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620 DIES BOREALES.
No. V.
CHRISTOPHER UNDER CANVASS.

Camp at Cladich.

SCENE -- The Pavilion.
TIME -- After breakfast.
NORTH -- TALBOYS -- SEWARD -- BULLER.

North. I begin to be doubtful of this day. On your visits to us, Talboys, you have been most unfortunate in weather. This is more like August than June.

Talboys. The very word, my dear sir. It is indeed most august weather.

North. Five weeks to-day since we pitched our Camp -- and we have had the Beautiful of the Year in all its varieties; but the spiteful Season seems to owe you some old grudge, Talboys -- and to make it a point still to assail your arrival with "thunder, lightning, and with rain."

Talboys. "I tax not you, ye Elements! with unkindness." I feel assured they mean nothing personal to me -- and though this sort of work may not be very favourable to Angling, 'tis quite a day for tidying our Tackle -- and making up our Books. But don't you think, sir, that the Tent would look nothing

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the worse with some artificial light in this obscuration of the natural?

North. Put on the gas. Pretty invention, the Gutta Percha tube, isn't it? The Electric Telegraph is nothing to it. Tent illuminated in a moment, at a pig's whisper.

Talboys. Were I to wish, sir, for anything to happen now to the weather at all, it would be just ever so little toning down of that one constituent of the orchestral harmony of the Storm which men call -- howling. The Thunder is perfect -- but that one Wind Instrument is slightly out of tune -- he is most anxious to do his best -- his motive is unimpeachable; but he has no idea how much more impressive -- how much more popular -- would be a somewhat subdued style. There again -- that's positive discord -- does he mean to disconcert the Concert -- or does he forget that he is not a Solo?

Buller. That must be a deluge of -- hail.

Talboys. So much the better. Hitherto we have had but rain. "Mysterious horrors! HAIL!"

'Twas a rough night.

My young remembrance cannot parallel
A fellow to it.

North. Suppose we resume yesterday's conversation?

Talboys. By all manner of means. Let's sit close -- and speak loud -- else all will be dumb show. The whole world's one waterfall.

North. Take up Knight on Taste. Look at the dog-ear.

621 *Talboys.* "The most perfect instance of this kind is the Tragedy of Macbeth, in which the character of an ungrateful traitor, murderer, usurper, and tyrant, is made in the highest degree interesting by the sublime flashes of generosity, magnanimity, courage, and tenderness, which continually burst forth in the manly but ineffective struggle of every exalted quality

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that can dignify and adorn the human mind, first against the allurements of ambition, and afterwards against the pangs of remorse and horrors of despair. Though his wife has been the cause of all his crimes and sufferings, neither the agony of his distress, nor the fury of his rage, ever draw from him an angry word, or upbraiding expression towards her; but even when, at her instigation, he is about to add the murder of his friend and late colleague to that of his sovereign, kinsman, and benefactor, he is chiefly anxious that she should not share the guilt of his blood: -- 'Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck! till thou applaud the deed.' How much more real grandeur and exaltation of character is displayed in one such simple expression from the heart, than in all the laboured pomp of rhetorical amplification."

North. What think you of that, Talboys?

Talboys. Why, like much of the cant of criticism, it sounds at once queer and common-place. I seem to have heard it before many thousand times, and yet never to have heard it at all till this moment.

North. Seward?

Seward. Full of audacious assertions, that can be forgiven but in the belief that Payne Knight had never read the tragedy, even with the most ordinary attention.

North. Buller?

Buller. Cursed nonsense. Beg pardon, sir -- sink cursed -- mere nonsense -- out and out nonsense -- nonsense by itself nonsense.

North. How so?

Buller. A foolish libel on Shakspeare. Was he the man to make the character of an ungrateful traitor, murderer, usurper, and tyrant, interesting by sublime flashes of generosity, magnanimity, courage, and tenderness, and -- do I repeat the words

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correctly? -- of every exalted quality that can dignify and adorn the human mind.

North. Buller -- keep up that face -- you are positively beautiful --

Buller. No quizzing -- I am ugly -- but I have a good figure -- look at that leg, sir!

North. I prefer the other.

Talboys. There have been Poets among us who fain would -- if they could -- have so violated nature; but their fabrications have been felt to be falsehoods -- and no quackery may resuscitate drowned lies.

North. Shakspeare nowhere insists on the virtues of Macbeth -- he leaves their measure indeterminate. That the villain may have had some good points we are all willing to believe -- few people are without them; -- nor have I any quarrel with those who believe he had high qualities, and is corrupted by ambition. But what high qualities had he shown before Shakspeare sets him personally before us to judge for ourselves? Valour -- courage -- intrepidity -- call it what you will -- Martial Virtue --

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For brave Macbeth, (well he deserves that name,)
Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution
Like valour's minion,
Carved out his passage till he faced the slave;
And ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,
And fixed his head upon our battlements.

The "bleeding Serjeant" pursues his panegyric till he grows faint -- and is led off speechless; others take it up -- and we are thus -- and in other ways -- prepared to look on Macbeth as a paragon of bravery, loyalty, and patriotism.

Talboys. So had seemed Cawdor.

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North. Good. Shakspeare sets Macbeth before us under the most imposing circumstances of a warlike age; but of his inner character as yet he has told us nothing -- we are to find that out for ourselves during the Drama. If there be sublime flashes of generosity, magnanimity, and every exalted virtue, we have eyes to see, unless indeed blinded by the lightning -- and if the sublime flashes be frequent, and the struggle of every exalted quality that can adorn the human mind, though ineffectual, yet strong -- why, then, we must not only pity and forgive, but admire and love the "traitor, murderer, usurper, and tyrant," with all the poetical and philosophical fervour of that amiable enthusiast, Mr Payne Knight.

Buller. Somehow or other I cannot help having an affection for Macbeth.

North. You had better leave the Tent, sir.

Buller. No. I won't.

North. Give us then, My dear Buller, your Theory of the Thane's character.

Buller. "Theory, God bless you, I have none to give, sir." Warlike valour, as you said, is marked first and last -- at the opening, and at the end. Surely a good and great quality, at least for poetical purposes. High general reputation won and held. The opinion of the wounded soldier was that of the whole army; and when he himself says, "I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of people, which would be worn now in their newest gloss, not thrown aside so soon," I accept that he then truly describes his position in men's minds.

North. All true. But we soon gain, too, this insight into his constitution, that the pillar upon which he has built up life is Reputation, and not Respect of Law -- not Self-Respect; that the point which Shakspeare above all others intends in him, is that his is a spirit not self-stayed -- leaning upon outward stays -- and therefore --

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Buller. Liable to all --

North. Don't take the words out of my mouth, sir; or rather, don't put them into my mouth, sir.

Buller. Touchy to-day.

North. The strongest expression of this character is his throwing himself upon the illicit divinings of futurity, upon counsellors known for infernal; and you see what subjugating sway the Three Spirits take at once over him. On the contrary, the Thaness is self-stayed; and this difference grounds the poetical opposition of the two personages. In Macbeth, I suppose a certain splendour of character -- magnificence of action high -- a certain impure generosity -- mixed up of some kindness and sympathy, and of the pleasure from self-elation and self-expansion in a victorious career, and of that ambition which feeds on public esteem.

Buller. Ay -- just so, sir.

North. Now mark, Buller -- this is a character which, if the path of duty and the path of personal ambition were laid out by the Sisters to be one and the same path, might walk through life in sunlight and honour, and invest the tomb with proud and revered trophies. To show such a spirit wrecked and hurled into infamy -- the ill-woven sails rent into shreds by the whirlwind -- is a lesson worthy the Play and the Poet -- and such a lesson as I think Shakspeare likely to have designed -- or, without preaching about lessons, such an ethical revelation as I think likely to have caught hold upon Shakspeare's intelligence. It would seem to me a dramatically-poetical subject. The mightiest of temptations occurs to a mind, full of powers, endowed with available moral elements, but without set virtue -- without principles -- "and down goes all before it." If the essential delineation of Macbeth be this conflict of Moral elements -- of good and evil -- of light and darkness -- I see a very poetical conception; if merely a hardened and bloody hypocrite

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from the beginning, I see none. But I need not say to you, gentlemen, that all this is as far as may be from the exaggerated panegyric on his character by Payne Knight.

Talboys. Macbeth is a brave man -- so is Banquo -- so are we Four, brave men -- they in their way and day -- we in ours -- they as Celts and Soldiers -- we as Saxons and Civilians -- and we had all need to be so -- for hark! in the midst of ours, "Thunder and Lightning, and enter Three Witches."

Buller. I cannot say that I understand distinctly their first Confabulation.

North. That's a pity. A sensible man like you should understand everything. But what if Shakspeare himself did not distinctly understand it? There may have been original

errata in the report, as extended by himself from notes taken in short-hand on the spot -- light bad -- noise worse -- voices of Weird Sisters worst -- matter obscure -- manner uncouth -- why really, Buller, all things considered, Shakspeare has shown himself a very pretty Penny-a-liner.

Buller. I cry you mercy, sir.

Seward. Where are the Witches on their first appearance, at the very opening of the wonderful Tragedy?

North. An open Place, with thunder and lightning.

Seward. I know that -- the words are written down.

North. Somewhere or other -- anywhere -- nowhere.

Buller. In Fife or Forfar? Or some one or other of your outlandish, or inlandish, Lowland or Highland Counties?

North. Not knowing, can't say. Probably.

Seward.

When the Hurly Burly's done,
When the Battle's lost and won.

What Hurly Burly? What Battle? That in which Macbeth

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is then engaged? And which is to be brought to issue ere "set of sun" of the day on which "enter Three Witches?"

624 *North.* Let it be so.

Seward.

Upon the heath,
There to meet with Macbeth.

The Witches, then, are to meet with Macbeth on the heath on the Evening of the Battle?

North. It would seem so.

Seward. They are "posters over sea and land" -- and, like whiffs of lightning, can outsail and outride the sound of thunder. But Macbeth and Banquo must have had on their seven-league boots.

North. They must.

Seward.

A drum, a drum!
Macbeth doth come.

Was he with the advanced guard of the Army?

North. Not unlikely -- attended by his Staff. Generals, on such occasions, usually ride -- but perhaps Macbeth and Banquo, being in kilts, preferred walking in their seven-league boots. Thomas Campbell has said, "When the drum of the Scottish Army is heard on the wild heath, and when I fancy it advancing with its bowmen in front, and its spears and banners in the distance, I am always disappointed with Macbeth's entrance at the head of a few kilted actors." The army may have been there -- but they did not see the Weirds -- nor, I believe, did the Weirds see them. With Macbeth and Banquo alone had they to do: we see no Army at that hour -- we hear no drums -- we are deaf even to the Great Highland Bagpipe, though He, you may be sure, was not dumb -- all "plaided and plumed in their tartan array" the Highland Host ceased to be -- like

vanished shadows -- at the first apparition of "those so withered and so wild in their attire" -- not of the earth though on it, and alive somewhere till this day -- while generations after generations of mere Fighting Men have been disbanded by dusty Death.

