* may be found reprinted in almost every school edition of the play; and there are many specific references to Holinshed to be found in the notes on particular passages of the play.

With regard to the construction and general characteristics of the tragedy, the construction is outlined with great boldness and simplicity. The first three acts are the natural outcome of Macbeth's first encounter with the weird sisters; the last two are the like outcome of the second and chief meeting with them, viz. in the great incantation scene of Act IV. Thus the play naturally divides itself into two parts, each prefaced by an appearance of the weird sisters, (1) the temptation of Macbeth with the fatal "consequence" of the murders of Duncan and Banquo, (2) his confirmation in the "bloody bold and resolute" course which ends in his final doom. Hence the supreme importance of the supernatural element.

As in *Hamlet*, it is the fascination of the supernatural which explains in some measure the popularity of *Macbeth*, and raises the play to the height of dramatic sublimity. But this tragedy has in addition its own characteristics. It is much the

shortest of the tragedies, as *Hamlet* is the longest. In its language we find those elements of compression, energy, rapidity, ruggedness, and even violence which are, speaking generally, absent from *Hamlet*. The two great characters are drawn on an almost superhuman scale. What one critic has aptly called "the solemn majesty of the ghost," in *Hamlet*, appearing in armour and standing silent in the moonlight at Elsinore is exchanged for the weird sisters, shapes of horror dimly seen in storm and tempest, or revealed by the glare of the cauldron fire in their dark cavern. It is exchanged for the ghastly face of the "blood-boltered" Banquo, smiling on his murderer and pointing in triumph at his successor kings. The action of the play is almost fiery in its speed, hurrying on through the five brief scenes of the first Act to the great crisis of the murder of Duncan at the beginning of Act II.; then, with gathering force to the murder of Banquo in Act III.; and only

xxxix

pausing at the peaceful Court of Edward the Confessor to return to the final scenes which seal the doom of Macbeth. As already remarked, the play is the shortest of the great tragedies; but it does not give us any impression or feeling of brevity, but rather one of concentrated speed. As we peruse it or see it acted we almost feel as if the greyness of a Scottish moor and the mist and darkness of the Scottish atmosphere had settled down on the scenes. Most of these -- at any rate most of the effective dramatic scenes -- take place at night or in the dark. The fateful vision of the air-drawn dagger, the murder of Duncan, the murder of Banquo, the famous sleep-walking scene all take place at night. Lady Macbeth is fearful of the darkness and has light by her continually. When she speaks of the place of anticipated torment for her guilty and tortured soul, she uses the fearful expression, "Hell is murky." The weird sisters appear to Macbeth first in thunder and mist (I. iii.), and secondly in the gloom of a dark cavern (IV. i.). When the murder of Duncan is accomplished and the next day arrives, its light is "strangled" and darkness entombs the face of the earth. On the other hand, the darkness is not unrelieved. The play gives us also an impression of colour, but this is the colour of blood. The ideas and imagery of blood seem facing us continually. Putting aside the absurd episode of the "bleeding sergeant" and his gory romance of Macbeth's prowess in battle, we have Lady Macbeth praying the ill spirits to make thick her blood and stop up the access of remorse. We have the daggers of Duncan's unfortunate grooms "unmannerly breeched with gore"; their faces smeared; the skin of the murdered king "laced" with his blood; the murderer of Banquo appearing at the door of the banquet room

with "blood upon his face"; we have Banquo the "blood-boltered"; we have Macbeth gazing on his bloody hands and Lady Macbeth ceaselessly rubbing hers to escape the smell of blood. And finally, as an eminent critic has put it, the most horrible lines in the whole tragedy are those of her shuddering and tortured cry: "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" It is, says Dr. Bradley, "as if the poet saw the whole story through an ensanguined mist, and as if it stained the very blackness of the night."

But the most potent agency in connection with the atmos-

xl

phere of the tragedy is the influence of the weird sister scenes on the imagination, and I think Shakespeare so intended it. We have now to deal with his conception of the weird sisters, as the primary supernatural machinery of the tragedy.

