

ACT I. SCENE III.

17

All. The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go about, about :
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
And thrice again, to make up nine.
Peace ! the charm's wound up.

Enter MACBETH and BANQUO.

Macbeth. *So foul and fair a day I have not seen.* 38

Banquo. How far is't call'd to Forres? What are these 39
So wither'd, and so wild in their attire, 40
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth, 41
And yet are on't ?—Live you ? or are you aught 42
That man may question ? You seem to understand me, 43
By each at once her choppy finger laying 44
Upon her skinny lips : you should be women, 45
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret 46
That you are so. 47

Macbeth. Speak, if you can : what are you ?

First W. All hail, Macbeth ! hail to thee, *thane of Glamis !* 48

Sec. W. All hail, Macbeth ! hail to thee, *thane of Cawdor !* 49

Third W. All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be *king hereafter !* 50

48-50. Why is the thanedom of Glamis polluted by the lips of these unnatural sisters? Would it not be in the manner of Shakespeare (so often invoked) to hint that Macbeth's first uncertain step in criminal ambition was an unfilial desire to succeed Sinel before the appointed time? Macbeth's habitual references to future time are worthy of a separate study. In this way of looking at the three all hail's the first ambition was premature inheritance, which is a rather intangible form of murder: the second is the guilty silence which results in the execution of the innocent Cawdor whom Macbeth should have defended and cleared: this is passive murder: the third step is the horrible midnight assassination of Duncan. Surely this gradual though terribly swift descent into the river of blood is more human than the headlong plunge of the regular view.