Seward. I wish to know *where* and *when* had been the Fighting? The Norwegian -- one Sweno, had come down very handsomely at Inchcolm with ten thousand dollars -- a sum in those days equal to a million of money in Scotland ----

North. Seward, speak on subjects you understand. What do you know, sir, of the value of money *in* those days in Scotland?

Seward. But *where* had been all the Fighting? There would seem to have been two hurley-burleys.

North. I see your drift, Seward. *Time and Place*, through the First Scene of the First Act, are past finding out. It has been asked -- Was Shakspeare ever in Scotland? Never. There is not one word in this Tragedy leading a Scotsman to think so -- many showing he never had that happiness. Let him deal with our localities according to his own sovereign will and pleasure, as a prevailing Poet. But let no man point out his dealings with our localities as proofs of his having such knowledge of them as implies personal acquaintance with them gained by a longer or shorter visit in Scotland. The Fights at the beginning seem to be in Fife. The Soldier, there wounded, delivers his relation at the King's Camp before Forres. He has crawled, in half-an-hour, or an hour -- or two hours -- say seventy, eighty, or a hundred miles, or more -- crossing the ridge of the Grampians. Rather smart. I do not know what you think here of Time; but I think that Space is here pretty well done for. The **Time** of the Action of Shakspeare's Plays has
625 never yet, so far as I know, been, in any one Play, carefully investigated -- never investigated at all; and I now announce

to you Three -- don't mention it -- that I have made discoveries here that will astound the whole world, and demand a New Criticism of the entire Shakspearean Drama.

Buller. Let us have one now, I beseech you, sir.

North. Not now.

Buller. No sleep in the Tent till we have it, sir. I do dearly love astounding discoveries -- and at this time of day, an astounding discovery in Shakspeare! May it not prove a Mare's Nest!

North. The Tragedy of Macbeth is a *prodigious* Tragedy, because in it the Chariot of Nemesis *visibly* rides in the lurid thunder-sky. Because in it the ill motions of a human soul, which Theologians account for by referring them all to suggestions of Beelzebub, are expounded in visible, mysterious, tangible, terrible shape and symbolisation by the Witches. It is great by the character and person, workings and sufferings, of Lady Macbeth -- by the immense poetical power in doing the Witches -- mingling for once in the world the Homely-Grotesque and the Sublime -- extinguishing the Vulgar in the Sublime --

by the bond, whatsoever it be, between Macbeth and his wife
-- by making us tolerate her and him ----

Buller. Didn't I say that in my own way, sir? And didn't
you reprove me for saying it, and order me out of the Tent?

North. And what of the Witches?

Buller. Had you not stopt me. I say now, sir, that no-
body understands Shakspeare's **Hecate**. Who is **She**? Each
of the Three Weirds is = one Witch + one of the Three Fates
-- therefore the union of two incompatible natures -- more than
in a Centaur. Oh! Sir! what a hand that was which bound
the two into one -- inseverably! There they are for ever as the
Centaur's are. But the gross Witch prevails; which Shakspeare
needed for securing belief, and he has it, full. Hecate, sir,
comes in to balance the <>disproporton -- she lifts into Mythology

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-- and strengthens the mythological tincture. So does the
"Pit of Acheron." That is classical. To the best of my re-
membrance, no mention of any such Pit in the Old or New
Statistical Account of Scotland.

North. And, in the Incantation Scene, those Apparitions!
Mysterious, ominous, picturesque -- and self-willed. They are
commanded by the Witches, but under a limitation. Their
oracular power is their own. They are of unknown orders -- as
if for the occasion created in Hell.

<>*North.* Talboys, are you asleep -- or are you at Chess with
your eyes shut?

Talboys. At Chess with my eyes shut. I shall send off
my move to my friend Stirling by first post. But my ears
were open -- and I ask -- when did Macbeth first design the
murder of Duncan? Does not everybody think -- in the mo-
ment *after* the Witches have first accosted and left him? Does
not -- it may be asked -- the whole moral significancy of the
Witches disappear, unless the invasion of hell into Macbeth's
bosom is first made by their presence and voices?

North. No. The whole moral significancy of the Witches
only then appears, when we are assured that they address them-
selves only to those who already have been tampering with
their conscience. "Good sir! why do you start, and seem to
fear things that do sound so fair?" That question put to Mac-
beth by Banquo turns our eyes to his face -- and we see Guilt.
626 There was no start at "Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor," -- but
at the word "King" well might he start; for ---- eh?

Talboys. We must look up the Scene.

North. No need for that. You have it by heart -- recite it.

Talboys.

Macbeth. So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

Banquo. How far is't call'd to Forres? -- What are these,
So wither'd, and so wild in their attire;

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That look not like the inhabitants of the earth,
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips: -- You should be women,

And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.
Macbeth. Speak, if you can; -- What are you?
1st Witch. All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!
2d Witch. All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!
3d Witch. All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be king hereafter.
Banquo. Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair? -- I' the name of truth,
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner
You greet with present grace, and great prediction
Of noble having, and of royal hope,
That he seems rapt withal; to me you speak not:
If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow, and which will not;
Speak then to me, who neither beg, nor fear
Your favours nor your hate.
1st Witch. Hail!
2d Witch. Hail!
3d Witch. Hail!
1st Witch. Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.
2d Witch. Not so happy, yet much happier.
3d Witch. Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:
So, all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!
1st Witch. Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!
Macbeth. Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:
By Sinel's death, I know, I am thane of Glamis;
But how of Cawdor? the thane of Cawdor lives,
A prosperous gentleman; and to be king,
Stands not within the prospect of belief,
No more than to be Cawdor. Say, from whence
You owe this strange intelligence? or why

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Upon this blasted heath you stop our way
With such prophetic greeting? -- Speak, I charge you.
[Witches vanish.
Banquo. The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
And these are of them: -- Whither are they vanish'd?
Macbeth. Into the air, and what seem'd corporal, melted
As breath into the wind. 'Would they had staid!
Banquo. Were such things here, as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten of the insane root,
That takes the reason prisoner.
Macbeth. Your children shall be kings.
Banquo. You shall be king.
Macbeth. And thane of Cawdor too; went it not so?
Banquo. To the self-same tune, and words.

North. Charles Kemble himself could not have given it more impressively.

Buller. You make him blush, sir.

627 *North.* Attend to that "start" of Macbeth, Talboys.

Talboys. He might well start on being told of a sudden, by such seers, that he was hereafter to be King of Scotland.

North. There was more in the start than that, my lad, else Shakspeare would not have so directed our eyes to it. I say again -- it was the start -- of a murderer.

Talboys. And what if I say it was not? But I have the candour to confess, that I am not familiar with the starts of murderers -- so may possibly be mistaken.

North. Omit what intervenes -- and give us the Soliloquy, Talboys. But before you do so, let me merely remind you that Macbeth's mind, from the little he says in the interim, is

manifestly ruminating on something bad, ere he breaks out into Soliloquy.

Talboys.

Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act

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Of the imperial theme. -- I thank you, gentlemen. --
This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill -- cannot be good: -- If ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings:
My thought whose murder is yet but fantastical
Shakes so my single state of man, that function
Is smothered in surmise; and nothing is,
But what is not.

North. Now, my dear Talboys, you will agree with me in thinking that this first great and pregnant, although brief soliloquy, stands for germ, type, and law of the whole Play, and of its criticism -- and for clue to the labyrinth of the Thane's character. "Out of this wood do not desire to go." Out of it I do not expect soon to go. I regard William as a fair Poet and a reasonable Philosopher; but as a supereminent Play-wright. The First Soliloquy *must* speak the nature of Macbeth, else the Craftsman has no skill in his trade. A Soliloquy *reveals*. That is its function. Therein is the soul heard and seen discursing with itself -- within itself; and if you carry your eye through -- up to the First Appearance of Lady Macbeth -- this Soliloquy is distinctly the highest point of the Tragedy -- the tragic acme -- or dome -- or pinnacle -- therefore of power indefinite, infinite. On this rock I stand, a Colossus ready to be thrown down by -- an Earthquake.

Buller. Pushed off by -- a shove.

North. Not by a thousand Buller-power. Can you believe, Buller, that the word of the Third Witch, "that shalt be **King**

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Hereafter," sows the murder in Macbeth's heart, and that it springs up, flowers, and fruits with such fearful rapidity.<>

Buller. Why -- Yes and No.

North. Attend, Talboys, to the words "supernatural soliciting." What "supernatural soliciting" to evil is there here? Not a syllable had the Weird Sisters breathed about Murder. But now there is much soliloquising -- and Cawdor contemplates himself *objectively* -- seen busy upon an elderly gentleman called Duncan -- after a fashion that so frightens him *subjectively* -- that Banquo cannot help whispering to Rosse and Angus --

See how our partner 's rapt!

Talboys. "My thought whose murder 's yet fantastical." I agree with you, sir, in suspecting he must have thought of

the murder.

North. It is from no leaning towards the Weird Sisters -- whom I never set eyes on but once, and then without interchanging a word, leapt momentarily out of this world into that pitch-pot of a pond in Glenco -- it is, I say, from no leaning towards the Weird Sisters that I take this view of Macbeth's character. No "sublime flashes of generosity, magnanimity, tenderness, and every exalted quality that can dignify and adorn the human mind," do I ever suffer to pass by without approbation, when coruscating from the character of any well-disposed man, real or imaginary, however unaccountable at other times his conduct may appear to be; but Shakspeare, who knew Macbeth better than any of us, has here assured us that he was in heart a murderer -- for how long he does not specify -- before he had ever seen a birse on any of the Weird Sisters' beards. But let's be canny. Talboys -- pray, what is the meaning of the word "soliciting," "preternatural soliciting," in this Soliloquy?

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Talboys. Soliciting, sir, is, in my interpreting, "an appealing, intimate visitation."

North. Right. The appeal is general -- as that *challenge* of a trumpet -- *Fairy Queen*, book III., canto xii., stanza 1 --

Signe of nigh battail or got victorye --

which, all indeterminate, is notwithstanding a *challenge* -- operates, and is felt as such.

Talboys. So a thundering knock at your door -- which may be a friend or an enemy. It comes as a summoning. It is more than internal urging and inciting of me by my own thoughts -- for mark, sir, the rigour of the word "supernatural," which throws the soliciting off his own soul upon the Weirds. The word is really undetermined to pleasure or pain -- the essential thought being that there is a searching or penetrating provocative -- a stirring up of that which lay dead and still. Next is the debate whether this intrusive, and pungent, and stimulant assault of a presence and an oracle be good or ill?