Shakespeare never throughout the whole course of the tragedy calls these, his beings of "metaphysical aid," by the term "witches." /1 Throughout they are dignified, impressive, sexless beings, ministers of fate and the supernatural powers; just as he read of them in Holinshed as "women," "sisters," "weird sisters" and "ye Goddesses of destinie or els some Nymphes or Feiries endewed [al. indued] with knowledge of prophesie by their Nicromanticall science": and just as Holinshed found them in Wyntoun's *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland*, vi. i8. 17-26 (circ. 1424): --

He thowcht, quhile he wes swa sythand,
He sawe thre Wemen by gangend;
And þai Wemen þan thowcht he
Thre Werd Systrys mast lyk to be.
þe fyrst he hard say gangand by,
Lo yhondyr þe Thayne of Crombawchty.
þe toþir Woman sayd agayne,
Of Moraye yhondyre I se þe Thayne.
þe þryd þan sayd, "I se þe Kyng."
Al þis he herd in hys dremyng.

Shakespeare's weird sisters are essentially and wholly distinct from Middleton's "witches" or those of any other contemporary dramatist. But for his dramatic purposes he thought fit to endow them with such external resemblance to the witches of vulgar imagination as to be readily appreciated by his theatrical audiences. The hint for this he also found in Holinshed. After the death of Banquo, Macbeth is warned by "certeine wizzards in whose words he put great confidence, (for that the prophesie had happened so right which the three faries or Weird Sisters had declared vnto him) how that he ought to take heed of Makduffe" (Hol. II. *Hist. Scot.* 174). He becomes careless of compassing Macduff's death when "a

certaine *witch*, whom hee had in great trust had told him that he should neuer be slaine with man born of anie woman, nor

/1 "*Witchcraft* celebrates Pale Hecate's offerings" (II. i. 51); and "black Hecate's summons" (III. ii. 41) are merely references to *night*, and have nothing to do with the scheme of the tragedy.

xli

vanquished till the wood of Bernane came to the castell of Dunsinane" (ibid.). Shakespeare utilised this hint to the full: but nevertheless it cannot be too strongly insisted on that his supernatural beings are not "witches." They are the "weird sisters" in I. v. 8 (Macbeth's letter); II. i. 20; III. iv. 133; IV. i. 136; "weird women" in III. i. 2; and "the sisters," simply, in III. i. 56, -- all exactly as he found in Holinshed. It is quite immaterial that they may be or are called "witches," or are merely labelled with numbers in the stage directions of the Folio.

This may have been by Shakespeare's own direction, or it may not; I think not: but in any case it does not affect *his* text. He therein describes the sisters as wild in their attire, of withered feature and unearthly appearance, bearded, and with chappy [i.e. wrinkled] fingers and skinny lips (I. iii. 40, 41, 44, 45, 46). They have power to vanish into the air (I. iii. 79; V. 5; IV. i. 133). They are prophetesses and can look into the future (I. iii. 59, 78); and have more in them than mortal knowledge (I. v. 2); they are the instruments of darkness (I. iii. 124); of fate and metaphysical [i.e. supernatural] aid (I. v. 29); and are thus able to raise apparitions -- their "master spirits" (IV. i. 63); the spirits that know all mortal consequence (V. iii. 4); the fiends that lie like truth (V. v. 43); the juggling fiends (V. vii. 48). On the other hand Shakespeare bestows on them *some* of those characteristic powers and attributes of mortal "witches" which were part of the demonology of his time. They have as "familiars" the cat, the hedge-pig and the somewhat mysterious "Harpie" (IV. i. 1, 2, 3). They raise a "charm" from ghastly ingredients in a cauldron (IV. i. *passim*); one of which is *witches'* mummy (which would seem to imply that mere earthly witches were creatures of a lower grade); they ride on the air (IV. i. 138); they can untie the winds, raise waves, lay corn, blow down trees and overturn castles and palaces (IV. i. 52-57). These may be assumed to be the attributes of the sisters as we find them in Shakespeare's authentic text. But the cauldron and its ingredients, no less than the bestowal of these witch-like powers and attributes, formed a necessary concession to the rising taste for melodramatic and spectacular incidents: it was not in itself essential to the raising of the apparitions which lured Macbeth on to his

