

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

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649723270

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

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & E. K. CHAMBERS**

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



Death's English Classics

William Shakespeare

THE TRAGEDY

OF

MACBETH

EDITED BY

E. K. CHAMBERS, B.A.

SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD

---

BOSTON, U. S. A.

D. C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS

1897

## 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.

## CONTENTS.

---

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| GENERAL PREFACE, . . . . .                                  | 3    |
| INTRODUCTION, . . . . .                                     | 7    |
| DRAMATIS PERSONÆ, . . . . .                                 | 28   |
| MACBETH, . . . . .  | 29   |
| NOTES, . . . . .  | 89   |
| APPENDIX A.—SIMON FORMAN, . . . . .                         | 145  |
| APPENDIX B.—THE EDITIONS OF 1673 AND 1674, . . . . .        | 146  |
| APPENDIX C.—SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORICAL AUTHORITY, 148         |      |
| APPENDIX D.—WITCHCRAFT IN THE AGE OF SHAKESPEARE, . . . . . | 163  |
| APPENDIX E.—ON THE WITCH SCENES, . . . . .                  | 164  |
| APPENDIX F.—ON THE PORTER SCENE, . . . . .                  | 165  |
| APPENDIX G.—ON VARIOUS SUSPECTED PASSAGES, . . . . .        | 167  |
| ESSAY ON METRE, . . . . .                                   | 171  |
| GLOSSARY, . . . . .   | 177  |
| INDEX OF WORDS, . . . . .                                   | 185  |
| GENERAL INDEX, . . . . .                                    | 187  |

---

## 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 Cæsar* 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 undergone. The Clarendon Press editors think The Folio text a stage version, Middleton and 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

<sup>1</sup> Instances of the state of the *First Folio* text will be found in the notes on I. 2, 10; I. 3, 37; II. 2, 2; II. 2, 16.



in a similar direction have been made by Mr. F. G. Fleay.<sup>1</sup> Middleton was a younger contemporary of Shakespeare's, and wrote for the King's Company between 1615 and 1624. If it was found necessary during that period to make any alterations in *Macbeth*, it would have been natural enough to intrust the task to him. But I cannot believe that it is possible to disentangle such alterations from the original stuff of the piece; and, in spite of Coleridge, a criticism which can attribute the Porter's speech in act ii. sc. 3 to any other than Shakespeare appears to me strangely untrustworthy.<sup>2</sup> It is not unlikely, however, that the *First Folio* was printed from a copy of *Macbeth* which had been 'cut' and 'written up' for stage purposes.<sup>3</sup> This theory would account for the unusual shortness of the play;<sup>4</sup> for certain discrepancies in the incidents;<sup>5</sup> and for the number of incomplete lines, which may very well be due to the excision of speeches or parts of speeches.<sup>6</sup> I think also that there has been some tampering with the witch-scenes by the introduction of a superfluous personage, Hecate, and of a few lines lyrical in character and incongruous to the original conception of the weird sisters. This condemnation would cover act iii. sc. 5, and act iv. sc. 1. ll. 39-43; 125-132. These passages are very likely the work of Middleton, for they closely resemble in style certain scenes in a play of his called *The Witch*.<sup>7</sup> This play was discovered in MS. in 1778, and its importance was at once observed, and perhaps exaggerated, by Shakespearian critics. Steevens assumed that *The Witch* was written before *Macbeth*, and inferred from certain parallels between the two plays that Shakespeare borrowed hints from his fellow-dramatist. A

<sup>1</sup> See the *Transactions of the New Shakspeare Society* for 1874; Mr. Fleay's *Shakspeare Manual*, p. 245, and a later paper in *Anglia*, vol. vii. On the passages attributed to Middleton by these critics see Appendices E, F, and G.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix F.

<sup>3</sup> Similar instances of such stage-versions are probably to be seen in the *Folio Hamlet* and the *First Quarto of Romeo and Juliet*.

<sup>4</sup> *Macbeth* has 1993 lines; the only play that is shorter is *Comedy of Errors*, which has 1770. The longest play, *Antony and Cleopatra*, has 3564, and the average length is 2857.

<sup>5</sup> See notes on i. 2. 53; i. 3. 73; i. 3. 108; iii. 6. 49.