North. Does the hope live in him for a moment that this home-visiting is not ill -- that the Spirits are not ill? They have spoken truth so far -- ergo, the Third "All hail!" shall be true, too. But more than that -- they have spoken *truth*. Ergo, they are not spirits of Evil. That hope dies in the same instant, submerged in the stormy waves which the blast from hell arouses. The infernal revelation glares clear before him -- a Crown held out by the hand of Murder. One or two struggles occur. Then the truth stands before him fixed and immutable -- "Evil, be thou my good." He is dedicated: and passive to fate. I cannot comprehend this so feeble debate in the mind of a good man -- I cannot comprehend any such debate at all in the mind of a previously settled and determined murderer; but I can comprehend and feel its awful significancy in the mind of a man already in a most perilous moral condition.

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Seward. The "start" shows that the spark has caught -- it has fallen into a tun of gunpowder.

Talboys. The touch of Ithuriel's spear.

North. May we not say, then, that perhaps the Witches have shown no more than this -- the Fascination of Contact between Passion and Opportunity?

629 Seward. To Philosophy reading the hieroglyphic; but to the People what? To them they are a reality. They seize the imagination with all power. They come like "blasts from hell" -- like spirits of Plague, whose breath -- whose very sight kills.

Within them Hell
They bring, and round about them; nor from Hell
One step, no more than from themselves, can fly.

The contagion of their presence, in spite of what we have been saying, almost reconciles *my* understanding to what it would otherwise revolt from, the *suddenness* with which the penetration of Macbeth into futurity lays fast hold upon Murder.

Buller. Pretty fast -- though it gives a twist or two in his handling.

Seward. Lady Macbeth herself corroborates your judgment and Shakspeare's on her husband's character.

Talboys. Does she?

Seward. She does. In that dreadful parley between them on the night of the Murder -- she reminds him of a time when

Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both;
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you.

This -- mark you, sir -- must have been before the Play began!

North. I have often thought of the words -- and Shakspeare himself has so adjusted the action of the Play as that, *since the encounter with the Weirds*, no opportunity had occurred to Mac-

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beth for the "making of time and place." Therefore it must, as you say, have been *before it*. Buller, what say you now?

Buller. Gagged.

North. True, she speaks of his being "full of the milk of human kindness." The words have become favourites with us, who are an affectionate and domestic people -- and are lovingly applied to the loving; but Lady Macbeth attached no such profound sense to them as we do; and meant merely that she thought her husband would, after all, much prefer greatness unbought by blood; and, at the time she referred to, it is probable he would; but that she meant no more than that, is plain from the continuation of her praise, in which her ideas get not a little confused; and her words, interpret them as you will, leave nothing "milky" in Macbeth at all. Milk of human kindness, indeed!

Talboys.

What thou would'st highly,
That would'st thou holily; would'st not play false,
And yet would'st wrongly win: thou'dst have great Glamis,
That which cries, 'Thus thou must do, if thou have it;

And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
Than wishest should be undone.'

That is her Ladyship's notion of the "milk of human kindness"! "I wish somebody would murder Duncan -- as for murdering him myself, I am much too tender-hearted and humane for perpetrating such cruelty with my own hand!"

Buller. Won't you believe a Wife to be a good judge of her Husband's disposition?

North. Not Lady Macbeth. For does not she herself tell us, at the same time, that he had formerly schemed how to commit Murder?

630 *Buller.* Gagged again.

North. I see no reason for doubting that she was attached

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to her husband; and Shakspeare loved to put into the lips of women beautiful expressions of love -- but he did not intend that we should be deceived thereby in our moral judgments.

Seward. Did this ever occur to you, sir? Macbeth, when hiring the murderers who are to look after Banquo and Fleance, cites a conversation in which he had demonstrated to them that the oppression under which they had long suffered, and which they had supposed to proceed from Macbeth, proceeded really from Banquo? My firm belief is that it proceeded from Macbeth -- that their suspicion was right -- that Macbeth is misleading them -- and that Shakspeare means you to apprehend this. But why should Macbeth have oppressed his inferiors, unless he had been -- long since -- of a tyrannical nature? He oppresses his inferiors -- they are sickened and angered with the world -- by his oppression -- he tells them 'twas not he but another who had oppressed them -- and that other -- at his instigation -- they willingly murder. An ugly affair altogether.

North. Very. But let us keep to the First Act -- and see what a hypocrite Macbeth has so very soon become -- what a savage assassin! He has just followed up his Soliloquy with these significant lines --

Come what come may,
Time and the hour run through the roughest day;

when he recollects that Banquo, Rosse, and Angus are standing near. Richard himself is not more wily -- guilty -- smily -- and oily; to the Lords his condescension is already quite kingly --

Kind gentlemen, your pains
Are registered where every day I turn
The leaf to read them --

Talboys. And soon after, to the King how obsequious!

The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself. Your Highness' part

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Is to receive our duties; and our duties
Are to your throne and state, children, and servants;
Which do but what they should by doing everything

Safe toward you love and honour.

What would Payne Knight have said to all that? This to his King, whom he has resolved, first good opportunity, to murder!
North. Duncan is now too happy for this wicked world.

My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves
In drops of sorrow.

Invaders -- traitors -- now there are none. Peace is restored to the Land -- the Throne rock-fast -- the line secure --

We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm; whom we name hereafter,
The Prince of Cumberland: which honour must
Not, unaccompanied, invest him only,
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
On all deservers.

Now was the time for "the manly but ineffectual struggle of every exalted quality that can dignify and exalt the human mind" -- for a few sublime flashes at least of generosity and tenderness, et cetera -- now when the Gracious Duncan is loading him with honours, and, better than all honours, lavishing on him the boundless effusions of a grateful and royal heart. The Prince of Cumberland! Ha, ha!

The Prince of Cumberland! -- That is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
For in my way it lies.

But the remorseless miscreant becomes poetical --

Stars, hide your fires!
Let not light see my black and deep desires:
The eye wink at the hand! yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see!

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The milk of human kindness has coagulated into the curd of inhuman ferocity -- and all this -- slanderers say -- is the sole work of the Weird Sisters! No. His wicked heart -- because it is wicked -- believes in their Prophecy -- the end is assured to him -- and the means are at once suggested to his own slaughterous nature. No supernatural soliciting here, which a better man would not successfully have resisted. I again repudiate -- should it be preferred against me -- the charge of a *tendresse* towards the Bearded Beauties of the Blasted Heath; but rather would I marry them all Three -- one after the other -- nay all three at once, and as many more as there may be in our Celtic Mythology -- than see your Sophia, Seward, or, Buller, your --
Buller. We have but Marmy.

North. Wedded to a Macbeth.

Seward. We know your affection, my dear sir, for your goddaughter. She is insured.

North. Well, this Milk of Human Kindness is off at a hand-gallop to Inverness. The King has announced a Royal Visit to Macbeth's own Castle. But Cawdor had before this despatched a letter to his lady, from which Shakspeare has

given us an extract. And then, as I understand it, a special messenger besides, to say "the King comes here to-night." Which of the two is the more impatient to be at work 'tis hard to say; but the idea of the murder originated with the male Prisoner. We have his wife's word for it -- she told him so to his face -- and he did not deny it. We have his own word for it -- he told himself so to his own face -- and he never denies it at any time during the play.

Talboys. You said, a little while ago, sir, that you believed Macbeth and his wife were a happy couple.

North. Not I. I said she was attached to him -- and I say now that the wise men are not of the Seven, who point to her reception of her husband, on his arrival at *home*, as a proof of

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her want of affection. They seem to think she ought to have rushed into his arms -- slobbered upon his shoulder -- and so forth. For had he not been at the Wars? Pshaw! The most tender-hearted Thanesses of those days -- even those that kept albums -- would have been ashamed of weeping on sending their Thanes off to battle -- much more on receiving them back in a sound skin -- with new honours nodding on their plumes. Lady Macbeth was not one of the turtle-doves -- fit mate she for the King of the Vultures. I am too good an ornithologist to call them Eagles. She received her mate fittingly -- with murder in her soul; but more cruel -- more selfish than he, she could not be -- nor, perhaps, was she less; but she was more resolute -- and resolution even in evil -- in such circumstances as hers -- seems to argue a superior nature to his, who, while he keeps vacillating, as if it were between good and evil, betrays all the time the bias that is surely inclining him to evil, into which he makes a sudden and sure wheel at last.

Buller. The Weirds -- the Weirds! -- the Weirds have done it all!

632 *North.* Macbeth -- Macbeth! -- Macbeth has done it all!

Buller. Furies and Fates!

North. Who make the wicked their victims!

Seward. Is she sublime in her wickedness?

North. It would, I fear, be wrong to say so. But I was speaking of Macbeth's character -- not of hers -- and, in comparison with him, she may seem a great creature. They are now utterly alone -- and of the two he has been the more familiar with murder. Between them, Duncan already is a dead man. But how pitiful -- at such a time and at such a greeting -- Macbeth's cautions --

My dearest Love,
Duncan comes here to-night!
Lady. -- And when goes hence?

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Macbeth. -- To-morrow, as he purposes.
Lady. -- Oh, never
Shall sun that morrow see!

Why, *Talboys*, does not the poor devil --

Talboys. Poor devil! Macbeth a poor devil?

North. Why, Buller, does not the poor devil?<>

Buller. Poor devil! Macbeth a poor devil?

North. Why, Seward, does not the poor devil --

Seward. Speak up -- speak out? Is he afraid of the spiders? You know him, sir -- you see through him.

North. Ay, Seward -- reserved and close as he is -- he wants nerve -- *pluck* -- he is close upon the coward -- and that would be well, were there the slightest tendency towards change of purpose in the Pale Face; but there is none -- he is as cruel as ever -- the more close the more cruel -- the more irresolute the more murderous -- for to murder he is sure to come. Seward, you said well -- why does not the poor devil speak up -- speak out? Is he afraid of the spiders?

Talboys. Murderous-looking villain -- no need of words.

North. I did not say, sir, there was any need of words. Why, will you always be contradicting one?

Talboys. Me? I? I hope I shall never live to see the day on which I contradict Christopher North in his own Tent. At least -- rudely.

North. Do it rudely -- not as you did now -- and often do -- as if you were agreeing with me -- but you are incurable. I say, my dear Talboys, that Macbeth so bold in a "twa-haun'd crack" with himself in a Soliloquy -- so figurative -- and so fond of swearing by the Stars and old Mother Night, who were not aware of his existence -- should not have been thus tongue-tied to his own wife in their own secretest chamber -- should have unlocked and flung open the door of his heart to her -- like a Man. I blush for him -- I do. So did his wife.