doom -- Shakespeare, in a word, to quote Professor Herford (Introduction to *Macbeth*, p. 161), "has blended the characteristics of all three [the weird sisters, the wizards and the certain witch of Holinshed] in his weird-sister witches . . . who speak a language which admits the extremes of sublimity and grossness, of mystic suggestion and realistic detail, the wild elemental poetry of wind and storm, and the recondite lore of the foul and noisome potencies of matter. The hideous imaginings of popular and academic demonology, so busily promoted by the king, are drawn upon without reserve; but we see them through an enchanted atmosphere." If, then, we realise that these supernatural agents of the tragedy are only "witches" in so far as Shakespeare has endowed them for his dramatic purposes with certain characteristics of the demonology of his time, and that the sovereign factor in his conception is that of ministers of fate and supernatural aid, and that hence they should be uniformly styled "weird sisters," as we find them in the play, and never "witches," we shall have nearly arrived at the true conception of these characters as Shakespeare drew them. They are not, as Fleay and other critics have supposed, allied to the Norns of Scandinavian mythology. Nor did Shakespeare, as Spalding, in his *Elizabethan Demonology*, 1880, has attempted to show, replace Holinshed's weird sisters or Goddesses of Destiny by the witches of common superstition, merely to endow them with command over the elements. They are creatures existing on a higher plane; and, again to quote Herford, "in the elemental poetry of wind and storm."

Supernatural agency in *Macbeth* and its effect on the ultimate fate of Macbeth himself is not entirely confined to the weird sisters. The appearance of Banquo's ghost in Act III. has given rise to certain interesting discussions (1) as to whether two ghosts are seen, viz. that of Banquo and that of Duncan; and (2) whether Banquo's ghost should be represented bodily or be regarded as a mere hallucination on the part of Macbeth.

(1) Seymour in his *Remarks*, etc. (1805) appears to have been the first to think that two ghosts are seen, Duncan's first, and afterwards that of Banquo; and chiefly on the ground that no new terror or "augmented perturbation" was

to be produced by the re-appearance of the same object in the same scene. Knight was strongly inclined to think that to make the ghost of Banquo return a second time at the moment when Macbeth wishes for the presence of Banquo is not

in the highest style of art. Hunter also inclined to the opinion of those who thought that the ghosts of both Duncan and Banquo appeared at the banquet. But the preponderance of fact and sound opinion is in favour of Banquo's ghost alone. Forman, as we have seen, speaks with no uncertain sound in his *Book of Plays*. "The next night, being at supper with his noble men whom he had bid to a feaste to the whiche also Bamco should have com. . . . the ghoste of Banco came and sate down in his cheier be-hind him. And he turninge A-bout to sit down Again sawe the goste of banco." Forman makes no mention of the ghost of Duncan. Collier thought that the opinion that the second ghost was that of Duncan and not that of Banquo was not founded on a correct interpretation of the text. Dyce (*Remarks*, p. 197) is emphatic on the point: "It is certain," he says, "that the stage directions which are found in the early editions of plays were designed *solely for the instruction of the actors*, not for the benefit of the readers; and consequently, if Shakespeare had intended the ghost of Duncan to appear as well as the ghost of Banquo, he would no doubt have carefully distinguished them in the stage directions, and not have risked the possibility of the wrong ghost being sent on by the prompter. Secondly, it is certain that when Dr. Forman saw *Macbeth* acted at the Globe, the ghost of Duncan did *not* appear." And Grant White is equally emphatic: "That this first ghost is *Banquo's* is beyond a doubt; and that the second is also his, seems almost equally clear from like considerations of Macbeth's mental preoccupation with the recent murder, and the appearance of the ghost again upon a renewed bravadoing attempt to forestall suspicion by the complimentary mention of Banquo's name. To all which must be added Dr. Forman's testimony." I am not aware that the ghost of Duncan has ever been represented on the stage. (2) As to the actual representation of Banquo's ghost: we have already had Forman's evidence. No less emphatic is the stage direction of the Folio for what it is worth, "*Enter the ghost of Banquo and sits*

