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THE SUPERNATURAL IN MAGBETH.

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THE Supernatural has from the very earliest ages played a considerable part in the literature, art, and the life of the peoples. In all times and under all conditions it has indubitably played a leading part in written and pictorial art. The Egyptian hieroglyphics — the Chaldean and Assyrian tablets, the Greek dramas, the Roman poems and dramas, and the Hebrew sacred books, are all full of the Supernatural. With that element excluded, they would be robbed of their chief significance, and would neither have instructed nor delighted mankind for so many centuries.

The literature and art of the middle ages depended even more than ancient art upon the Supernatural. Greek and Roman art introduced the Gods as part of the stage machinery, but of the stage machinery only. The *Deus ex Machina* in their plays appears when his presence cannot be dispensed with: otherwise human life and human character are displayed influenced by human desires and flavored with human peculiarities. Certainly all, even the Gods themselves, are controlled by inexorable dramatic fate, and this fate may be said to be of necessity Supernatural. Notwithstanding this, the Supernatural in art and literature among the ancients had a restricted area; its stage manifestation was

confined to beneficial or revengeful action on the part of Gods or Goddesses; their intercession was always a voluntary one, due either to the virtue or the vice of some human character. But when the world emerged from the darkness of the Middle Ages, and felt the throes of a new birth, (which has in our time either matured, or grown old and decrepit, or has to be born again, according to the several views we hold), the Supernatural had the chief part in shaping the literature, the art, the feeling, the life of the people. The only active instinct was a Supernatural one: miracles grew on every bush; judgments fell from every cloud: men and women rose and eat, worked and slept, as we do now, but they walked and worked, and ate and slept in an atmosphere we know not. To them a Supernatural apparition, a demoniac possession, a blessed intercession, a well-placed and most effectually miraculous curse, were as natural events as the toothache is to us. They simply could not conceive life, or the world, without the presence, actively among them, of Supernatural beings, and the daily occurrence of Supernaturalevents. I need not (indeed it is not within the scope of my paper) discuss how far this retarded, how far it advanced, the civilization we now enjoy. Suffice it