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THE  
TEMPLE SHAKESPEARE

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SHAKESPEARE'S  
TRAGEDY OF  
MACBETH

WITH PREFACE  
GLOSSARY & C BY  
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M A

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Preface.

**The First Edition.** *Macbeth* was first printed in the  
*First Folio*, where it occupies pp. 131 to 151, and is placed  
between *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*. It is mentioned among the  
plays registered in the books of the Stationers' Company by the  
publishers of the Folio as "not formerly entered to other men."  
The text is perhaps one of the worst printed of all the plays, and  
textual criticism has been busy emending and explaining away  
the many difficulties of the play. Even the editors of the Second  
Folio were struck by the many hopeless corruptions, and  
attempted to provide a better text. The first printers certainly  
had before them a very faulty transcript, and critics have  
attempted to explain the discrepancies by assuming that Shake-  
speare's original version had been tampered with by another  
hand.

**"Macbeth" and Middleton's "Witch."** Some  
striking resemblances in the incantation scenes of *Macbeth* and  
Middleton's *Witch* have led to a somewhat generally accepted  
belief that Thomas Middleton was answerable for the alleged  
un-Shakespearian portions of *Macbeth*. This view has received

confirmation from the fact that the stage-directions of *Macbeth* contain allusions to two songs which are found in Middleton's *Witch* (viz. "Come away, come away," III. v.; "Black Spirits and white," IV. i.). Moreover, these very songs are found in D'Avenant's re-cast of *Macbeth* (1674)./\* It is, however, possible

/\* The first of these songs is found in the edition of 1673, which contains also two other songs not found in the Folio version.

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that Middleton took Shakespeare's songs and expanded them, and that D'Avenant had before him a copy containing additions transferred from Middleton's cognate scenes. This view is held by the most competent of Middleton's editors, Mr A. H. Bullen, who puts forward strong reasons for assigning the *Witch* to a later date than *Macbeth*, and rightly resents the proposals on the part of able scholars to hand over to Middleton some of the finest passages of the play./\* Charles Lamb had already noted the essential differences between Shakespeare's and Middleton's Witches. "Their names and some of the properties, which Middleton has given to his hags, excite smiles. The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot co-exist with mirth. But in a lesser degree, the Witches of Middleton are fine creatures. Their power, too, is in some measure over the mind, They raise jars, jealousies, strifes, like a thick scurf o'er life" (*specimens of English Dramatic Poets*).

**The Porter's Speech.** Among the passages in *Macbeth*. that have been doubted are the soliloquy of the Porter, and the short dialogue that follows between the Porter and Macduff,

/\* The following are among the chief passages supposed to resemble Middleton's style, and rejected as Shakespeare's by the Clarendon Press editors: -- Act I. Sc. ii, iii., 1-37; Act II. Sc. i. 61, iii. (Porter's part); Act III. Sc. v.; Act IV. Sc. i. 39-47, 125-132; iii. 140-159; Act V. (?) ii., v. 47-50; viii. 32-33; 35-75.

The second scene of the First Act is certainly somewhat disappointing, and it is also inconsistent (cp. ll. 53, 53, with Sc. iii., ll. 72, 73, and 112, etc.), but probably the scene represents the compression of a much longer account. The introduction of the superfluous Hecate is perhaps the strongest argument for rejecting certain witch-scenes, viz.: Act III. Sc. v.; Act IV. Sc. i. 39-47; Act IV. i. 125-132.

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Even Coleridge objected to "the low soliloquy of the Porter"; he believed them to have been written for the mob by some other hand, perhaps with Shakespeare's consent, though he was willing to make an exception in the case of the Shakespearian words, "I'll devil-porter it no further: I had thought to let in some of all professions, that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire." But the Porter's Speech is as essential a part of the design of the play as is the Knocking at the Gate, the effect of which was to subtly analysed by De Quincey in his well-known essay on the subject. "The effect was that it reflected back upon the murderer a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity . . . when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds; the knocking at the

gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflex upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them."

The introduction of the Porter, a character derived from the Porter of Hell in the old Mysteries, is as dramatically relevant, as are the grotesque words he utters; and both the character and the speech are thoroughly Shakespearian in conception (cp. *The Porter in Macbeth*, *New Shak. Soc.*, 1874, by Prof. Hales).