xliv

in Macbeth's place." The poet Campbell considered that the idea of omitting the ghost of Banquo "was a mere crotchet, and a pernicious departure from the ancient custom. There was no rationality in depriving the spectator of a sight of Banquo's ghost merely because the company at Macbeth's table are not supposed to see it. . . . The stage-spectre of a dagger would be ludicrous; but not so is the stage-spectre of a man appearing to his murderer. Superstition sanctions the latter representation." Knight well remarks: "It is a piece of consummate art that Macbeth should see his own chair

occupied by the vision of him whose presence he has just affected to desire." And Professor Wilson: "What could the audience have understood to be happening, without other direction of their thoughts than the terrified Macbeth's bewildered words? He never mentions Banquo's name -- and nobody then sitting there then knew that Banquo had been murdered. . . . Shakespeare and his audience had no difficulty about one person's seeing what another does not -- or one's not seeing, rather, that which another does . . . no difficulty about the bodily representation of Thoughts -- the inward by the outward." And the practice of all recent distinguished actors such as Macready, Booth, Phelps, Irving and Tree would seem to give countenance to the theory that Shakespeare intended the actual representation of Banquo's ghost.

In this tragedy the supreme dramatic energy is concentrated upon the two great protagonists, who in their sublimity and importance dwarf all the other characters. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have this element of sublimity; and both, in spite of the horrors for which they are responsible, inspire us with awe, and even to some extent with pity. Both have the same passion of ambition, and to that extent they are alike. Both are born to rule, and both are of proud and dominating temper. Their thoughts and aims are habitually of place and power -- "solely of sovereign sway and masterdom," as Lady Macbeth puts it. Their ambition is not divided. They support and love one another, and they suffer together -- almost to the end, even when they drift somewhat apart.

But the contrast between them, as drawn by the master dramatist, is almost as striking as the resemblance. When, for example, the murder of King Duncan is projected, it pro-

xlvi

duces quite different effects on Macbeth and his wife. *Then* Lady Macbeth overshadows her husband, though afterwards she retires into the background, and Macbeth himself becomes the leading figure in the drama.

In considering Macbeth's character, in the first place it is absolutely wrong to look upon him as a half-hearted cowardly criminal, just as it is equally wrong to consider Lady Macbeth as wholly an unsexed "fiend." A striking characteristic of Macbeth is his undoubted courage, -- what man dares he dares, i.e. in regard to all manifest and open dangers. We imagine him as a great warrior, rough and masterful, a man who inspires fear and admiration. He is not of a noble nature, like Hamlet or Brutus or Othello, but he has a strong sense of honour and the value of a good name. By temperament he is, as above remarked, exceedingly ambitious, and this feature in him is greatly strengthened by the influence of his

wife. There is in him besides a much more vivid peculiarity, and when we appreciate this, I believe we have the key to Shakespeare's conception of his character. He is bold, he is ambitious, he is a man of action, but he is also, within limits, a man of imagination. Through his vivid imagination he is kept in touch with supernatural impressions, and is liable to supernatural fears. His better nature incorporates itself in images which alarm and terrify instead of speaking to him in the language of moral ideas and commands. These promptings of his better self -- his "better part" as Shakespeare himself perhaps would say -- seem to Lady Macbeth the creations of nervous fear, and are sometimes, as Coleridge said, referred by Macbeth himself to the dread of vengeance or the restlessness of insecurity. As we see in his soliloquies, his consciousness dwells chiefly among considerations of outward success and failure, while his inner being is convulsed by conscience. Hence he is unable to understand himself, just as Lady Macbeth is unable to understand him; and he is equally misunderstood by actors and critics who represent him as a cold-blooded, calculating, pitiless coward who shrinks from crime because it is dangerous and suffers afterwards because he is unsafe. In reality his courage is immense; he rushes from crime to crime, though his soul always conjures up shapes of terror and warns him that he is giving his "eternal jewel"

