

But the ghost was only indirectly responsible for the birth of such doubts. It was not seen by the thanes. It did not by a single word make known to them the unnatural crimes of Macbeth nor seek to lead them, by suggestion or act, to punish the one committing them. Its only work was to force Macbeth to reveal his inward guilt, in the paroxysm of fear, experienced at the sight of the gibbering figure in his chair.

In Macbeth, then, the ghost plays a very minor part indeed, if we take into consideration only its direct influence on the actions of those who were to right offended justice and nature. Had Macbeth been seized by a short fit of madness, the effect would have been the same. It would have had just as much influence on the after movement of the plot as the ghost had. By forcing him to divulge the awful thoughts that were scorching his mind, it could have aroused the suspicions of the Lords, just as fully as had the spirit of Banquo. And in truth we cannot satisfactorily determine whether it was the madness of an oppressed mind, or the shadow from another world that led to the regicide's revelation of his guilt.

How different from this is the part played by the ghost in "Hamlet"! Here the spirit of the murdered king sets the whole machinery of the drama in motion. The cunning Claudius had so skilfully brought about the death of his brother the king and his own ascent to sovereign power, that no whisper of his foul crime had gone abroad. In the eyes of the world he was an upright man, and in mounting the throne of Denmark, upon the death of his brother, had only taken the place that rightfully belonged to him. Even Hamlet thought him innocent, and persisted in the thought until the face of Claudius in the play only too plainly revealed the awful guilt it had up to that so well hidden.

Claudius, a master in the art of scheming, had provided for every human emergency. A shadow from the next world knocked all his plans awry. A word from the spirit of the late King revealed to his son Hamlet the horror of the new king's crime. "Know thou, noble youth, the ghost says, "the serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears the crown." This bit of information is the mainspring of the whole plot. The command of the ghost, that Hamlet "revenge his (father's) foul and most unnat-