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Buller. I don't find that in the record.

633 North. Don't you? "Your face, my Thane, is as a book where men may read strange matters." She sees in his face self-alarm at his own murderous intentions. And so she counsels him about his face -- like a self-collected, trustworthy woman. "To beguile the time, look like the time;" with further good stern advice. But -- "We shall speak farther," is all she can get from him in answer to conjugal assurances that should have given him a palpitation at the heart, and set his eyes on fire --

He that's coming
Must be provided for; and you shall put
This night's great business into my despatch;
Which shall, to all our nights and days to come,
Give solely sovereign sway and Masterdom.

There spoke one worthy to be a Queen!

Seward. Worthy!

North. Ay -- in that age -- in that country. 'Twas not then the custom "to *speak* daggers but *use* none." Did Shakspeare mean to dignify, to magnify Macbeth by such demeanour? No -- to degrade and minimise the murderer.

Talboys. My dear sir, I cordially agree with every word you utter. Go on -- my dear sir -- to instruct -- to illumine --

Seward. To bring out "sublime flashes of magnanimity, courage, tenderness," in Macbeth --

Buller. "Of every exalted quality that can dignify and

adorn the human mind" -- the mind of Macbeth in his struggle with the allurements of ambition!

North. Observe, how this reticence -- on the part of Macbeth -- contrasted with his wife's eagerness and exultation, makes her, for the moment, seem the wickeder of the two -- the fiercer and the more cruel. For the moment only; for we soon ask ourselves what means this unhusbandly reserve in him who had

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sent her *that letter* -- and then a messenger to tell her the king was coming -- and who had sworn to himself as savagely as she now does, not to let slip this opportunity of cutting his king's throat. He is well-pleased to see that his wife is as bloody-minded as himself -- that she will not only give all necessary assistance -- as an associate -- but concert the when, and the where, and the how -- and if need be, with her own hand deal the blow.

Seward. She did not then know that Macbeth had made up his mind to murder Duncan that very night. <>*But we know it.* She has instantly made up hers -- we know how; but being as yet unassured of her husband, she welcomes him home with a Declaration that must have more than answered his fondest hopes; and, therefore, he is almost mute -- the few words he does utter seem to indicate no settled purpose -- Duncan may fulfil his intention of going in the morning, or he may not; but we know that the silence of the murderer now is because the murderess is manifestly all he could wish -- and that, had she shown any reluctance, he would have resumed his eloquence, and, to convert her to his way of thinking, argued as powerfully as he did when converting himself.

Buller. You carry on at such a pace, sir, there's no keeping up with you. Pull up, that I may ask you a very simple question. On his arrival at his castle, Macbeth finds his wife reading a letter from her amiable spouse, about the Weird Sisters. Pray, when was that letter written?

North. At what hour precisely? That I can't say. It must, however, have been written before Macbeth had been presented to the King -- for there is no allusion in it to the King's intention to visit their Castle. I believe it to have been written about an hour or so after the prophecy of the Weirds --
634 either in some place of refreshment by the road-side -- or in such a Tent as this -- kept ready for the General in the King's

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Camp at Forres. He despatched it by a Gilly -- a fast one like your Cornwall Clipper -- and then tumbled in.

Buller. When did she receive it?

North. Early next morning.

Buller. How could that be, since she is reading it, as her husband steps in, well on, as I take it, in the afternoon?

North. Buller, you are a blockhead. There had she, for many hours, been sitting, and walking about with it, now rumbled up in her fist -- now crunkled up between her breasts -- now locked up in a safe -- now spread out like a sampler on that tasty little oak table -- and sometimes she might have been heard by the servants -- had they had the unusual curiosity to

listen at the door -- murmuring like a stock-dove -- anon hooting like an owl -- by-and-by barking like an eagle -- then bellowing liker a hart than a hind -- almost howling like a wolf -- and why not? -- now singing a snatch of an old Gaelic air, with a clear, wild, sweet voice, like that of "a human!"

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promised.

Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour of my tongue,
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which Fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crown'd withal.

Buller. Grand indeed.

North. It *is* grand indeed. But, my dear Buller, was that all she had said to herself, think you? No -- no -- no. But it was all Shakspeare had time for on the Stage. Oh, sirs! The Time of the Stage is but a simulacrum of true Time. That must be done at one stroke, on the Stage, which in a Life takes ten. The Stage persuades *that* in one conversation, or soliloquy,

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which Life may do in twenty -- you have not leisure or goodwill for the ambages and iterations of the Real.

Seward. See an artist with a pen in his hand, challenged; and with a few lines he will exhibit a pathetic story. From how many millions has he given you -- One? The units which he abstracts, represent sufficiently and satisfactorily the millions of lines and surfaces which he neglects.

North. So in Poetry. You take little for much. You need not wonder, then, that on an attendant entering and saying, "The King comes here to-night," she cries, "Thou'rt mad to say it!" Had you happened to tell her so half-an-hour ago, who knows but that she might have received it with a stately smile, that hardly moved a muscle on her high-featured front, and gave a merciful look to her green eyes even when she was communing with Murder!

<>*North.* What hurry and haste had been on all sides to get into the House of Murder!

Where's the Thane of Cawdor?
We coursed him, at the heels, and had a purpose
To be his purveyor: but he rides well:
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him
To his home before us -- Fair and noble Hostess,
We are your guest to-night.

Ay, where is the Thane of Cawdor? I, for one, not knowing, can't say. The gracious Duncan desires much to see him as well as his gracious Hostess.

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Give me your hand:
Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,
And shall continue our graces towards him.
By your leave, Hostess.

Ay -- where's the Thane of Cawdor? Why did not Shakspeare

show him to us, sitting at supper with the King?

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Talboys. Did he sup with the King?

Buller. I believe he sat down -- but got up again -- and left the Chamber.

Talboys. His wife seeks him out. "He has almost supped. Why have you left the Chamber?" "Has he asked for me?" "Know ye not he has?"

North. On Macbeth's Soliloquy, which his wife's entrance here interrupts, how much inconsiderate comment have not moralists made! Here -- they have said -- is the struggle of a good man with temptation. Hearken, say they -- to the voice of Conscience! What does the good man, in this hour of trial, say to himself? He says to himself -- "I have made up my mind to assassinate my benefactor in my own house -- the only doubt I have, is about the consequences to myself in the world to come." Well, then -- "We'd jump the world to come. But if I murder him -- may not others murder me? Retribution even in this world." Call you that the voice of Conscience?

Seward. Hardly.

North. He then goes on to descant to himself about the relation in which he stands to Duncan, and apparently discovers for the first time, that "he's here in double trust;" and that as his host, his kinsman, and his subject, he should "against his murderer shut the door, not bear the knife myself."

Seward. A man of genius.

North. Besides, Duncan is not only a King, but a good King --

So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off.

That is much better morality -- keep there, Macbeth -- or thereabouts -- and Duncan's life is tolerably safe -- at least for one

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night. But Shakspeare knew his man -- and what manner of man he is we hear in the unbearable context, that never yet has been quoted by any one who had ears to distinguish between the true and the false.

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

Cant and fustian. Shakspeare knew that cant and fustian would come at that moment from the mouth of Macbeth. Accordingly, he offers but a poor resistance to the rhetoric that comes rushing from his wife's heart -- even that sentiment which is thought so fine -- and 'tis well enough in its way --

I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more is none --

is set aside at once by --

What beast was it, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?

We hear no more of "Pity like a naked new-born babe" -- but
at her horrid scheme of the murder --

636 Bring forth men-children only!
 For thy undaunted mettle should compose
 Nothing but males!

Shakspeare does not paint here a grand and desperate struggle
between good and evil thoughts in Macbeth's mind -- but a
mock fight; had there been any deep sincerity in the feeling
expressed in the bombast -- had there been any true feeling at
all -- it would have revived and deepened -- not faded and died
almost -- at the picture drawn by Lady Macbeth of their victim --

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When Duncan is asleep,
Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey
Soundly invite him,

the words that had just left his own lips --

His virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off,

would have re-rung in his ears; and a strange medley -- words
and music -- would they have made -- with his wife's

When in swinish sleep
Their drenched natures lie, as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
The unguarded Duncan?

That is my idea of the Soliloquy. Think on it.

Talboys. The best critics tell us that Shakspeare's Lady
Macbeth has a commanding Intellect. Certes she has a com-
manding Will. I do not see what a commanding Intellect has
to do in a Tragedy of this kind -- or what opportunity she has
of showing it. Do you, sir?

North. I do not.

Talboys. Her Intellect seems pretty much on a par with
Macbeth's in the planning of the murder.

North. I defy any human Intellect to devise well an atro-
cious Murder. Pray, how would you have murdered Duncan?

Talboys. Ask me rather how I would -- this night -- murder
Christopher North.

North. No more of that -- no dallying in that direction. You
make me shudder. Shakspeare knew that a circumspect mur-
der is an impossibility -- that a murder of a King in the mur-
derer's own house, with expectation of non-discovery, is the
irrationality of infatuation. The poor Idiot chuckles at the
poor Fury's device as at once original and plausible -- and, next

hour, what single soul in the Castle does not know who did the deed?

Seward. High Intellect indeed!

Talboys. The original murder is bad to the uttermost. I mean badly contrived. What colour was there in colouring the two Grooms? No two men kill their master, and then go to bed again in his room with bloody faces and poignards.

Buller. If this was really a very bad plot altogether, it is her Ladyship's as much -- far more than his Lordship's. Against whom, then, do we conclude? Her? I think not -- but the Poet. He is the badly-contriving assassin. He does not intend lowering your esteem for her Ladyship's talents. Am I, sir, to think that William himself, after the same game, would have hunted no better? I believe he would; but he thinks that this will carry the Plot through for the Stage well enough. The House, seeing and hearing, will not stay to criticise. The Horror persuades Belief. He knew the whole mystery of murder.

North. My dear Buller, wheel nearer me. I would not lose a word you say.

Buller. Did Macbeth commit an error in killing the two Grooms? And does his Lady think so?

Talboys. A gross error, and his Lady thinks so.

Buller. Why was it a gross error -- and why did his lady think so?

Talboys. Because -- why -- I really can't tell.

Buller. Nor I. The question leads to formidable difficulties -- either way. But answer me this. Is her swooning at the close of her husband's most graphic picture of the position of the corpses -- real or pretended?

Seward. Real.

Talboys. Pretended.

Buller. Sir?

North. I reserve my opinion.