xlvi

to the common enemy of man. Macbeth's imagination is excitable and intense, but it is narrow. It is not the noble and universal meditative imagination of Hamlet. The only things which stimulate his imagination are the thrills of sudden startling and supernatural fear. Manifest dangers leave him unmoved. What really appals him is the image of his own guilty heart or bloody deed, and by this he is wholly possessed. Look at the "horrid image" of Duncan's murder which unfixes his mind, and causes his hair to stand on end. This was not for fear of any consequences, nor because the deed was bloody. What holds him back is the hideous vileness of the deed as depicted by the power of his own imagination. Similarly, when the deed is done, he is mad with horror, but not the horror of detection. He has to be prompted to wash his hands, and get on his night-gown. What he thinks of is that he could not say "Amen," because his vivid imagination pictured his parched throat as the swift and immediate judgment of heaven on the crime. On the other hand, when his imagination is at rest, he is practical and self-controlled; for example, when in Act III. scene i. he skilfully obtains from Banquo the information necessary for the latter's murder.

After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth's character seems to

harden, and we have no hope of his redemption. He is in blood stepped in too far. But the heart-sickness which comes from the perception of his crime is not his habitual state. This appears from two considerations. The consciousness of his guilt is stronger than the consciousness of failure, and it keeps him in a perpetual agony of restlessness. He cannot sleep. In the search for oblivion he must have ceaseless action. Next, his ambition, his love of power, are much too strong in him to permit him to resign the pride of place for which he has "put rancours in the vessel of his peace." As an eminent critic has said, "The will to live is mighty in him." The forces which impelled him to aim at the crown now re-assert themselves, and he faces the world, desperate, undaunted, never acknowledging defeat. He will see the whole universe in ruins first, and he challenges fate to do her worst. It is this frame of mind and soul which decides him on the murder of Banquo. The fear is the fear of Banquo and the promise of his kingdom to Banquo's issue. The dead man will not haunt him perhaps

xlvi

if the deed is done by other hands; it is done, and all the horror of Duncan's murder returns in the banquet scene. But this horror has now less power, and Macbeth has more will. He faces the image of terror, and when it is gone, he is "a man again." His hardening conscience is now quite seared, he cannot turn back, and he himself goes to seek the weird sisters. He must beware Macduff, but he suspects no double meaning in their words, and he will not spare Macduff or any of his kin. Nothing but savage destruction will quiet his inward fever, and he proceeds to murder Macduff's innocent wife and children. He becomes an open tyrant, and his country sinks beneath his yoke. And yet he never quite loses some measure of our sympathy. This perhaps arises from our admiration of the sublime courage of the born soldier, with which, when cheated of his last hope, he faces earth and hell and heaven.

Just as the first half of *Macbeth* is greater and more intensely interesting than the second, so in that first half is Lady Macbeth the greatest and most commanding personality. In fact, she is the most awe-inspiring figure in the whole gallery of Shakespeare's mighty creations. As we have already seen, she has many qualities in common with her husband; but she is sharply distinguished from him in the main by her inflexibility of will, which seems in her to dominate all morality, feeling and conscience alike. She links will to deed: there is no line of demarcation between them. She immediately assumes the direction of affairs when her victorious husband returns, and impels him to the deed of murder by the sheer

force of her will and her over-mastering self-control. Consequences, which have such meaning for Macbeth himself, have none for her, and her undaunted courage sweeps him off his feet. She is to "bring forth men children only." Even after the horror of Duncan's murder, after the appearance of Banquo's ghost, her self-control is unimpaired. From beginning to end, although she makes slips in acting her part, as e.g. in not showing any natural feeling in her remark to Banquo after the discovery, "What, in our house?" she never complains, she stands by her husband till the end, but never asks his help: she is self-sufficient, self-centred, self-controlled, like the great author of her creation himself. She never by word or look

xlvi

betrays her husband, even if she unconsciously says too much in her sleep-walking scene. Yet even in the earlier part of the tragedy, we can detect certain traces of feminine weakness and human feeling which perhaps account for her final breakdown. Her over-mastering force of will was exerted to overcome not only her husband's reluctance, but also some inward resistance in herself. This is clear from her impatient utterance of the famous lines: "Had he not resembled My father as he slept, I 'd done it"; and she had to nerve herself with wine in order to produce the necessary courage to go through her part. In the utterance of the dreadful lines "I have given suck . . . had I so sworn as you have done to this" (I. vii. 54-59), and whilst we imagine her voice rising to the height of an hysterical scream, as Mrs. Siddons is indeed reported to have given the passage, we can still detect the unconquerable will overpowering the weakness of the woman.

