

to say that this Supernaturalism was the logical outcome of the intense paganism of former centuries. It embodied in different forms many of the most beautiful myths or legends of the ancients, peopling every wood and stream and mountain with lovely and exquisite beings, but alas! peopling also the woods, the streams, the mountains, the very air itself, with foul and cruel fiends, seeking to destroy. The old Pagan Gods existed still in the mind and imagination of some devout Christians, but changed from the beneficent, if tyrannical deities of the Pagans, who made love, and took revenge, into one or another semblance of the universal enemy of mankind, disguising, may be, his horns and hoofs. This intense and unquestioning belief in the Supernatural as an element of every day life, something to be reckoned with and accounted for in every transaction, even the most ordinary, was universal from the earliest monkish days, flourished in the Dark Ages, survived the renaissance, was undisputed by the dawning light of scientific truth, and died, not a lingering, but a sudden death, within measurable distance of the life of our great grandfathers. When the Supernatural was for centuries so intricately woven in the very web and woof of life, it naturally followed that it was also a chief factor in determining the designs of dramatic poems—it formed an essential and integral part of the thoughts of all men, so that its absence from their works, if such absence had been possible, would have left them colorless and invertebrate. It is natural, therefore, that we find in Shakespeare the Supernatural dealt with in every one of its various forms: fairy lore, witchcraft, demonology, sorcery, astrology, magic—we find them all in various plays. And it is necessary, in considering how he used this material, to determine what was the received sentiment, opinion and belief, on these subjects, of those for whom he wrote. I shall try to be brief. The most

direct method of enquiry is to examine the existing laws on the subject and their manner of enforcement. The branch on the Supernatural most largely used in Macbeth comes under the head of witchcraft, and to that branch I shall confine my remarks.

Penal laws against witchcraft date from an early period. The twelve tables of Roman law, and later, the Code of Justinian, dealt severely with it, the latter imposing the right of torture in case of even a mere accusation. The church followed, amplified the law, and made the offence an ecclesiastical one. The Ecclesiastical Courts punished by penance and fine, up to 1542; graver punishments had to be confirmed by the secular power. It was, from very early times, an indictable offence at common law, but was not made felony by statute until the reign of Henry VIII., which brings us very close to Shakespeare's time. Henry VIII.'s act was passed in 1541, repealed at the accession of Edward VI., and another act on the same lines, but distinguishing more particularly the different grades of witchcraft, was passed in 1562, the fifth year of Elizabeth's reign. This was the act in force when Shakespeare wrote. It is useful therefore, briefly to state its nature and provisions. By it, conjuration and invocation of evil spirits, the practice of sorceries, enchantments, charms and witchcrafts, whereby death ensued, were made felonies without benefit of clergy, and punishable with death. If only bodily harm ensued, the punishment for a first offence was a year's imprisonment and the pillory, and for a second, death. If the practice was to discover hidden treasure, or to provoke to unlawful love, the punishment for a first offence was the same as in the last case; for a second, imprisonment for life and forfeiture of goods. This, then, was the law during the greater part of Shakespeare's active life. On the accession of James I., a new law was passed. The writer in the "*Encyclopedia Britannica*," to