Talboys. Not a faint -- but a *feint*. She cannot undo that which is done; nor hinder that which he will do next. She must mind her own business. Now distinctly her own business is -- to faint. A high-bred, sensitive, innocent Lady, startled from her sleep to find her guest and King murdered, and the room full of aghast nobles, cannot possibly do anything else but faint. Lady Macbeth, who "all particulars of duty knows," faints accordingly.

North. Seward, we are ready to hear you.

Seward. She has been about a business that must have somewhat shook her nerves -- granting them to be of iron. She would herself have murdered Duncan had he not resembled her Father as he slept; and on sudden discernment of that dreadful resemblance, her soul must have shuddered, if her body served her to stagger away from parricide. On the deed being done, she is terrified after a different manner from the doer of the deed; but her terror is as great; and though she says --

Are but as pictures -- 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted Devil --

believe me that her face was like ashes, as she returned to the chamber to gild the faces of the grooms with the dead man's blood. That knocking, too, alarmed the Lady -- believe me -- as much as her husband; and to keep cool and collected before him, so as to be able to support him at that moment with her advice, must have tried the utmost strength of her nature. Call her Fiend -- she was Woman. Down stairs she comes -- and stands among them all, at first like one alarmed only -- astounded by what she hears -- and striving to simulate the ignorance of the innocent -- "What, in our house?" "Too cruel anywhere!" What she must have suffered then, Shak-

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speare lets us conceive for ourselves; and what on her husband's elaborate description of his inconsiderate additional murders. "The whole is too much for her" -- she "is perplexed in the extreme" -- and the sinner swoons.

638 *North.* Seward suggests a bold, strong, deep, tragical turn of the scene -- that she faints actually. Well -- so be it. I shall say, first, that I think it a weakness in my favourite; but I will go so far as to add that I can let it pass for a not unparadonable weakness -- the occasion given. But I must deal otherwise with her biographer. Him I shall hold to a strict rendering of account. I will know of him what he is about, and what she is about. If she faints really, and against her will, having forcible reasons for holding her will clear, she must be shown fighting to the last effort of will, against the assault of womanly nature, and drop, vanquished, as one dead, without a sound. But the Thaness calls out lustily -- she remembers, "as we shall make our griefs and clamours roar upon his death." She makes noise enough -- takes good care to attract everybody's attention to her performance -- for which I commend her. Calculate as nicely as you will -- she distracts or diverts speculation, and makes an interesting and agreeable break in the conversation. -- I think that the obvious meaning is the right meaning -- and *that she faints on purpose.*

<>*North.* Decided in favour of Feint.

Buller. You might have had the good manners to ask for my opinion.

North. I beg a thousand pardons, Buller.

Buller. A hundred will do, North. In Davies' *Anecdotes of the Stage*, I remember reading that Garrick would not trust Mrs Pritchard with the Swoon -- and that Macklin thought Mrs Porter alone could have been endured by the audience. Therefore, by the Great Manager, Lady Macbeth was not allowed in the Scene to appear at all. His belief was, that

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with her Ladyship it was a feint -- and that the Gods, aware of that, unless restrained by profound respect for the actress, would have *laughed* -- as at something rather comic. If the Gods, in Shakspeare's days, were as the Gods in Garrick's, William, methinks, would not, on any account, have exposed

the Lady to derision at such a time. But I suspect the Gods of the Globe would not have laughed, whatever they might have thought of her sincerity, and that she did appear before them in a Scene from which nothing could account for her absence. She was not, I verily believe, given to fainting -- perhaps this was the first time she had ever fainted since she was a girl. Now I believe she did. She would have stood by her husband at all hazards, had she been able, both on his account and her own; she would not have so deserted him at such a critical juncture; her character was of boldness rather than duplicity; her business now -- her duty -- was to brazen it out; but she grew sick -- qualms of conscience, however terrible, can be borne by sinners standing upright at the mouth of hell -- but the flesh of man is weak, in its utmost strength, when moulded to woman's form -- other qualms assail suddenly the earthly tenement -- the breath is choked -- the "distracted globe" grows dizzy -- they that look out of the windows know not what they see -- the body reels, lapses, sinks, and at full length smites the floor.

Seward. Well said -- Chairman of the Quarter-sessions.

Buller. Nor, with all submission, my dear Sir, can I think you treat your favourite murderess, on this trying occasion, with your usual fairness and candour. All she says, is, "Help me hence, ho!" Macduff says, "Look to the Lady" -- and Banquo says, "Look to the Lady" -- and she is "carried off." Some critic or other -- I think Malone -- says that Macbeth shows he knows "'tis a feint" by not going to her assistance. Perhaps he was mistaken -- know it he could not. And nothing more

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likely to make a woman faint than that revelling and wallowing of his in that bloody description.

North. By the Casting Vote of the President -- *Feint.*

Talboys. Let's to Lunch.

North. Go. You will find me sitting here when you come back.

639 SCENE II.

SCENE -- The Pavilion.

TIME -- after Lunch.

NORTH -- TALBOYS -- BULLER -- SEWARD.

North. Claudius, the Uncle-king in Hamlet, is perhaps the most odious character in all Shakspeare. But he does no unnecessary murders. He has killed the Father, and will the Son, all in regular order. But Macbeth plunges himself, like a drunken man, into unnecessary and injurious cruelties. He throws like a reckless gamester. If I am to own the truth, I don't know why he is so cruel. I don't think that he takes any pleasure in mere cruelty, like Nero --

Buller. What do we know of Nero? Was he mad?

North. I don't think that he takes any pleasure in mere cruelty, like Nero; but he seems to be under some infatuation that drags or drives him along. To kill is, in every difficulty, the ready resource that occurs to him -- as if to go on murdering

were, by some law of the Universe, the penalty which you must pay for having once murdered.

Seward. I think, Sir, that without contradicting anything we said before Lunch about his Lordship or his Kingship, we may conceive in the natural Macbeth considerable force of Moral Intuition.

North. We may.

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Seward. Of Moral Intelligence?

North. Yes.

Seward. Of Moral Obedience?

North. No.

Seward. Moral Intuition, and Moral Intelligence breaking out, from time to time, all through -- we understand how there is engendered in him strong self-dissatisfaction -- thence perpetual goadings on -- and desperate attempts to lose conscience in more and more crime.

North. Ay -- Seward -- even so. He tells you that he stakes soul and body upon the throw for a Crown. He has got the Crown -- and *paid for it*. He *must* keep it -- else he has bartered soul and body -- for nothing! To make his first crime *good* -- he strides gigantically along the road of which it opened the gate.

Talboys. An almost morbid impressibility of imagination is energetically stamped, and universally recognised in the Thane, and I think, sir, that it warrants, to a certain extent, a *sincerity* of the mental movements. He really sees a fantastical dagger -- he really hears fantastical voices -- perhaps he really sees a fantastical Ghost. All this in him is Nature -- not artifice -- and a nature deeply, terribly, tempestuously com-moved by the near contact of a murder imminent -- doing -- done. It is more like a murderer a-making than a murderer made.

Seward. See, sir, how precisely this characteristic is proposed.

640 *Buller.* By whom?

Seward. By Shakspeare, in that first Soliloquy. The poetry colouring, throughout, his discourse, is its natural efflorescence.

North. Talboys, Seward, you have spoken well.

Buller. And I have spoken ill?

North. I have not said so.

Buller. We have all Four of us spoken well -- we have all

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Four of us spoken ill -- and we have all Four of us spoken but so-so -- now and heretofore -- in this Tent -- hang the wind -- there's no hearing twelve words in ten a body says. Honoured sir, I beg permission to say that I cannot admit the Canon laid down by your Reverence, an hour or two ago, or a minute or two ago, that Macbeth's extravagant language is designed by Shakspeare to designate hypocrisy.

North. Why?

Buller. You commended Talboys and Seward for noticing the imaginative -- the poetical character of Macbeth's mind. There we find the reason of his extravagant language. It may, as you said, be cant and fustian -- or it may not -- but why attri-

bute to hypocrisy -- as you did -- what may have flowed from his genius? Poets may rant as loud as he, and yet be honest men. "In a fine frenzy rolling," their eyes may fasten on fustian.

North. Good -- go on. Deduct.

Buller. Besides, sir, the Stage had such a language of its own; and I cannot help thinking that Shakspeare often, and too frankly, gave in to it.

North. He did.

Buller. I would, however, much rather believe that if Shakspeare meant anything by it in Macbeth's Oratory or Poetry, he intended thereby rather to impress on us that last noticed constituent of his nature -- a vehement seizure of imagination. I believe, sir, that in the hortatory scene Lady Macbeth really vanquishes -- as the scene ostensibly shows -- his irresolution. And if Shakspeare means *irresolution*, I do not know why the *grounds* thereof which Shakspeare assigns to Macbeth should not be accepted as the true grounds. The Dramatist would seem to me to demand too much of me, if, *under* the grounds which he expresses, he requires me to discard these, and to discover and express others.

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Seward. I do not know, sir, if that horrible Invocation of hers to the Spirits of Murder to unsex her, be held by many to imply that she has no need of their help?

North. It is held by many to prove that she was not a woman but a fiend. It proves the reverse. I infer from it that she does need their help -- and, what is more, *that she gets it*. Nothing so dreadful, in the whole range of Man's Tragic Drama, as that Murder. But I see Seward is growing pale -- we know his infirmity -- and for the present shun it.

Seward. Thank you, sir.

North. I may, however, ask a question about Banquo's Ghost.

Seward. Well -- well -- do so.

641 *Talboys.* You put the question to me, sir? I am inclined to think, sir, that no real Ghost sits on the Stool -- but that Shakspeare meant it as with the Daggers. On the Stage he appears -- that is an abuse.

North. Not so sure of that, Talboys.

Talboys. Had Macbeth himself continued to believe that the first-seen Ghost was a real Ghost, he would not, could not have ventured so soon after its disappearance to say again, "And to our dear friend Banquo." He does say it -- and then again diseased imagination assails him at the rash words. Lady Macbeth reasons with him again, and he finally is persuaded that the Ghost, both times, had been but brain-sick creations.

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

Buller. That certainly looks as if he did then know he had been deceived. But perhaps he only censures himself for being too much agitated by a real ghost.

Talboys. That won't do.

North. But go back, my dear Talboys, to the first enacting of the Play. 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 recollect that nobody sitting there then knew that Banquo had been murdered. The dagger is not in point. Then the spectators heard him say, "Is this a dagger that I see before me?" And if no dagger was there, they could at once see that 'twas phantasy.

Talboys. Something in that.

Buller. A settler.

North. I entirely separate the two questions -- first, how did the Manager of the Globe Theatre have the King's Seat at the Feast filled; and second, what does the highest poetical Canon deliver. I speak now, but to the first. Now, here the rule is -- "the audience *must understand, and at once*, what that which they see and hear means" -- that Rule must govern the art of the drama in the Manager's practice. You allow that, Talboys?