As compared with Macbeth she has little or no imagination. At the most terrible crises of the action things remain for her exactly as they were. Her mind is merely realistic and matter of fact. For instance, the chance that the old king would sleep sound after his journey to Inverness for her is simply a fortunate circumstance, for Macbeth it is attended with thoughts of horror. The weird sisters do not strike her imagination in the least, except perhaps as factors in the execution of her fixed purpose in attaining to place and power. Sympathy in Nature with her purpose is not for her: unlike Macbeth, she would never think of bidding the solid earth not hear "her steps which way they walk." The noises in the castle before and during the murder for her are simple facts and are referred to their true sources. The knocking at the gate merely comes from the "south entry." The blood on Macbeth's hands merely suggests the sharp taunt that she "shames to wear a heart so white": the blood is only a "filthy witness." Many well-known passages show her practical and

matter-of-fact mind: none more so than the ghastly and realistic "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" It has been aptly remarked that it is this want of imagination which in the end is fatal to Lady Macbeth, because she does not foresee the inward consequences which at once reveal themselves in her husband, and afterwards

xlix

in herself. Consequently her character develops on lines contrary to those which we have followed in the character of Macbeth. When the murder is done, the discovery of its hideousness, as she sees it in the faces of the guests, comes to her with the shock of a sudden disclosure, her woman's nature gives way, and begins to sag. Her "tenement of clay" is "o'er-informed." The first hint of this seems to be indicated by Shakespeare when she faints and is carried out. Incidentally, I am of opinion that she is meant really to faint, though many authorities hold to the contrary. She never expected to take part in the gross reality of the murder, she never expected to be obliged to carry back the daggers, to see the bloody corpse of the old king and to smear the faces of the grooms. But Macbeth's agony had alarmed her, and she was compelled to complete his unfinished task. She has gone through the ordeal of the discovery, she realises the horror and suspicion excited by the murder, which she had before refused to do; and it seems perfectly natural that, being a woman, the inevitable reaction should come, and overtasked nature give way.

When later on we find her as queen, the pride of place has gone. She is utterly disillusioned and weary with want of sleep. She has thrown away all and gained nothing; "the stem of her being seems to be cut through," as one eminent writer has put it.

Macbeth now steps into the foreground, and she retires. Her powerful will is still there, but it is only in the banquet scene that she makes any effort to exercise it; in that grave emergency her strength and ascendancy return, as by a *tour de force*, to prevent Macbeth betraying himself, and she succeeds in turning him from this at least. But this is her final effort and she retires from the action. We only learn from her pitiful words in the sleep-walking scene that she has even heard of the vilest crime of all, the slaughter of the innocent Lady Macduff and her children. That pitiful cry, "The Thane of Fife had a wife, where is she now?" shows that Lady Macbeth is still a woman; it shows that as a woman she can still feel for a murdered woman; it is, as Professor Wilson has nobly put it, "a touch of nature from Shakespeare's profound and pitiful heart." Lady Macbeth is now alone in her misery,

drifting apart from her husband, sinking slowly down to the inevitable end. She cannot bear darkness and she "has light by her continually." Her nature, not her unbending will, gives way; and it quite accords with her character that her own hand cuts short the agony of her life.

From the banquet scene till the end we involuntarily think of her less as the instigator of murder than as a woman with much that is grand in her nature and much that is piteous. Strange as the statement may appear, and it is no new idea, she is, according to her lights, a perfect wife. She gives her husband of her best. She admires him and thinks him a great man for whom the kingdom is the only proper sphere. She despises what she thinks is his weakness, but she never despises him. Her ambition, both for him and for herself, was fatal to him; much more so than the prophecies of the weird sisters; but even when she instigated him to murder, she believed that she was helping him to do what he only lacked the nerve to attempt.