

**HEATH'S ENGLISH
CLASSICS: THE
TRAGEDY OF MACBETH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649723263

Heath's English Classics: The Tragedy of Macbeth by William Shakespeare & E. K. Chambers

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THE TRAGEDY

OF

MACBETH

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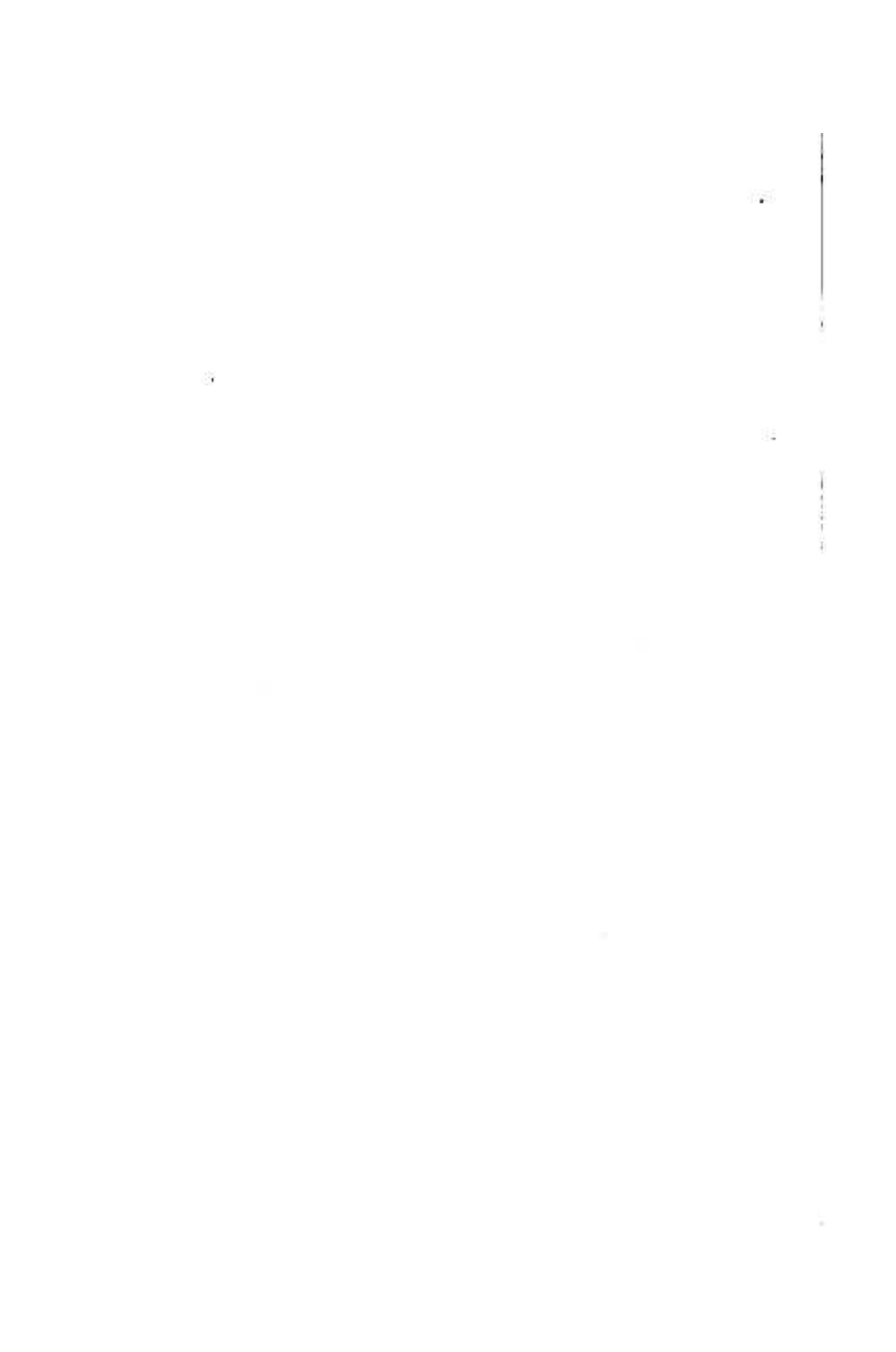
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GENERAL PREFACE.

IN this edition of SHAKESPEARE an attempt is made to present the greater plays of the dramatist in their literary aspect, and not merely as material for the study of philology or grammar. Criticism purely verbal and textual has only been included to such an extent as may serve to help the student in the appreciation of the essential poetry. Questions of date and literary history have been fully dealt with in the Introductions, but the larger space has been devoted to the interpretative rather than the matter-of-fact order of scholarship. Aesthetic judgments are never final, but the Editors have attempted to suggest points of view from which the analysis of dramatic motive and dramatic character may be profitably undertaken. In the Notes likewise, while it is hoped that all unfamiliar expressions and allusions have been adequately explained, yet it has been thought even more important to consider the dramatic value of each scene, and the part which it plays in relation to the whole. These general principles are common to the whole series; in detail each Editor is alone responsible for the play or plays that have been intrusted to him.

Every volume of the series has been provided with a Glossary, an Essay upon Metre, and an Index; and Appendices have been added upon points of special interest, which could not conveniently be treated in the Introduction or the Notes. The text is based by the several Editors on that of the *Globe* edition: the only omissions made are those that are unavoidable in an edition likely to be used by young students.

By the systematic arrangement of the introductory matter, and by close attention to typographical details, every effort has been made to provide an edition that will prove convenient in use.



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INTRODUCTION.

I. LITERARY HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

THE *Tragedy of Macbeth*, like most of Shakespeare's later plays, was not printed separately in quarto form during his lifetime. It first appeared in the collected edition The Folio text of 1623 issued in 1623, seven years after the poet's death, by John Heminge and Henry Condell. Here it stands between *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*. In the preface to this edition, known as the *First Folio*, Heminge and Condell claim to have taken great care to present an accurate text of the plays, "absolute in their numbers as he conceived them". But it would not be safe to put overmuch confidence in this boast. The text of *Macbeth*, in particular, is very unsatisfactory. It is full of printer's errors. Verse-passages are printed as prose, or cut up into irregular lines without regard to metre. And in many places the original sense has been reduced to nonsense.¹ Some of these mistakes were corrected in the *Second Folio* of 1632; some have been emended by the ingenuity of Theobald and his fellow commentators; others are perhaps beyond the reach of scholarship.

It is improbable that the version of the play from which the *First Folio* text was taken was in the state in which Shakespeare left it. Opinions differ as to the extent of the modification which it may have The Folio text a stage version. Middleton and undergone. The Clarendon Press editors think Macbeth that it had been freely touched up by Thomas Middleton. They profess to be able to trace his hand in certain rhyming tags and passages "not in Shakespeare's manner". Attempts

¹ Instances of the state of the *First Folio* text will be found in the notes on l. 1. 20; l. 3. 37; ll. 2. 2; ll. 2. 26.