<sup>6</sup> See *Essay on Metre*, § 3 (iii).

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix E, and the notes on the doubtful passages.

saner scholarship has, however, led to the conclusion that *The Witch* was probably not written before 1613, and consequently that Middleton was the borrower. Having written his own play, he may have interpolated a few lines in a similar style into *Macbeth*, with the object, perhaps, of introducing a musical element. It is noteworthy that in the stage-directions to two of the doubtful passages appear the titles of songs which are given in full in *The Witch*.<sup>1</sup>

Three possible dates have been suggested for the original production of *Macbeth*. The latest of these is 1610. It depends upon the testimony of one Simon Forman, an astrologer. Forman was in the habit of keeping a manuscript book, and entering in it his play-house impressions. He records a performance of *Macbeth* at the Globe on April 20, 1610. From the description he gives, it is clear that what he saw was Shakespeare's play, and that in its main outlines it was identical with the version in the Folio.<sup>2</sup> But there is no proof that Forman was at the first performance; revivals were frequent on the Elizabethan stage; and the weight of evidence is in favour of an earlier date. This can hardly be later than 1607, for in *The Puritan*, published in that year, occurs a manifest allusion to Banquo's ghost. It is in act iv. sc. 1: "Instead of a jester we'll have a ghost in a white sheet sit at the upper end of the table". It is worth noting that in the same year William Warner added to the new edition of his *Albion's England* a history of Macbeth, as if public attention had been recently called to the subject.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the constant reference throughout the play to James I. makes it practically certain that it was produced after his accession in March 1603. The interest taken by this king in witchcraft is notorious; the vision of Macbeth in act iv. sc. 1 is a scarcely veiled tribute to one who traced his descent from Banquo; and a passage in sc. 3 of the same act is as obviously inspired by the 'touching for the king's evil', revived by James,

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup> Forman's description of the play will be found in Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> The Warner coincidence by itself proves nothing, for his narrative might have suggested the subject to Shakespeare.

and claimed by him as hereditary in his house. With less certainty we may push the limits of time a little closer. The incident of the thane of Cawdor has been compared with the famous conspiracy of the Earl of Gowry and his brother in 1601.<sup>1</sup> The bestowal of Cawdor's honours on Macbeth recalls the investiture of the dignities of Scone, formerly held by Gowry, upon Sir David Murray, who had been forward in saving the king's life from the conspirators. This event took place on April 7, 1605.<sup>2</sup> In 1605 also is recorded a curious performance given before James during a progress at Oxford. On reaching the gates of St. John's College he was met by three boys, representing the nymphs or Sibyls who had foretold the reign of Banquo's descendants. These delivered orations in Latin and English.<sup>3</sup> It is very possible that this performance suggested the writing of *Macbeth*, and that it was produced on the occasion of the visit of the King of Denmark to England in July 1606. Oldys, the antiquary, has a story of a letter sent by James I. to Shakespeare, and it has been conjectured that it was a command to write this play. On the whole, the production of *Macbeth* at the Globe may be provisionally put in 1606. This date is accepted by the majority of scholars, and it is consistent with the style and thought of the play. Malone further supports it by tracing in act ii. sc. 3 various allusions, to the trial of Garnet the Jesuit on March 28, to the low prices of that year, and to the French hose then fashionable.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted, however, that some critics have doubted the authenticity of this passage, and that such allusions can easily be introduced in the process of 'writing up' a play.

Mr. Fleay, whose laborious and valuable investigations give him a claim to be heard, thinks that the play pro-

<sup>1</sup> See J. H. Burton's *History of Scotland*, vol. vi. chap. 61.

<sup>2</sup> There is a difficulty in supposing that there is any allusion to the Gowry conspiracy in *Macbeth*. Another play on the subject, produced by the same company in 1604, got them into trouble. See Fleay, *Life and Work of Shakespeare*, p. 152. Was *Macbeth* an apology?

<sup>3</sup> This incident is described in Wake's *Rex Platonicus*, in Anthony Nixon's *The Oxford Triumph* (1605), and in MS. Baker 7044. The verses were written by Matthew Gwynne, and are annexed to his *Vertumnus* (1607).

<sup>4</sup> See notes on ii. 3. 5; ii. 3. 9; ii. 3. 15.