

Macbeth







When Duncan the Meek¹ reigned King of Scotland, there lived a great thane², or lord, called Macbeth. This Macbeth was a near kinsman³ to the king, and in great esteem at court for his valor and conduct in the wars; an example of which he had lately given, in defeating a rebel army assisted by the troops of Norway in terrible numbers.

The two Scottish generals, Macbeth and Banquo, returning victorious from this great battle, their way lay over a blasted⁴ heath⁵, where they were stopped by the strange appearance of three figures like women, except that they had beards, and their withered⁶ skins and wild attire⁷ made them look not like any earthly creatures. Macbeth first addressed them, when they, seemingly offended, laid each one her choppy⁸ finger upon her skinny lips, in token of silence; and the first of them saluted Macbeth with the title of Thane of Glamis.

1 meek [mi:k] (a.) 溫和的

2 thane [θeɪn] (n.) 藉服兵役而取得土地的大鄉紳

3 kinsman ['kɪnzməɪn] (n.) 男親戚

4 blasted ['blæstɪd] (a.) [文學用法] 被閃電擊毀的

5 heath [hi:θ] (n.) 荒地

6 withered ['wɪðəd] (a.) 乾皺的

7 attire [ə'taɪr] (n.) [文學用法][詩的用法] 服裝

8 choppy ['tʃɒpi] (a.) 多裂縫的





2 The general was not a little startled to find himself known by such creatures; but how much more, when the second of them followed up that salute by giving him the title of Thane of Cawdor, to which honor he had no pretensions⁹; and again the third bid him “All hail¹⁰! king that shalt be hereafter!” Such a prophetic greeting might well amaze him, who knew that while the king’s sons lived he could not hope to succeed to the throne.

⁹ pretension [pri'tenʃən] (n.) 主張 (常用複數形)

¹⁰ hail [heɪl] (v.) 歡呼；打招呼



Then turning
to Banquo, they
pronounced him, in a
sort of riddling terms,
to be *lesser than
Macbeth and greater!
Not so happy, but much
happier!* and prophesied
that though he should
never reign, yet his sons
after him should be
kings in Scotland. They
then turned into air, and
vanished: by which the
generals knew them to
be the weird sisters, or witches.



While they stood pondering on the strangeness
of this adventure, there arrived certain messengers
from the king, who were empowered by him to confer
upon Macbeth the dignity of Thane of Cawdor.



Banquo. Look how our partner's rapt.

Act 1. Scene 3.



An event so miraculously corresponding with the prediction of the witches astonished Macbeth, and he stood wrapped in amazement, unable to make reply to the messengers; and in that point of time swelling hopes arose in his mind that the prediction of the third witch might in like manner have its accomplishment, and that he should one day reign king in Scotland.

Turning to Banquo, he said, "Do you not hope that your children shall be kings, when what the witches promised to me has so wonderfully come to pass?"



"That hope," answered the general, "might enkindle¹¹ you to aim at the throne; but oftentimes these ministers of darkness tell us truths in little things, to betray us into deeds of greatest consequence."

But the wicked suggestions of the witches had sunk too deep into the mind of Macbeth to allow him to attend to the warnings of the good Banquo. From that time he bent all his thoughts on how to compass¹² the throne of Scotland.

Macbeth had a wife, to whom he communicated the strange prediction of the weird sisters, and its partial accomplishment. She was a bad, ambitious woman, and so as her husband and herself could arrive at greatness, she cared not much by what means.

¹¹ enkindle [ɪn'kɪndl] (v.) 煽動

¹² compass ['kʌmpəs] (v.) 達到；獲得



She spurred¹³ on the reluctant purpose of Macbeth, who felt compunction¹⁴ at the thoughts of blood, and did not cease to represent the murder of the king as a step absolutely necessary to the fulfilment of the flattering prophecy.

It happened at this time that the king, who out of his royal condescension¹⁵

would oftentimes visit his principal nobility upon gracious terms¹⁶, came to Macbeth's house, attended by his two sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, and a numerous train¹⁷ of thanes and attendants, the more to honor Macbeth for the triumphal success of his wars.



13 spur [spɜːr] (v.) 踢馬刺；刺激；激勵

14 compunction [kəmˈpʌŋkʃən] (n.) 良心的不安；內疚

15 condescension [ˌkɒndrɪˈsenʃən] (n.) 屈尊俯就

16 terms [tɜːrmz] (n.) 關係；友誼（作複數形）

17 train [treɪn] (n.) 成縱隊行進的若干人



The castle of Macbeth was pleasantly situated, and the air about it was sweet and wholesome, which appeared by the nests which the martlet, or swallow, had built under all the jutting¹⁸ friezes¹⁹ and buttresses²⁰ of the building, wherever it found a place of advantage; for where those birds most breed and haunt, the air is observed to be delicate.

The king entered well pleased with the place, and not less so with the attentions and respect of his honored hostess, Lady Macbeth, who had the art of covering treacherous²¹ purposes with smiles; and could look like the innocent flower, while she was indeed the serpent²² under it.



¹⁸ jutting ['dʒʌtɪŋ] (a.) 伸出的；突出的

¹⁹ frieze ['friːz] (n.) 壁緣（建築物外部的牆上端之橫幅雕飾帶）

²⁰ buttress ['bʌtrəs] (n.) 拱壁

²¹ treacherous ['treɪʃərəs] (a.) 虛偽的；奸詐的

²² serpent ['sɜːrpənt] (n.) 〔譬喻用法〕狡獪之人；心如蛇蠍的人