F. G. Fleay, Shakespeare manual (London, 1876).

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SHAKESPEARE MANUAL.

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CHAPTER X.

ON "MACBETH."

Were it not that I have the high authority of the Cambridge editors to countenance me in my main theory of this play, I should almost fear to produce it: the popular idea that this is not only one of the most powerful, but also one of the most perfect works of Shakespeare, must necessarily raise so strong a prejudice in the minds of my readers against so bold a hypothesis as I shall have to lay before them, that it will be in most cases difficult even to obtain a hearing, much more a candid consideration of it. And if difficult, as I know by several years' experience it is, to get a hearing for their hypothesis as they present it, it will be far more so when pushed to the greater extent that appears to me inevitable. The general statement is this: *Macbeth* in its present state is an altered copy of the original drama, and the alterations were made by Middleton. I commence by a condensed statement of the arguments of Messrs Clark and Wright.

1. The stage directions in III. v. 33, *Sing within, Come away, Come away, &c.*; and IV. i. 43, *Musicke and a Song, Black Spirits, &c.*, refer to two songs given in full in Middleton's *Witch*.

2. The *Witch* and *Macbeth* have points of resemblance. (a) As Hecate says of Sebastian, "I know he loves me not," so Hecate says of Macbeth, "He loves for his own ends, not for you." (b) In the *Witch*, "For the maid-servants and the girls o' th' house, I spiced

them lately with a drowsy posset:" in *Macbeth*, "I have drugged

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their possets." (c) In the *Witch*, Hec., "Come, my sweet sisters, let the air strike our tune:" in *Macbeth*, "I'll charm the air to give a sound." (d) In the *Witch*, "The innocence of sleep:" in *Macbeth*, "The innocent sleep." (e) In the *Witch*, "There's no such thing:" in *Macbeth* the same words. (f) In the *Witch*, "I'll rip thee down from neck to navel:" in *Macbeth*, "He unseamed him from the nave to the chaps." And, they add, there are other passages.

3. The witches in the two plays are strongly alike, though Hecate in one is a spirit,/1 and in the other an old woman.

4. There are parts of *Macbeth* not in Shakespeare's manner: namely --

(a) I. ii. Slovenly in metre, bombastic; l. 52, 53, not consistent with I. iii. 72, 73, 112, &c. Shakespeare would not send a severely wounded soldier with news of victory.

I. iii. 1--37. Not in Shakespeare's style.

II. i. 61. "Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives." Too feeble for Shakespeare.

II. iii. Porter's part. "Low, written for the mob by another hand." -- Coleridge. /1

III. v. Not in Shakespeare's manner.

IV. i. 1--38. Masterly, but doubtful: falls off in l. 39--47.

III. v. 13. "Loves for his own ends." But Macbeth hates them: calls them "secret, black, and midnight hags."

III. v. 125--152. Cannot be Shakespeare's.

IV. iii. 140--159. Interpolation: probably before a Court-representation.

V. ii. Doubtful.

V. v. 47--50. Weak tag: unskilful imitation.

V. viii. 32. "Before my body I throw my war-like shield." Interpolation.

/1 I do not agree with this.

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V. viii. last 40 lines. Two hands clearly. Double-stage direction. "Fiend-like queen" dispels the pity excited for Lady Macbeth:/1 "by self and violent hands" raises the veil dropped over her fate with Shakespeare's fine tact.

III. ii. 54, 55. Interpolation.

Play probably interpolated after Shakespeare's withdrawal from theatre [not earlier than 1613].

Their opinion as to I. i. is doubtful. They also decline giving opinion as to date of the *Witch*.

The above is, I hope, a fair abstract of their views: what I shall try to do is to carry them out still farther, and to support them with new arguments.

[Here followed in the first issue of this chapter a discussion on the Porter's speech in Act ii. Sc. 3. As this rough and incorrect draft was never intended for publication, I have withdrawn it. There was in it one blunder which even now I wish to set right.

The singular words "everlasting bonfire" have been misunderstood by the commentators. A bonfire at that date is invariably given in the Latin Dictionaries as equivalent to *pyra* or *rogus*; it was the fire for consuming the human body after death: and the hell-fire differed from the earth-fire only in being everlasting. This use of a word so remarkably descriptive in a double meaning (for it also meant *feu de joie*: see Cotgrave) is intensely Shakespearian./2 I do not however say that this speech is *unaltered* Shakespeare: I only leave out all discussion of it as not bearing on my main argument, and coming into unnecessary collision with opinions worthy of great respect even if one differs from them.]/3

Taking, then, for granted that one of the two plays, the *Witch* and *Macbeth*, was copied from the other in certain parts, it is important to consider if there is any evidence which was the earlier. Some external evidence that we have favours the view that the *Witch* was. Middleton says in his dedication, "Witches are *ipso facto* by the law condemned: and that only, I think, hath made her lie so

/1 I do not agree with this.