Talboys. I do.

Buller. Rash -- Talboys -- rash: he's getting you into a net.

North. That is not my way, Buller. Well, then, suppose Macbeth acted for the first time to an audience, who are to establish it for a stock-play or to *damn it*. Would the Manager commit the whole power of a scene which is perhaps the most -- singly -- effective of the whole Play --

Buller. No -- no -- not the most effective of the whole Play --

North. The rival, then, of the Murder Scene -- the Sleep-Walking stands aloof and aloft -- to the chance of a true divination by the whole Globe audience? I think not. The argument is of a vulgar tone, I confess, and extremely literal, but it is after the measure of my poor faculties.

Seward. In confirmation of what you say, sir, it has been

lately asserted that one of the two appearances at least is not Banquo's -- but Duncan's. How is that to be settled but by a real Ghost -- or Ghosts?

642 *North.* And I ask, what has Shakspeare himself undeniably done elsewhere? In Henry VIII., Queen Katherine sleeps and *dreams*. Her Dream enters, and performs various acts -- somewhat expressive -- minutely contrived and prescribed. It is a mute Dream, which she with shut eyes sees -- which you in pit, boxes, and gallery see -- which her attendants, watching about her upon the stage, do *not* see.

Seward. And in Richard III -- He dreams, and so does Richmond. Eight Ghosts rise in succession and *speak* to Richard first, and to the Earl next -- each hears, I suppose, what concerns himself -- they seem to be present in the two Tents at once.

North. In Cymbeline, Posthumus dreams. His Dream enters -- Ghosts and even **Jupiter!** They act and speak; and this Dream has a reality -- for Jupiter hands or tosses a parchment-roll to one of the Ghosts, who lays it, as bidden, on the

breast of the Dreamer, where he, on awaking, perceives it! I call all this physically strong, sir, for the representation of the metaphysically thought.

Buller. If Buller may speak, Buller would observe, that once or twice both Ariel and Prospero come forward "invisible." And in Spenser, the Dream of which Morpheus lends the use to Archimago, is -- carried.

Seward. We all remember the Dream which Jupiter sends to Agamemnon, and which, while standing at his bed's-head, puts on the shape of Nestor and speaks; -- the Ghost of Patroclus -- the actual Ghost which stands at the bed's-head of Achilles, and *is* his Dream.

North. My friends, Poetry gives a body to the bodiless. The Stage of Shakspeare was rude, and gross. In my boyhood,

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I saw the Ghosts appear to John Kemble in Richard III. Now they may be abolished with Banquo. So may be Queen Katherine's Angels. But Shakspeare 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. Nor had Homer, when Achilles alone, in the Quarrel Scene, sees Minerva. Shakspeare and his Audience had no difficulty about the bodily representation of Thoughts -- the inward by the outward. Shakspeare and the Great Old Poets leave vague, shadowy, mist-shrouded, and indeterminate the boundaries between the Thought and the Existent -- the Real and the Unreal. I am able to believe with you, Talboys, that Banquo's Ghost was understood by Shakspeare, the Poet, to be the Phantasm of the murderer's guilt-and-fear-shaken soul; but was required by Shakspeare, the Manager of the Globe Theatre, to rise up through a trap-door, mealy-faced and blood-boultered, and so make "the Table full."

Buller. Seward, do bid him speak of Lady Macbeth.

Seward. Oblige me, sir -- don't now -- after dinner, if you will.

North. I shall merely allude now, as exceedingly poetical treatment, to the discretion throughout used in the **showing** of Lady Macbeth. You might almost say that she never takes a step on the stage, that does not *thrill the Theatre*. Not a waste word, gesture, or look. All at the studied fulness of sublime tragical power -- yet all wonderfully tempered and governed. I doubt if Shakspeare could have given a good account of everything that he makes Macbeth say -- but of all that She says he could.

Talboys. As far as I am able to judge, she but once in the whole Play loses her perfect self-mastery -- when the servant surprises her by announcing the King's coming. She answers, 643 'thou'rt mad to say it;' which is a manner of speaking used by

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those who cannot, or can hardly believe tidings that fill them with exceeding joy. It is not the manner of a Lady to her servant who unexpectedly announces the arrival of a high -- of the highest visitor. She recovers herself instantly. 'Is not thy master with him, who, wer't so, would have informed for pre-

paration?' This is a turn colouring her exclamation, and is spoken in the most self-possessed, argumentative, demonstrative tone. The preceding words had been torn from her; now she has passed, with inimitable dexterity, from the dreamed Queen, to the usual mistress of her household -- *to the huswife*.

North. In the Fourth Act -- she is not seen at all. But in the Fifth, lo! and behold! and at once we know why she had been absent -- we see and are turned to living stone by the revelation of the terrible truth. I am always inclined to conceive Lady Macbeth's night-walking as the summit, or topmost peak of all tragic conception and execution -- in Prose, too, the crowning of Poetry! But it must be, because these are the *ipsissima verba* -- yea, the escaping sighs and moans of the bared soul. There must be nothing, not even the thin and translucent veil of the verse, betwixt her soul showing itself, and yours beholding. Words which your "hearing latches" from the threefold abyss of Night, Sleep, and Conscience! What place for the enchantment of any music is here? Besides, she speaks in a whisper. The Siddons did -- audible distinctly, throughout the stilled immense theatre. Here music is not -- sound is not -- only an anguished soul's faint breathings -- gaspings. And observe that Lady Macbeth carries -- a candle -- besides washing her hands -- and besides speaking prose -- three departures from the severe and elect method, to bring out that supreme revelation. I have been told that the great Mrs Pritchard used to touch the palm with the tips of her fingers, for the washing, keeping candle in hand; -- that the Siddons first set down her candle, that she might come forwards, and wash her hands in earnest, one over

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the other, as if she were at her wash-hand stand, with plenty of water in her basin -- that when Sheridan got intelligence of her design so to do, he ran shrieking to her, and, with tears in his eyes, besought that she would not, at one stroke, overthrow Drury Lane -- that she persisted, and turned the thousands of bosoms to marble.

Talboys. Our dear, dear Master.

North. You will remember, my friends, her *four rhymed lines* -- uttered to herself in Act Third. They are very remarkable --

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

They are her only *waking* acknowledgments of having *mis-* taken life! So -- they forebode the Sleep-Walking, and the Death -- as an owl, or a raven, or vulture, or any fowl of obscene wing, might flit between the sun and a crowned but doomed head -- the shadow but of a moment, yet ominous, for the augur, of an entire fatal catastrophe.

Seward. They do. But to say the truth, I had either forgot them, or never discovered their significance. O that William Shakspeare!

Talboys. O that Christopher North!

North. Speak so, friends -- 'tis absurd, but I like it.

Talboys. It is sincere.

644 North. At last they call him "black Macbeth," and "this dead Butcher." And with good reason. They also call her "his fiend-like Queen," which last expression I regard as highly offensive.

Buller. And they call her so not without strong reason.

North. A bold, bad woman -- not a Fiend. I ask -- Did she,

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or did she not, "with violent hand foredo her life?" They mention it as a rumour. The Doctor desires that all means of self-harm may be kept out of her way. Yet the impression on us, as the thing proceeds, is, that she dies of pure remorse -- which I believe. She is *visibly dying*. The cry of women, announcing her death, is rather as of those who stood around the bed watching, and when the heart at the touch of the invisible finger stops, shriek -- than of one after the other coming in and finding the self-slain -- a confused, informal, perplexing, and perplexed proceeding -- but the Cry of Women is formal, regular for the stated occasion. You may say, indeed, that she poisoned herself -- and so died in bed -- watched. Under the precautions, that is unlikely -- too refined. The manner of Seyton, "The Queen, my Lord, is dead," shows to me that it was hourly expected. How these few words would *seek* into you, did you first read the Play in mature age! She died a natural death -- of remorse. Take my word for it -- the rumour to the contrary was natural to the lip and ear of Hate.

Talboys. A question of primary import is -- What is the relation of feeling between him and her? The natural impression, I think, is, that the confiding affection -- the intimate confidence -- is "there" -- of a husband and wife who love one another -- to whom all interests are in common, and are consulted in common. Without this belief, the Magic of the Tragedy perishes -- vanishes to me. "My dearest love, Duncan comes here to-night." "Be innocent of the knowledge, *dearest Chuck*" -- a marvellous phrase for Melpomene. It is the full union -- for ill purposes -- that we know habitually for good purposes -- that to me tempers the Murder Tragedy.

North. Yet believe me, my dear Talboys -- that of all the murders Macbeth may have committed, she knew beforehand but of **one** -- Duncan's. The haunted somnambulist speaks the truth -- the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

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Talboys. "The Thane of Fife had a wife." Does not that imply that she was privy to *that* Murder?

North. No. Except that she takes upon herself *all* the murders that are the offspring, legitimate or illegitimate, of that First Murder. But we know that Macbeth, in a sudden fit of fury, ordered the Macduffs to be massacred when on leaving the Cave Lenox told him of the Thane's flight.

Talboys. That is decisive.

North. A woman, she feels for a murdered woman. That is all -- a touch of nature -- from Shakspeare's profound and pitiful heart.

Talboys. "The Queen, my lord, is dead." "She should

have died hereafter; There would have been a time for such a word" -- Often have I meditated on the meaning of these words -- yet even now I do not fully feel or understand them.

North. Nor I. This seems to look from them -- "so pressed by outward besiegings, I have not capacity to entertain the blow as it requires to be entertained. With a free soul I could have measured it. Now I cannot."

Talboys. Give us, sir, a commentary on the Revelations of the Sleeping Spectre.

645 *North.* I dare not. Let's be cheerful. I ask this -- when you see and hear Kemble-Macbeth -- and Siddons-Macbeth -- whom do you believe that you see and hear? I affirm that you at one and the same instant -- (or at the most in two immediately successive instants -- yet I believe in one and the same instant) -- know that you see and hear Kemble -- or if that accomplished gentleman and admirable actor -- Macready be performing the part -- then Macready; -- and yet believe that you see and hear Lord Macbeth. I aver that you entertain a mixt -- confused -- self-contradictory state of mind -- that two elements of thought which cannot co-subsist do co-subsist.

Talboys. *De jure* they cannot -- **de facto** they do.

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North. Just so.

Talboys. They co-subsist fighting, and yet harmonising -- there is half-belief -- semi-illusion.

North. I claim the acknowledgment of such a state -- which any one who chooses may better describe, but which shall come to that effect -- for the lowest substratum of all science and criticism concerning **Poesy**. Will anybody grant me this, then I will reason with him about Poesy, for we begin with something in common. Will anybody deny me this, then I will not argue with him about Poesy, for we set out with nothing in common.