**Date of Composition.** The undoubted allusion to the union of England and Scotland under James I. (Act IV. Sc. i. 120, gives us one limit for the date of *Macbeth*, viz., March 1603, while a notice in the MS. Diary of Dr Simon Forman, a notorious quack and astrologer, gives 1610 as the other limit; for in

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that year he saw the play performed at the Globe./\* Between these two dates, in the year 1607, "*The Puritan, or, the Widow of Watling Street*," was published, containing a distinct reference to Banquo's Ghost -- "*Instead of a jester we'll have a ghost in a white sheet sit at the upper end of the table.*"/†

It is remarkable that when James visited Oxford in 1605 he was "addressed on entering the city by three students of St John's College, who alternately accosted his Majesty, reciting some Latin verses, founded on the prediction of the weird sisters relative to Banquo and Macbeth." The popularity of the subject is further attested by the insertion of the *Historie of Makbeth* in the 1606 edition of *Albion's England*. The former incident may have suggested the subject to Shakespeare; the latter fact may have been due to the popularity of Shakespeare's play. At all events authorities are almost unanimous in assigning *Macbeth* to 1605-1606; and this view is borne out by minor points of internal evidence./‡ As far as metrical characteristics are con-

/\* The Diary is among the Ashmolean MSS. (208) in the Bodleian Library; its title is a *Book of Plaies and Notes thereof for common Pollicie*. Alliwell Phillipps privately reprinted the valuable and interesting booklet. The account of the play as given by Forman is not very accurate.

/† Similarly, in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, produced in 1611: --

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

/‡ E.g. II. iii. 5, "expectation of plenty" probably refers to the abundance of corn in the autumn of 1606; the reference to the "*Equivocator*" seems to allude to Garnet and other Jesuits who were tried in the spring of 1606.

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cerned the comparatively large number of light-endings, twenty-one in all (contrasted with eight in *Hamlet*, and ten in *Julius*

Caesar) places *Macbeth* near the plays of the Fourth Period./\*  
With an early play of this period, viz. *Antony and Cleopatra*, it  
has strong ethical affinities (*vide Preface to Antony and Cleopatra*).

**The Sources of the Plot.** Shakespeare derived his materials for *Macbeth* from Holinshed's *Chronicle of England and Scotland*, first published in 1577, and subsequently in 1587; the latter was in all probability the edition used by the poet. Holinshed's authority was Hector Boece, whose *Scotorum Historiae* was first printed in 1526; Boece drew from the work of the Scotch historian Fordun, who lived in the fourteenth century. Shakespeare's indebtedness to Holinshed for the plot of the present play is not limited to the chapters dealing with Macbeth; certain details of the murder of Duncan belong to the murder of King Duffe, the great grandfather of Lady Macbeth. Shakespeare's most noteworthy departure from his original is to be found in his characterisation of Banquo.

(A full summary of theories of The Legend of Macbeth is to be found in Furness' *Variorum* edition, which contains also an excellent survey of the various criticisms on the characters.)

The Macbeth of Legend has been whitened by recent historians; and the Macbeth of History, according to Freeman, seems to have been quite a worthy monarch; (cp. Freeman's *Norman Conquest*, Skene's *Celtic Scotland*, &c.).

/\* Macbeth numbers but two weak-endings, while *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* have none. *Antony and Cleopatra* has no less than seventy-one light-endings and twenty-eight weak-endings. It would seem that Shakespeare, in this latter play, broke away from his earlier style as with a mighty bound.

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Shakespeare, in all probability, took some hints from Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) for his witch-lore. It should also be noted that King James, a profound believer in witchcraft, published in 1599 his *Demonologie*, maintaining his belief against Scot's scepticism. In 1604 a statute was passed to suppress witches.

There may have been other sources for the plot; possibly an older play existed on the subject of Macbeth; in Kempe's *Nine Days' Wonder* (1600) occur the following words: -- "I met a proper upright youth, only for a little stooping in the shoulders, all heart to the heel, a penny poet, whose first making was the miserable story of Mac-doel, or Mac-dobeth, or Mac-somewhat," &c. Furthermore, a ballad (? a stage-play) on Macdobeth was registered in the year 1596.

**Duration of Action.** The Time of the Play, as analysed by Mr P. A. Daniel (*New Shakespeare Soc.*, 1877-79) is nine days represented on the stage, and intervals: --

Day 1. Act I. Sc i. to iii.

Day 2. Act I. Sc. iv. to vii.

Day 3. Acts II., Sc. i. to iv. *An interval*, say a couple of weeks.

Day 4. Act III. Sc. i. to v. [Act III. Sc. vi., an impossible time.]

Day 5. Act IV. Sc. i.

Day 6. Act IV. Sc. ii. *An interval.* Ross's journey to England.  
Day 7. Act IV. Sc. iii., Act V. Sc. i. *An interval.* Malcolm's return to Scotland.  
Day 8. Act V. Sc. ii. and iii.  
Day 9. Act V. Sc. iv. to viii.