/2 Compare also *All's Well that Ends Well*, iv. 5, "They'll be for the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire."

/3 This passage between brackets was inserted in September 1874.

long in an imprisoned obscurity." It seems from this at first sight as if the play had been written long before the dedication, and the dedication had been written soon after -- (in King James the First's first year, 1603) -- the laws against witches had been confirmed. But the words will bear another interpretation, and we cannot build on this. Malone gave up this opinion in favour of the other, that *Macbeth* was the earlier: nor do I see how the coincidences of expression pointed out by Clark and Wright are to be explained otherwise, as several of these occur in parts undoubtedly Shakespeare's: and he would not imitate Middleton. In this view the Cambridge editors coincide. This point being, then, probably determined, the question arises, Could Middleton have altered this play after 1613, and yet have written the *Witch* after that? Certainly; for he continued writing till 1624; and there is good reason to believe that all his plays written for the King's company date between 1615 and 1624.

I next pass to the consideration of the nature of these witches.

In Holinshed we find that "Macbeth and Banquo were met by iij women in straunge and ferly apparell resembling creatures of an elder world:" that they vanished: that at first by Macbeth and Banquo "they were reputed but some vayne fantasticall illusion," but afterwards the common opinion was that they were "eyther the weird sisters that is *ye Goddesses of destinie*, or else some Nimphes or Feiries endewed with knowledge of prophesie by their Nicromanticall science." (Act ii. Sc. 2.) But in the part corresponding to IV. i. Macbeth is warned by "certain wysardes" to take heed of Macduff: but he does not kill him, because "a certain witch whom he had in great trust" had given him the two other equivocal predictions. Now it is to me incredible that Shakespeare, who in the parts of the play not rejected by the Cambridge editors never uses the word, or alludes to witches in any way, should have degraded "ye Goddesses of destinie" to three old women, who are *called* by Paddock and Grimalkin (their incubi or familiars), sail in sieves, kill swine, serve Hecate, and deal in all the common charms, illusions, and incantations of vulgar witches. The three who "look not like the inhabitants o' th' Earth and yet are on't;" they who "can look into the seeds of Time and say which grain will grow;" they who "seem corporal," but "melt into the air" like "bubbles of the Earth:"

the "weyward sisters" who "make themselves air" and have "more than mortal knowledge" are not beings of this stamp. Were it for this reason only, Act I. Sc. i, Sc. iii l. 1--37, and III. v. (in which the servants of Hecate are identified with the three beings who meet Macbeth in I. ii.) must be rejected. Shakespeare may have raised the wizard and witches of the latter parts of Holinshed into the weird sisters of the former parts; but the converse process is impossible. I shall recur to this, but want first to dispose of Hecate. The Hecate of III. v. and IV. i. occurs nowhere else in Shakespeare. Even in this play the "pale Hecate" whose "offerings witchcraft celebrates," the "black Hecate who summons the beetle to ring night's yawning peal," is the classical Hecate, the mistress of the lower world, arbiter of departed souls, patroness of magic, the threefold dreadful Goddess: so she is in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *Lear*, in *Hamlet*. "Triple Hecate's team," "The mysteries of Hecate and the night," "with Hecate's ban thrice blasted," are the phrases we meet with there: in this play she is a common witch, as in Middleton's play (not a spirit, as the Cambridge editors say); the chief witch: who sails in the air indeed; all witches do that: but a witch; rightly described in the stage direction: *Enter Hecate and the other three witches.*

I must here in parenthesis ask how the usual theory can be made consistent with this stage direction? The three *witches* are already on the stage; the *other three* must mean the weird sisters who appear in I. iii. to Macbeth in the Shakespeare part of the play, and are identified with the Middleton witches in I. iii. 32. They are quite distinct from the Shakespeare witches of IV. i. The attempts made to evade the evidence of this stage direction as being a blunder should be supported by instances of similar blunders: instances where characters already on the stage are described as entering: omissions of such directions are easy to understand: their insertion without cause is unexplained, and I think inexplicable. Then this un-Shakespearian Hecate does not use Shakespearian language: there is not a line in her part that is not in Middleton's worst

style: her metre is a jumble of tens and eights (iambic, not trochaic like Shakespeare's short lines) like some of the Gower choruses in *Pericles*, a sure sign of inferior work; and what is of most importance, she is not of the least use in the play in any way: the only

effect she produces is, that the three fate-goddesses who in the introduction of the play were already brought down to ordinary witches, are lowered still further to witches of an inferior grade with a mistress who "contrives their charms" and is jealous if any "trafficking" goes on in which she does not bear her part. She and her songs, and the speech in IV. i. 125--132, which is certainly hers, although all the editors assign it to First Witch, are all alike not only of the earth earthy, but of the mud muddy. They are the sediment of Middleton's puddle, not the sparkling foam of the living waters of Shakespeare.