Buller. We grant you all you ask -- we are all agreed -- "our unanimity is wonderful."

North. Leave out the great Brother and Sister, and take the Personated alone. I know that Othello and Desdemona never existed -- that an Italian Novelist began, and an English Dramatist ended them -- and there they are. But do I not believe in their existence, "their loves and woes?" Yes I do believe in their existence, in their loves and woes -- and I hate Iago accordingly with a vicious, unchristian, personal, active, malignant hatred.

Talboys. Dr Johnson's celebrated expression, "all the belief that Poetry claims" ----

Buller. Celebrated! Where is it?

Talboys. Preface to Shakspeare -- is idle, and frivolous, and false?

North. It is. He belies his own experience. He cannot make up his mind to admit the *irrational thought* of belief which you at once reject and accept. But exactly the half acceptance, and the half rejection, separates poetry from -- prose.

Talboys. That is, sir, the poetical from the prosaic.

North. Just so. It is the life and soul of all poetry -- the *lulus* -- the make-believe -- the glamour and the gramarye. I

do not know -- gentlemen -- I wish to be told, whether I am now throwing away words upon the setting up of a pyramid which was built by Cheops, and is only here and there crumbling a little, or whether the world requires that the position shall be formally argued and acknowledged. Johnson, as you reminded me, Talboys, did not admit it.

Talboys. That he tells in so many words. Has any more versed and profound master in criticism, before or since, authentically and authoritatively, luminously, cogently, explicitly, psychologically, metaphysically, physiosologically, psychologically, propounded, reasoned out, legislated, and enthroned the Dogma?

North. I know not, Talboys. Do you admit the Dogma?

646 *Talboys.* I do.

North. Impersonation -- Apostrophe -- of the absent; every poetical motion of the Soul; the whole pathetic beholding of Nature -- involve the secret existence and necessity of this irrational psychical state for grounding the Logic of Poesy.

Buller. Go on, sir.

North. I will -- but in a new direction. Before everything else, I desire, for the settlement of this particular question, a foundation for, and some progress in the science of **Murder Tragedies.**

Seward. I know *properly* two.

Buller. Two only? Pray name.

Seward. This of Macbeth and Richard III.

Buller. The Agamemnon -- the Choephoræ -- the Electra -- the Medea --

Seward. In the Agamemnon, your regard is drawn to Agamemnon himself and to Cassandra. However, it is after a measure a prototype. Clytemnestra has in it a principality. Medea stands eminent -- but then she is in the right.

Buller. In the right?

Seward. Jason at least is altogether in the wrong. But we must -- for obvious reasons -- discuss the Greek drama by itself; therefore not a word more about it now.

North. Richard III., and Macbeth and his wife, are in their Plays the principal people. You must go along with them to a certain guarded extent -- else the Play is done for. To be kept abhorring and abhorring, for Five Acts together, you can't stand.

Seward. Oh! that the difference between Poetry and Life were once for all set down -- and not only once for all, but every time that it comes in question.

Buller. My dear sir, do gratify Seward's very reasonable desire, and once for all set down the difference.

Seward. You bear suicides on the stage, and tyrannicides and other cides -- all simple homicide -- much murder. Even Romeo's killing Tybalt in the street, in reparation for Mercutio's death, you would take rather differently, if happening to-day in Pall Mall, or Moray Place.

North. We have assuredly for the Stage a qualified scheme of sentiment -- grounded no doubt on our modern or every-day

morality -- but specifically modified by Imagination -- by Poetry -- for the use of the dramatist. Till we have set down what we do bear, and why, we are not prepared for distinguishing what we won't bear, and why.

Buller. Oracular!

Seward. Suggestive.

647 *North.* And if so, sufficient for the nonce. Hamlet's uncle, Claudius, seems to me to be the most that can be borne of one purely abhorrible. He is made disgusting besides -- drunken and foul. Able he is -- for he won the Queen by "witchcraft of his wit;" but he is made endurable by his diminisht proportion in the Play -- many others overpowering and hiding him.

Buller. Pardon me, sir, but I have occasionally felt, in

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course of this conversation, that you were seeking -- in opposition to Payne Knight -- to reduce Macbeth to a species of Claudius. I agree with you in thinking that Shakspeare would not give a Claudius so large a proportion of his drama. The pain would be predominant and insupportable.

North. I would fain hope you have misunderstood me, Buller.

Buller. Sometimes, sir, it is not easy for a plain man to know what you would be at.

North. I?

Buller. Yea -- you.

North. Richard III. is a hypocrite -- a hard, cold murderer from of old -- and yet you bear him. I suppose, friends, chiefly from his pre-eminent Intellectual Faculties, and his perfectly courageous and self-possessed Will. You do support your conscience -- or traffic with it -- by saying all along -- we are only conducting him to the retribution of Bosworth Field. But, friends, if these motions in Macbeth, which look like revealings and breathings of some better elements, are sheer and vile hypocrisy -- if it is merely his manhood that quails, which his wife has to virilify -- a dastard and a hypocrite, and no more -- I cannot abide him -- there is too much of a bad business, and then I must think Shakspeare has committed an egregious error in Poetry. Richard III. is a bold, heroic hypocrite. He knows he is one. He lies to Man -- never to his own Conscience, or to Heaven.

Talboys. What?

North. Never. There he is clear-sighted, and stands, like Satan, in open and impious rebellion.

Buller. But your Macbeth, sir, would be a shuffling Puritan -- a mixture of Holy Willie and Greenacre. Forgive me ----

Seward. Order -- order -- order.

Talboys. Chair -- chair -- chair.

Buller. Swing -- Swing -- Swing.

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North. My dear Buller -- you have misunderstood me -- I assure you you have. Some of my expressions may have been too strong -- not sufficiently qualified.

Buller. I accept the explanation. But be more guarded in future, my dear sir.

North. I will.

Buller. On that assurance I ask you, sir, how is the Tragedy of Macbeth morally saved? That is, how does the degree of complacency with which we consider the two murderers not morally taint ourselves -- not leave us predisposed murderers?

North. That is a question of infinite compass and fathom -- answered then only when the whole Theory of Poesy has been expounded.

648 *Buller.* Whew!

North. The difference established between our contemplation of the Stage and of Life.

Buller. I hardly expect that to be done this Summer in this Tent.

North. Friends! Utilitarians and Religionists shudder and shun. They consider the Stage and Life as of one and the same kind -- look on both through one glass.

Buller. Eh?

North. The Utilitarian will settle the whole question of Life upon half its data -- the lowest half. He accepts Agriculture, which he understands logically -- but rejects Imagination, which he does not understand at all -- because, if you sow it in the track of his plough, no wheat springs. Assuredly not; a different plough must furrow a different soil for that seed and that harvest.

Buller. Now, my dear sir, you speak like yourself. You always do so -- the rashness was all on my side.

Seward. Nobody cares -- hold your tongue.

North. The Religionist errs from the opposite quarter. He

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brings measures from Heaven to measure things of the Earth. He weighs Clay in the balance of Spirit. I call him a Religionist who overruns with religious rules and conceptions things that do not come under them -- completely distinct from the native simplicity and sovereignty of Religion in a piously religious heart. Both of them are confounders of the sciences which investigate the Facts and the Laws of Nature, visible and invisible -- subduing inquiry under preconception.

Buller. Was that the Gong -- or but thunder?

North. The Gong.

Talboys. I smell sea-trout.

SCENE III.

SCENE -- Deeside.

TIME -- after Dinner.

NORTH -- BULLER -- SEWARD -- TALBOYS.

North. One hour more -- and no more -- to Shakspeare.

Buller. May we crack nuts?

North. By all means. And here they are for you to crack.

Buller. Now for some of your *astounding Discoveries*.

649 *North.* If you gather the Movement, scene by scene, of the Action of this Drama, you see a few weeks, or it may be months. There must be time to hear that Malcolm and his brother have reached England and Ireland -- time for the King of England to interest himself in behalf of Malcolm, and mus-

ter his array. More than this seems unrequired. But the zenith of tyranny to which Macbeth has arrived, and particularly the manner of describing the desolation of Scotland by the speakers in England, conveys to you the notion of a long, long dismal reign. Of old it always used to do so with me; so that when I came to visit the question of the Time, I felt

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myself as if baffled and puzzled, not finding the time I had looked for, demonstrable. Samuel Johnson has had the same impression, but has not scrutinised the data. He goes probably by the old Chronicler for the actual time, and this, one would think, must have floated before Shakspeare's own mind.

Talboys. Nobody can read the Scenes in England without seeing long-protracted time.

Malcolm. Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty.
Macduff. Let us rather
Hold fast the mortal sword, and, like good men,
Bestride our down-fallen birthdom: Each new morn,
New widows howl; new orphans cry; new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland, and yell'd out
Like syllable of dolour.

North. Ay, Talboys, that is true Shakspeare. No Poet -- before or since -- has in so few words presented such a picture. No poet, before or since, has used *such* words. He writes like a man inspired.

Talboys. And in the same dialogue Malcolm says --

I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;
It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds.

North. Go on, my dear Talboys. Your memory is a treasury of all the highest Poetry of Shakspeare. Go on.

Talboys. And hear Rosse, on his joining Malcolm and Macduff in this scene, the latest arrival from Scotland: --

Macduff. Stands Scotland where it did?
Rosse. Alas, poor country!
Almost afraid to know itself! It cannot
Be call'd our mother, but our grave: where nothing,
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;

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Where sighs and groans, and shrieks that rent the air,
Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstasy; the dead man's knell
Is there scarce ask'd, for who; and good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying, or ere they sicken.

North. Words known to all the world, yet coming on the ear of each individual listener with force unweaken'd by familiarity, power increased by repetition, as it will be over all Scottish breasts *in secula seculorum*.

Talboys. By Heavens! he smiles! There is a sarcastic

smile on that incomprehensible face of yours, sir -- of which no man in this Tent, I am sure, may divine the reason.

650 *North.* I was not aware of it. Now, my dear Talboys, let us here endeavour to ascertain Shakspeare's Time. Here we have long time with a vengeance -- *and here we have short time; for this is the Picture of the State of Poor Scotland before the Murder of Macduff's Wife and Children.*

Buller. What?

Seward. Eh?

North. Macduff, moved by Rosse's words, asks him, you know, Talboys, "how does my wife?" And then ensues the affecting account of her murder, which you need not recite. Now, I ask, when was the murder of Lady Macduff perpetrated? Two days -- certainly not more -- after the murder of Banquo. Macbeth, incensed by the flight of Fleance, goes, the morning after the murder of Banquo, to the Weirds, to know by "the worst means, the worst." You know what they showed him -- and that, as they vanished, he exclaimed --

Where are they? Gone? -- Let this pernicious hour
Stand aye accursed in the calendar! --
Come in, without there!

