

of Glamis;" the second, of the present—"Thane of Cawdor;" the third of the future—"King hereafter;" and it is the same in their speeches to Banquo. The brevity of their prophecies is most remarkable—one line from each, to each warrior—the force of condensation could no further go, and it is the concentrated force gained by this condensation which makes the beauty and the horror of the scene.

It is no part of my task to mark the effect upon Macbeth of the brief and fateful words,—that belongs to other essayists,—but it is not out of place to point out how thoroughly, not only Macbeth, but Banquo, believed in the witches. It is indeed the latter who questioned them. Macbeth says practically nothing until the close of the scene, and to Macbeth's earnest appeal they vouchsafed no answer, immediately vanishing; but Banquo questions early, and in his questioning, shews his knowledge of witches, a natural knowledge in the progenitor of James I. "You should be women, and yet your beards forbid me to interpret that you are so." Beards were the common attribute of witches, and many a poor wretch met her doom on no better evidence than a hairy chin. "If you can look into the seeds of time, and say which grain will grow, and which will not, speak then to me." This power of foretelling, and to some degree affecting, the growth of the crops, was one of the most generally accepted attributes of witches. In Shakespeare's time, a witch was tried and condemned merely for prophesying on this very point, and Banquo applies it as a test of the witches' power. So the scene closes; the high-minded, simple soldier and the potential murderer, shewn as equal believers in the existence of the supernatural: the first accepting its dark hints and no more; but the second, to his destruction, allowing them to dominate his mind and sway his actions—himself the agent of their fulfilment and of his own doom.

When the church of the Middle Ages took cognizance of witchcraft and made it an ecclesiastical offence, it did so in the belief that witches had sold themselves to the devil, and sold themselves by an actual, personal compact with an actual, personal devil. It would not have been surprising, therefore, if Shakespeare had, in *Macbeth*, introduced the devil; but, instead, he never even alludes to him throughout the whole play. This would be more curious were it not for the well-known fact that throughout the whole of his plays he rarely, even by allusion, mentions the devil, and still more rarely speaks of him as being an actual active agent for evil. But he had a substitute ready to his hand in Hecate, and in spite of much that has been written, this substitute was the most natural for him to use, the most artistic, therefore the best suited for his purpose. Richard Grant White remarks, "Shakespeare has been censured for mixing Hecate up with vulgar Scotch witches, but he shared in this regard with many better scholars than himself, and had he not such companionship, his shoulders could bear the blame, as they also could that of pronouncing her name as a dissyllable." When the Pagan mythology was wrested from Olympus by the Christian religion, many of its myths, traditions, beliefs and deities survived, and even to this day survive, in curious forms. Warton says, "The Gothic and Pagan fictions were frequently blended and incorporated. The Lady of the Lake floated in the suite of Neptune, before Queen Elizabeth, at Kenilworth. Ariel assumes the appearance of a sea nymph, and, by an easy association, Hecate conducts the rites of the weird sisters in *Macbeth*. The worship of Hecate or Diana, the goddess of the moon, sender of midnight phantoms, lent itself,—says Mr. Tylor on magic—especially to the magician's rites, as may be seen from this formula to evoke her: "O, friend and companion of night; thou