Thus far, then, my results coincide with the Cambridge editors': I reject I. i. and I. iii. 1--37; III. v. and IV. i. 39--44. But now we must face the real difficulty. What are the witches of IV. i.? are they the "weird sisters," fairies, nymphs, or goddesses? or are they ordinary witches or wizards, as we should expect from the narrative in Holinshed, and entirely distinct from the three mysterious beings in I. iii.? I hold the latter view. In order to support it, it will be necessary to show that they are not weird sisters in the higher sense: to give a hypothesis as to how they got confused with them: to try to present some idea of Shakespeare's intentions regarding them. Now Act IV. Sc. i. 1--47 is admitted by all critics to be greatly superior to the corresponding passage in I. iii. 1--37. Clark and Wright hold it to be Shakespeare, except the Hecate bit. I agree with them; but then I cannot identify these witches with the Nornae of I. iii. 38--80. The witches in Act IV. are just like Middleton's witches, only superior in quality. They are clearly the originals from whom his imitations were taken. Their charms are of the sort popularly believed in. Their powers are to untie the winds, lodge corn, create storms, raise spirits, but of themselves they have not the prophetic knowledge of the weird sisters, the all-knowers of Past, Present, Future; they must get their knowledge from their *masters*, or call them up to communicate it themselves. Nor do they call themselves weird sisters, although the three in I. iii. (early rejected part) do so; their knowledge is from the pricking of their thumbs; they are submissive to the *great King* who calls them *filthy hags, secret, black, and midnight hags*; the oracles their masters are ambiguous, delusive: those of the weird sisters were pithy, inevitable; the witches are of the middle ages, a growth of

the popular superstitions; the Nornae are of the old Aryan mythology, and worthy of their parentage. But however strongly I may feel this difference between the supernatural beings of I. iii. (latter part) and IV. i.; -- and I think that anyone who can read these two scenes divested of old associations and prejudice will agree with me; -- however sure I may feel that Shakespeare could not have given up the "destiny goddesses" of his authority for this play so as to lower them to the wizards and witches of Macbeth's later time, there is a great stumbling-block in our way. In III. iv. 133, and IV. i. 136, Macbeth calls the witches of IV. i. "the weird sisters." It is true

that he has called them *filthy hags*, that he describes them as *riding on the air*, that he is surprised that Lennox did not see them pass by him, that they may have /1 left the stage in the ordinary way, while Macbeth was in a reverie: that he never alludes to them afterwards as he so often does to the real "weird sisters," but only mentions "the spirits" or "the fiend." All this is true; but if my theory be true also, those two passages must be explained. This is a real difficulty, and I cannot satisfactorily solve it at present. III. iv. 133 I think is an insertion of Middleton's, and in IV. i. 136 the original reading may have been, *Saw you the sister witches?* or something like this: but I don't think the text has here been tampered with: I can only conjecture that Shakespeare made a slip, or intended Macbeth, who was thinking of the original prophecy, to make one. I do not think the difficulty weighty enough to support the common view *of itself*, but I admit its importance.

I next pass to a matter of an entirely different nature. The Cambridge editors have pointed out some instances of rhyming tags so weak in this play that they cannot admit them as Shakespeare's work. I desire to add to the number of such exceptionable rhymes. For instance, I. iv. 48--53. Macbeth has "humbly taken his leave," and been dismissed by the king. While going out he soliloquizes thus:

"The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'er-leap:
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires!
Let not light see my black and deep desires:

/1 I feel certain on this point. The stage direction, *vanish with Hecate*, is Middleton's.

The eye wink at the hand: yet let that be
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see."

During this, Banquo has been praising him to Duncan in words not reported to us. Then Duncan goes on, "True, worthy Banquo," &c. This is not like Shakespeare: but is just such an attempt at being like Shakespeare as I should expect Middleton to write. Note specially the weakness of the italicized words, and of the next line. The play has evidently been cut down at this point.

In II. iii. end:

"there's warrant in that theft
Which steals itself, when there's no mercy left."

This is too weak and thin for Shakespeare to emphasize, and the ending of II. iv. is worse:

"Ross. *Well*, I will thither.
Macd. *Well*, may you see things *well* done them! Adieu!
Lest our old robes sit easier than our new.
Ross. Farewell, father.
Old M. God's benison go with you, and with those
That would make good of bad, and friends of foes."

Delete both couplets, which are bad, especially the last.

IV. i. end:

"No boasting like a fool;
This deed I'll do before this purpose cool,"

is wretched. See how the passage reads without it:

"give to the edge of the sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line. But no more sights!
Where are these gentlemen?"

