

**TWENTIETH CENTURY
TEXT-BOOKS;
SHAKSPERE'S
TRAGEDY OF MACBETH**

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Twentieth Century Text-Books; Shakspere's Tragedy of Macbeth by William Shakespeare & Richard Jones & A. F. Nightingale

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & RICHARD JONES & A. F. NIGHTINGALE

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TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXT-BOOKS

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TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXT-BOOKS

William

SHAKSPERE'S
TRAGEDY OF
MACBETH

EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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P R E F A C E .

IN this edition of the tragedy of *Macbeth* there is included the customary linguistic explanatory matter, and, in addition, some consideration of the theme of the tragedy and of the significance of the play as a whole. The desirability of some thought on the theme of the play, on the part of the preparatory-school student even, is suggested by the character of some of the questions set by many colleges and universities in their entrance examinations on the English texts. Indeed, the only question on *Macbeth* set by Vassar at the last entrance examination was, "Does Macbeth's instigation to crime come from within or from without? On what do you base your opinion?" And among the recommendations of late made by Harvard to secondary-school teachers of English is the following, "Pupils should of course be made to understand what they read as they go along; but attention should be fixed, not on unimportant details of substance or of style, but on the significance and spirit of the whole. In studying a tragedy of Shakspeare, for example, far less time should be given to the discussion of details than to the march of events, the play of character, the main lines of the plot, the significance of the whole as a work of genius."

The discussion herewith given of Macbeth's instigation to crime and of the significance of the play as a whole is designed to be stimulating and suggestive

rather than dogmatic and exhaustive. It takes the form of an exposition and a comparison of the views of various critics, with some attempt at an explanation of the existing extraordinary differences of critical opinion respecting the theme of the play, the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and their relations to each other, the significance of the Weird Sisters and of the play as a whole,—respecting, in short, all of the necessary questions of the play.

Every reader of the following pages will have access, it is hoped, to the works there quoted and discussed. Every school where this play is read will possess, it is assumed, Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar* (The Macmillan Company), and that inexhaustible treasure store of the student and of the editor of Shakspeare, the *Variorum* editions of Dr. Furness (J. B. Lippincott Company). Every school is advised to possess also Butcher's *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (The Macmillan Company), the enduring work of an exact scholar, yet withal most stimulating and suggestive,—the greater portion entirely within the comprehension of the preparatory-school student.

The acknowledgments of the editor are due to the authors and to the publishers of the works quoted so freely in the following pages.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, December 20, 1898.

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