

the word "extend," I merely meant that the time was after twelve o'clock.

By Dr. Hodgins, Chairman :

Q.—What time should the examination have closed? A.—At twelve o'clock.

Q.—You found those persons there after twelve? A.—Yes, by my time-piece.

By Mr. Le Sueur, Commissioner :

Q.—I suppose your time-piece is correct? A.—I did not look at it, but I know it was after twelve o'clock.

Q.—There is a clock there. A.—I don't remember looking at it.

Q.—I think you said you exchanged some remarks with somebody about writing on the black-board. I want to know whether the remarks were commendatory of the writing on the board or not? A.—I have no recollection of making any remarks in reference to the writing, either signifying my approval or disapproval.

Q.—Was it a thing to be expected to see the writing? A.—Not if it were answers to the problems.

Signed in presence of

A. SMIRLE.

J. GEORGE HODGINS,
Commissioner.

V. Extracts from Periodicals and Papers.

1. THE TRUE MACBETH.

Mr. Irving's original representation of the character of *Macbeth*, in which he broke loose entirely from its traditional interpretation, has excited a good deal of criticism of the play itself. Mr. Edward R. Russell, who is editor of the *Liverpool Post*, has published a paper which he read recently before the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool, on the subject of "The True Macbeth." This we have now before us, and it contains about the best interpretation of the moral meaning of *Macbeth* that we remember ever to have seen. We cannot do better than reproduce for the benefit of our readers the gist of this gentleman's criticism. After touching upon the misinterpretation of *Macbeth* which arose from a mistaken analogy between that play and the *Agamemnon* of *Æschylus*, Mr. Russell says :—

Schlegel's *Macbeth* is "an ambitious but noble hero, yielding to a deep-laid hellish temptation." All the subsequent crimes to which the usurper is driven by necessity "cannot altogether eradicate the stamp of native heroism." His wife instigates him to commit the deed which the witches have suggested, "urging him on with fiery eloquence, which has at command all those sophisms that serve to throw a false splendour over crime." "Little more than the mere execution of it falls to the share of *Macbeth*; he is driven into it in a tumult of fascination." "Repentance immediately follows, nay, even precedes the deed, and the sting of conscience leave him rest neither night nor day. But he is now fairly entangled in the snares of hell," and this—not any native characteristic of the man—makes him "cling with growing anxiety to his earthly existence the more miserable it becomes, and pitilessly remove out of the way whatever to his dark suspicious mind seems to threaten danger.

I read such an account of the play with a sensation of amazement, confusion, and absence of recognition, which I should think resembles incipient paralysis. I feel as Lady Teazle must have felt when dumbfounded Mrs. Surface gave Sir Peter that wonderful explanation of her being caught behind the screen in his library. The play does not support a single line of Schlegel's imaginative description of its motive. "Not one word, Sir Peter." The whole of it must be traversed.

To begin : *Macbeth* had conceived the murder before he met the witches. This is proved by the language of his wife when Duncan was in the house :—

What beast was't then
That made you break this enterprise to me?
Nor time nor place
Did they adhere, but yet you would make both.
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you.

Lady *Macbeth* did not quite understand her husband, but she understood him a great deal better than modern critics who take him for a hero. So strong-nerved and determined a woman, who would have scorned to contemplate a villany she dared not commit, could not be deceived in the signs of cowardice which her husband so plentifully exhibited. She knew him to be brave in the field—as many a moral coward has been before and since. She was even persuaded—wrongly—that if he were once crowned, he would be able to "keep his state" with a sufficient outward show of callous majesty. But she recognised the weak place in him, and saw that she must keep him to the sticking-place. This, rather than primary

instigation, was her function, and the necessity of it lay in the inherent baseness of *Macbeth*, who could neither be an honest man of valour, nor a valorous man of sin.

At first Lady *Macbeth* took a too favourable view of her lord's weakness. Some husbands show their wives only the best sides of their vices, as others show them the worst sides of their virtues, and it is a proverb, that many a spouse thinks well of her partner long after every one else has given him up. Such facts are quite beneath the notice of critics who cannot descend from the fixed stars of perpetual sublimity; but Shakespeare had a keen eye for them. When *Macbeth* had already confided to his consort his heroic idea of murdering the king—which, as he then proposed to make the opportunity, was the first and last heroic idea we know him to have had—and when she had thereafter received a letter from him telling the story of the witches, she thus charitably apostrophised him :

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
What thou art promised : yet do I fear thy nature ;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way : thou wouldst be great ;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it : what thou wouldst highly
That wouldst thou holily ; wouldst not play false
And yet wouldst wrongly win ; thou'dst have, great Glamis,
That which cries "Thus thou must do if thou have it ;"
And that which thou dost rather fear to do
Than wishest should be undone.

So far as this is a picture of *Macbeth*'s infirmity of will, it is a true one ; so far as it attributes that infirmity of will to generosity of nature, it is unsupported by anything else in the play, and indeed will be found on close examination to break down in the very passage itself. Yet it is often quoted as a proof that *Macbeth*'s was a noble nature until spoiled by the witches and by his wife. I prefer the theory that Lady *Macbeth*, who loved her husband as strongly as she was determined to make him great, although she knew his weakness, held a too favourable view of its origin, and that what she took for the milk of human kindness was really the white feather. The very discrepancy between the man's undoubted and quite comprehensible weakness as presently revealed, and her complimentary way of explaining it, is full of significance most destructive to the amiable and heroic theory of his character.

If Shakespeare had intended *Macbeth* to be a noble and generous man led astray, nothing could have been easier to him, and the picture would have been a fine one. But that which he has given us, if less impising, is not less interesting as a moral study. Take the speech at the beginning of the seventh scene. Surely at that moment a hero, and a well-disposed man, with his aged king under his roof-tree, would have felt compunctions other than selfish ; and there is a passing reference to the circumstance that Duncan as a guest was there in double trust. But the mean villain is not seriously impressed by this. He is troubled by other matters. The probability that one murder will not suffice frets him. He says, if one murder would serve, he would not mind risking the life to come. But, unfortunately, retribution comes in this life. A cruel man in high place finds his example come home to him to plague the inventor. Besides, King Duncan has been so amiable and exemplary that every one will bewail his loss and execrate his taking-off. On the whole, therefore, the willing murderer does not like the look of things. This noble hero finds his project so likely to make him unpopular, that he really wishes he had something besides ambition to urge him on. If Duncan had only insulted one now, or even been ungrateful, instead of loading one with honours, how comfortably one could murder him ! But it was a bad world for *Macbeth* in those days, as it was for William Sikeses in this. Nothing went right. The king this "misled but virtuous hero" particularly needed to be rid of was so respectable and kindly that it could not but be a disgrace to kill him. Such are the sentiments of this speech, and they are again and again exemplified. When *Macbeth* has had Banquo assassinated, he gives himself the airs of an injured man because the ghost appears at the supper table. "Blood hath been shed ere now," he says querulously, "and when the brains were out the man would die, and there an end ; but now they rise again and push us from our stools. This is more strange than such a murder." That ideas of this sort are expressed in glorious poetry does not alter them. They are base, cowardly, paltry, as they are heartless and devoid of all sense of true repulsion from evil.

Ugly as the business looked, when Duncan had arrived at the castle, *Macbeth* did not care to drop it, and he well knew his wife would not allow it to be abandoned. Accordingly, he gave her the cue for such stimulating arguments as would best meet the case, by proposing that they should proceed no farther. Duncan had honoured him. He had bought golden opinions from all sorts of people, and these should be worn in their newest gloss, not cast away so soon. A very proper reflection, though not quite in the