

peare again, with marvellous terseness, shews the malevolence of their magic :

"A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,
And mounch'd, and mounch'd, and mounch'd:—
'Give me,' quoth I.
'Aroint thee, witch!' the rump'd ronyon
cries,
'Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the
Tiger:
But in a sieve I'll thither sail,
And, like a rat without a tail,
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do."

It is to be noted that the popular belief was that witches could assume the form of any animal at will, but that in every case the tail would be wanting. There is also another noteworthy feature in this scene. "I'll give thee a wind"—"Th' art kind—and I another"—"I myself have all the other, and the very parts they blow, all the quarters that they know i' the shipman's card."

Now in 1591, while James was still James VI. of Scotland, Agnes Sampson was tried for witchcraft, and made the following confession. "She vowed that at the time His Majesty was in Denmark, she took a cat and christened it; and afterwards bound to each part of that cat the chiefest parts of a dead man, and several joints of his body; and that on the night following, the said cat was conveyed into the midst of the sea by herself and other witches sailing in their riddles or cirenes, and so left the said cat before the town of Leith in Scotland. This done, there arose such a tempest in the sea as a greater hath not been seen, which tempest was the cause of the perishing of a boat or vessel coming from the town of Burnt Island to the town of Leith, wherein were sundry jewels and rich gifts, which should have been presented to the new Queen of Scotland at His Majesty's coming to Leith. Again, it is confessed that the said christened cat was the cause of the King's Majesty's ship, at his coming forth of Denmark, having a contrary wind to the rest of the ships then being in his company, which thing was

most strange and true, as the King's Majesty testified." We may be sure that His Most Sacred and Sapient Majesty looked on with complacent satisfaction at the burning of that particular witch. But the superstition as to witches' power over the winds was a very widespread one. Long after Shakespeare's time, wise women still trafficked in winds. Drayton says: "She could sell winds to any one that would buy them for money." They were sold in packages, sometimes to mariners, in which case they were, of course, favoring breezes; sometimes to the enemies of those afloat, to work to them disaster. But there is, curiously enough, frequently a limit set to the power of witches—"Though his bark *cannot* be lost, yet it shall be tempest toss'd." As in Agnes Sampson's confession, so in Shakespeare's pages, trouble and disaster might be caused, but the ultimate power over life and death was generally withheld.

But in discussing the, to me at any rate, fascinating facts of superstition, we may be tempted to overlook the marvellous poetry in which these facts are clothed by Shakespeare. The lyrical power of this scene is extraordinary: it is the product of careful and exquisite workmanship, which is chiefly effective because it is hidden. *Ar's celare artem* has no better exemplification. The daring quatrain of rhyme, when the curses heaped upon the unlucky mate of the Tiger bound for Aleppo, are disturbed by the entrance of Macbeth, is an example of concentrated lyric force and of the power of rhyme in the hands of a great genius:—

First Witch,—

"Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wrecked as homeward he did come."

Third Witch,—

"A drum, a drum,
Macbeth doth come."

When Macbeth appears, the witches still preserve their relative parts which have connected them with the Norns—the first speaks of the past—"Thane