

**SHAKESPEARE'S
TRAGEDY
OF MACBETH**

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Shakespeare's Tragedy of Macbeth by Edwin Booth

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EDWIN BOOTH

**SHAKESPEARE'S
TRAGEDY
OF MACBETH**

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Edwin Booth.

The Prompt-Book.

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Shakespeare's Tragedy

of

Macbeth

As Presented by

Edwin Booth.



"Hours dreadful and things strange."

"He shall live a man forbid."

"Things had begun make strong themselves by ill."

"They say blood will have blood."

*"Nature's germins tumble all together,
Even till destruction sicken."*

"Unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles."

"Life's but a walking shadow."

*"Blow wind! come wrack!
At least we'll die with harness on our back."*

"And so, his knell is knolled."



New-York:

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1881.

(RECAP)

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Preface.



"*MACBETH*" is remarkable, even among the works of Shakespeare, for sustained continuity of rapid movement, and for a uniform and abiding quality of high and weird poetic mood. In general, as may be gathered from Ben Jonson's famous commemorative lines, its author was a scrupulous and thorough reviser of his own writings. He did not scorn to reinforce his spontaneous creative power with laborious art, and thus he produced his "well-torned and true-filed lines" by striking "the second heat upon the Muses' anvil." But, in the writing of "*Macbeth*," he seems to have enjoyed supreme mental freedom. He possessed an hour of insight, and his art was merged in inspiration. The piece is breezy with power, and is totally free from the heaviness and difficulty of a constrained effort. Even the quality of the verse is invariable throughout this play. No feeble passages occur in it. The texture of the fifth act is as firm as the texture of the first. The rush of dramatic action enters into and vitalizes almost every part of the mechanism. A piece thus vigorously and happily created cannot lapse from movement into narrative. All stage versions of "*Macbeth*," accordingly, present, with but slight curtailment or other alteration, the original of Shakespeare. The version herewith printed gives the text as it is used by Edwin Booth, and illustrates it with the stage business—whether traditional or newly devised—which he employs. Excisions and changes of the original will be observed in it; but these—few in number, though important in character—are thought to be necessary

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and justifiable. *Lady Macbeth*, for example, is not brought on amid the tumult of horror and consternation which ensues upon the discovery of the murder of *Duncan*, for the reason that, while the dramatic point here made is splendid and thrilling, it does not often happen that a representative of *Lady Macbeth* proves able to give it its proper effect. The slaughter of *Banquo* is omitted, as a needless exhibition of melodramatic violence. The killing of *Lady Macduff*—an incident usually discarded—is expunged for the same reason. This, indeed, is a superfluity of horror, much like the actual digging out of *Gloster's* eyes, in "*King Lear*." The spectre of *Banquo* is treated as the "bodiless creation" of *Macbeth's* haunted mind. "When all's done," says the Queen, "you look but on a stool." This phantom, in accordance with the old stage direction, "Enter the Ghost of *Banquo* and sits in *Macbeth's* place," was always presented in material form and with gory visage, till *John Philip Kemble*, acting *Macbeth*, treated it as kindred with the illusion of "the air-drawn dagger," and assumed it to be invisible to all but the King. Amplifying lines have been excluded, at various points in the piece. The colloquy between *Malcolm* and *Macduff* in Act Fourth has been shortened, and the dubious and non-essential part of *Hecate* has been omitted. This part, there is reason to believe, was interpolated into *Shakespeare's* work, after his death, or after he had withdrawn from the theatre. This is the opinion of the Cambridge editors, *Clark* and *Wright*, who also think that the parts assigned to "the weird sisters" were expanded by a second author—not improbably *Thomas Middleton*. This writer was chronologer to the city of London in 1626, and died a little after that year. A play by him, called "*The Witch*," much resembling "*Macbeth*," was discovered, in manuscript, in 1779, and *Steevens* maintained that this was earlier than *Shakespeare's* "*Macbeth*," and that *Shakespeare* borrowed from it the incantations in his tragedy. The editors of the "*Biographia Dramatica*" follow this view; but the weight of opinion is opposed to it. *Shakespeare*, it is thought, left theatrical life about 1604; and he died in 1616. "*Macbeth*," which was never published during his life-time, might readily have been altered

in the theatre, before it came into the possession of Heminge and Condell, who first gave it to the world in their folio of 1623. Dr. Douzen, a sagacious authority, considers Middleton's "Witch" to be of later date than Shakespeare's "Macbeth." The text of the Folio of 1623 has been followed, except in a very few instances, in this reprint. Shakespeare found the materials for this tragedy in Holinshed's Chronicle. It is thought to have been written after 1603, because of its allusion to the union of the sovereignties of England and Scotland, under James I., who came to the throne in that year. This reference is to kings "that twofold balls and treble sceptres carry." Malone thought it was written about 1606. Dr. Forman saw "Macbeth" acted, on April 20th, 1610, at the Globe, in Southwark; so that the piece could not have been of later date than that. Shakespeare was, probably, at New Place, in Stratford, when he wrote it. The original representative of Macbeth was Burbage. The part has been acted by all the prominent English-speaking tragedians who have followed in his illustrious footsteps. Betterton, Garrick, Barry, Macklin, Young, Kemble, Kean, Vandenhoff, Forrest, Junius Booth, Davenport, and Brooke—all were famous in it. Garrick, notwithstanding that he dressed it in scarlet coat and white wig, is said to have uttered its deep and various meaning with wonderful power. Kemble's Macbeth was accounted prodigious. But, probably, this great character found its consummate interpreter in Macready. Gould, in his "Tragedian," gives this glimpse of the method of several of these renowned actors: "Vandenhoff played the imagery; Macready, the analysis; Kean, the passion of the scene; Booth, the character—which not only includes the other methods but supplies an element wanting in them."

W. W.

New-York, September 27th, 1878.



"Old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago."—WORDSWORTH.

"Can nothing great, and at the height,
Remain so long? but its own weight
Will ruin it?"—BEN JONSON.

"Noctes atque dies patet atri Jannae Ditis."—VIRGIL.

"Hark! the ravenne flappes hys wynges
In the briered dells belows:
Hark! the death-owle lowde dothe synge
To the nyghte-mares as heie goe."—CHATTERTON.

"Ghosts are seen there at noon: the valley is silent, and the people shun
the place of Lamor. * * * * Darkness rests on the steep of Cromla.
A distant wind roars in the woods. Silent and dark is the plain of death.
* * * * They shall mark it like the haunt of ghosts, pleasant and
dreadful to the soul."—OSSIAN.

"He strives against the stream, nor can his power reverse the first decrees
of fate."—CERVANTES.

"And sleep shall obey me,
And visit thee never,
And the curse shall be on thee
Forever and ever."—SOUTHEY.

"A burning cauldron stood in the midst,
The flame was fierce and high,
And all the cave, so wide and long,
Was plainly seen thereby * * *
The lights they fled, the cauldron sunk,
Deep thunders shook the dome,
And hollow peals of laughter came,
Resounding through the gloom."

HENRY KIRKE WHITE.

"With hopes that but allure to fly,
With joys that vanish while he sips,
Like Dead Sea fruits, that tempt the eye,
But turn to ashes on the lips."—MOORE.

"For all things born one gate
Opens, no gate of gold;
Opens—and no man sees
Beyond the gods and fate."—SWINBURNE.