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Enter Lenox.

Len. What's your grace's will?

Macb. Saw you the weird sisters?

Len. No, my lord.

Macb. Came they not by you?

Len. No, indeed, my lord.

Macb. Infected be the air whereon they ride;
And damn'd all those that trust them! -- I did hear
The galloping of horse: Who was't came by?

Len. 'Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you word,
Macduff is fled to England.

Macb. Fled to England?

Len. Ay, my good lord.

Macb. Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits:
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook,
Unless the deed go with it: from this moment,
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:
The castle of Macduff I will surprise;
Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace his line. No boasting like a fool:
This deed I'll do, before this purpose cool.

And his purpose does not cool -- for the whole Family are murdered. When, then, took place the murder of Banquo? Why, a week or two after the Murder of Duncan. A very short time indeed, then, intervened between the first and the last of these Murders. And yet from those pictures of Scotland, painted in England for our information and horror, we have before us a long, long time, all filled up with butchery over all the land! But I say there had been no such butchery -- or anything resembling it. There was, as yet, little amiss with Scotland. Look at the *linking* of Acts II. and III. End of Act II., Macbeth is gone to Scone -- to be invested. Beginning of Act III.,

Banquo says, in soliloquy, in Palace of Fores, "Thou hast it now." I ask, when is *this now*? Assuredly just after the Coronation. The Court was moved from Scone to Fores, which, we may gather from finding Duncan there formerly, to be the usual Royal Residence. "Enter Macbeth as King." "Our great Feast" -- our "solemn Supper" -- "this day's Council" -- all have the aspect of new taking on the style of Royalty. "Thou hast it **now**," is formal -- weighed -- and in a position that gives it authority -- at the very beginning of an Act -- therefore intended to mark time -- a very pointing of the finger on the dial.

Buller. Good image -- short and apt.

651 *Talboys.* Let me perpend.

Buller. Do, sir, let him perpend.

North. Banquo fears "Thou play'dst most foully for it;" he goes no farther -- not a word of any tyranny done. All the style of an incipient, *dangerous* Rule -- clouds, but no red rain yet. And I need not point out to you, Talboys, who carry Shakspeare unnecessarily in a secret pocket of that strange Sporting Jacket, which the more I look at it the greater is my wonder -- that Macbeth's behaviour at the Banquet, on seeing Banquo nodding at him from his own stool, proves him to have been *then* young in blood.

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

He had a week or two before committed a first-rate murder, Duncan's -- that night he had, by hired hands, got a second-rate job done, Banquo's -- and the day following he gave orders for a bloody business on a more extended scale, the Macduffs. But nothing here the least like Rosse's, or Macduff's, or Malcolm's Picture of Scotland -- during those few weeks. For Shakspeare

forgot what the true time was -- his own time -- *the short time*; and introduced *long time at the same time* -- why, he himself no doubt knew -- and you no doubt, Talboys, know also -- and will you have the goodness to tell the "why" to the Tent?

Talboys. In ten minutes. Are you done?

North. Not quite. Meanwhile -- Two Clocks are going at once -- which of the two gives the true time of Day?

Buller. Short and apt. Go on, Sir.

North. I call that an **Astounding Discovery**. Macduff speaks as if he knew that Scotland had been for ever so long desolated by the Tyrant -- and yet till Rosse told him, never had he heard of the Murder of his own Wife! Here Shakspeare either forgot himself wholly, and the short time he had himself assigned -- or, with his eyes open, forced in the *long time* upon the *short* -- in wilful violation of possibility! All silent?

Talboys. After supper -- you shall be answered.

North. Not by any man now sitting here -- or elsewhere.

Talboys. That remains to be heard.

North. Pray, Talboys, explain to me *this*. The Banquet scene breaks up in most admired disorder -- "stand not upon the order of your going -- but go at once," -- quoth the Queen. The King, in a state of great excitement, says to her --

I will to-morrow,
(Betimes I will,) unto the weird sisters:
More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,
By the worst means, the worst: for mine own good,
All causes shall give way; I am in blood
Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

One might have thought not quite so tedious; as yet he had murdered only Duncan and his grooms, and to-night Banquo. Well, he does go "to-morrow and by times" to the Cave.

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Witch. -- By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes:
Open, locks, whoever knocks.
Macbeth. -- How now, you secret, Black, and midnight Hags?

It is a "dark Cave" -- dark at all times -- and now "by times" of the morning! Now -- observe -- Lenox goes along with Macbeth -- on such occasions 'tis natural to wish "one of ourselves" to be at hand. And Lenox had been at the Banquet. Had he gone to bed after that strange Supper? No doubt, for an hour or two -- like the rest of "the Family." But whether he went to bed or not, *then and there* he and another Lord had a confidential and miraculous conversation.

Talboys. Miraculous! What's miraculous about it?

North. Lenox says to the other Lord --

My former speeches have but hit your thoughts,
Which can interpret further; only, I say,
Things have been strangely borne: the gracious Duncan
Was pitied of Macbeth -- marry he was dead.
And the right valiant Banquo walked too late;
Whom, you may say, if it please you, Fleance killed,
For Fleance fled.

Who told him all this about Banquo and Fleance? He speaks of it quite familiarly to the "other lord," as a thing well known in all its bearings. But not a soul but Macbeth, and the Three Murderers themselves, could possibly have known anything about it! As for Banquo, "Safe in a ditch he bides," -- and Fleance had fled. The body may, perhaps in a few days, be found, and, though "with twenty trenched gashes on its head," identified as Banquo's, and, in a few weeks, Fleance may turn up in Wales. Nay, the Three Murderers may confess. But now all is hush; and Lenox, unless endowed with second sight, or clairvoyance, could know nothing of the murder. Yet, from his way of speaking of it, one might imagine crowner's 'quest

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had sitten on the body -- and the report been in the *Times* between supper and that after-supper confab! I am overthrown -- everted -- subverted -- the contradiction is flagrant -- the im-

possibility monstrous -- I swoon.

Buller. Water -- water.

North. Thank you, Buller. That's revivifying -- I see now all objects distinctly. Where was I? O, ay. The "other Lord" seems as warlock-wise as Lenox -- for he looks forward to times when

We may again
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights;
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives.

An allusion, beyond doubt, to the murder of Banquo! A sudden thought strikes me. Why, not only must the real, actual, spiritual, corporeal Ghost of Banquo *sate on the stool*, but "Lenox and the other Lord," as well as Macbeth, *saw him*.

Buller. Are you serious, sir?

North. So serious that I can scarcely hope to recover my usual spirits to-day. Have you, gentlemen, among you any more plausible solution to offer? All mum. One word more with you. Lenox tells the "other Lord"

From broad words, and 'cause he fail'd
His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear,
Macduff lives in disgrace; Sir, can you tell
Where he bestows himself?

653 And the "other Lord," who is wonderfully well informed for a person "strictly anonymous," replies that Macduff --

Is gone to pray the holy king, (Edward) on his aid
To wake Northumberland, and warlike Siward.

Nay, he minutely describes Macduff's surly reception of the King's messenger, sent to invite him to the Banquet, and the

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happy style of that official on getting the Thane of Fife's "absolute, Sir, not I," and D. I. O.! And the same nameless "Lord in waiting" says to Lenox, that

this report
Hath so exasperate the king, that he
Prepares for some attempt of war.

I should like to know first where and when these two gifted individuals picked up all this information? The king himself had told the Queen, that same night, that he had *not sent* to Macduff -- but that he had heard "by the way" that he was not coming to the Banquet -- and he only *learns* the flight of Macduff after the Cauldron Scene -- that is at end of it: --

Macbeth. Come in, without there!
Enter Lenox.
Lenox. What's your Grace's will?
Macbeth. Saw you the Weird Sisters?
Lenox. No, indeed, my Lord.
Macbeth. Infected be the air whereon they ride;
And damn'd all those that trust them! -- I did hear
The galloping of horse: Who was't came by?
Lenox. 'Tis two or three, my Lord, that bring you word,

Macduff is fled to England.
Macbeth. Fled to England?

For an Usurper and Tyrant, his Majesty is singularly ill-informed about the movements of his most dangerous Thanes! But Lenox, I think, must have been not a little surprised at that moment to find that, so far from the *exasperated* Tyrant having "*prepared for some attempt of war*" with England -- he had not till then positively known that Macduff had fled! I pause, as a man pauses who has no more to say -- not for a reply. But to be sure, Talboys will reply to anything -- and were I to say that the Moon is made of green cheese, he would say -- yellow --

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Talboys. If of weeping Parmesan, then I -- of the "cheese without a tear" -- Double Gloster.

North. The whole Dialogue between Lenox and the Lord is *miraculous*. It abounds with knowledge of events that had not happened -- and *could not* have happened -- on the showing of Shakspeare himself; but I do not believe that there is another man now alive who knows that Lenox and the "other Lord" are caught up and strangled in that *noose of Time*. Did the Poet? You would think, from the way they go on, that one ground of war, one motive of Macduff's going, is the murder of Banquo -- perpetrated since he is gone off!

Talboys. Eh?

North. Gentlemen, I have given you a specimen or two of Shakspeare's way of dealing with Time -- and I can elicit no reply. You are one and all dumbfounded. What will you be -- where will you be -- when I --

Buller. Have announced "all my astounding discoveries!" and where, also, will be poor Shakspeare -- where his Critics?

654 *North.* Friends, Countrymen, and Romans, lend me your ears! A dazzling spell is upon us that veils from our apprehension all incompatibilities -- all impossibilities -- for he dips the Swan-quill in Power -- and Power is that which you must accept from him, and so to the utter oblivion, while we read or behold, of them all. To go to work with such inquiries is to try to articulate thunder. What do I intend? That Shakspeare is only to be *thus* criticised? Apollo forbid -- forbid the Nine! I intend <>Prologomena to the Criticism of Shakspeare. I intend mowing and burning the brambles before ploughing the soil. I intend showing where we must not look for the Art and the Genius of Shakspeare, as a step to discovering where we must. I suspect -- I know -- that Criticism has oscillated from one extreme to another, in the mind of the country -- from denying all art, to acknowledging consummated art, and no flaw. I

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would find the true Point. Stamped and staring upon the front of these Tragedies is a conflict. He, the Poet, beholds Life -- he, the Poet, is on the Stage. The littleness of the Globe Theatre mixes with the greatness of human affairs. You think of the Green-room and the Scene-shifters. I think that when we have stripped away the disguises and incumbrances of the

Power, we shall see, naked, and strong, and beautiful, the
statue moulded by Jupiter.