In V. i. end:

"Doctor. So, good-night:
My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight.
I think, but dare not speak."

Omit second line of couplet.

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In V. ii. the invitation "to pour in our country's purge as many drops of us as are needed to dew the sovereign flower and kill the weeds" is unlike Shakespeare.

V. iii. end, after Macbeth's emphatic declaration:

"I will not be afraid of death and bane,
Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane,"

the Doctor's washy sentiment,

"Were I from Dunsinane away and clear,
Profit again should hardly draw me here,"

is surely out of place. Why should our sympathy with Macbeth be interrupted by the Doctor's private sentiments?

V. iv, end:

"The time approaches,
That will with due decision make us know
What we shall say we have, and what we owe:
Thoughts speculative their unsure hopes relate;
But certain issue strokes must arbitrate."

cannot surely be Shakespeare's.

V. vi. end :

"*Make* all our trumpets *speak*; *give* them all *breath*,
Those *clamorous* harbingers of blood and death."

This tautology cannot be Shakespeare's; besides, the whole sentiment is too weak for the situation.

In a few of these I may have missed some inner aesthetic meaning which is too deep for my comprehension; but the number of them is far too great for me to be wrong in all. I conclude therefore that Middleton altered the endings of many scenes by inserting rhyming tags: whether he cut anything out remains to be seen.

The next point I notice is, that the account of young Siward's death and the unnatural patriotism of his father, which is derived

from Holinshed's history of England, and not of Scotland like the rest of the play, is a bit of padding put in by Shakespeare after finishing the whole tragedy; this shows great haste in its composition: to my mind the story is not nearly so well told as in Henry of Huntingdon, and spoils the *dénouement*, which would be decidedly better if the first whom Macbeth combated turned out to be the fated warrior not born of woman. But this leads us to a much larger and more important point: the number of characters in this play who only appear for a scene or two and then are heard of no more. In the 27 scenes (20 in Folio, 28 in modern editions) there are only 8 in which new characters are not introduced; a phenomenon unexampled in all the dramas I have read. Some of these -- Fleance, Donalbain, Macduff's wife, the Scotch Doctor -- are real aids to the story; but others are not as it now stands. For example: --

The severely-wounded captain in I. ii., who mangles his metre so painfully, I surrender at once to the Cambridge editors as Middleton's. In all probability, however, this scene replaces one of Shakespeare's; one of whose lines, at least,

"The multiplying villanies of nature,"

seems to be still left in it as it now stands. In this scene Ross comes in afterwards, and is sent to Macbeth to greet him with his new title; he says, "*I*'ll see it done." Lennox also is present, not Angus. Ross and Angus take the message to Macbeth in I. iii. where Angus speaks 10 lines, and then disappears till V. ii.; he there has 7 lines to repeat; so that he has 17 in all. He is not of the slightest use in the play. Lennox could have done his work better in I. iii. on account of his after connection with Macbeth: V. ii. is not wanted at all. I think, therefore, that Middleton has cut down Angus's part in the original play by omitting scenes in which he appeared.

This shows that the play has been greatly abridged for acting purposes.

Hecate we have already discussed.

The Cambridge editors have pointed out the double stage-direction, *Exeunt fighting*; and *Enter fighting, Macbeth dead*. (Compare the double-ending of *Troylus and Cressida*.)

We have yet to consider III. iv. 130--to end. The metre of

"And betimes I will to the weird sisters;"

the poverty of thought in

"For mine own good
All causes shall give way: I am in blood
Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er:
Strange things I have in head that will to hand,
Which must be acted ere they will be scann'd;"

the putting this long tag in Macbeth's mouth when he is so bewildered that he answers Lady Macbeth's --

"You lack the season of all natures, sleep" --

by

"Come, we'll to sleep,"

are all marks of inferior work, and make me sure that this part has been worked over by Middleton.

There is a passage in IV. i. that has been worked over in a similar way. After the speech of the third apparition Macbeth says,

"That will never be.
Who can impress the forest, bid the tree
Unfix his earth-bound root? Sweet bodements, good!
Rebellious dead, rise never till the wood
Of Birnam rise, and our high-placed Macbeth
Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath
To time and mortal custom."

"Our high-placed Macbeth" cannot be said by Macbeth himself: it must be part of a speech of a witch. "Sweet bodements!" looks also like Middleton, and the whole bit is, in my opinion, a fragment of *Hecate's* inserted by him. "Rebellious dead" seems to me an allusion to Banquo's ghost, misplaced by Middleton. If we read "Rebellion's head" it seems a mistaken interpretation of the armed-head apparition: in any case, it is not Shakespeare. And I have no doubt a minute examination may detect still more traces of Middleton: but in an essay of this kind more detail would be wearisome.

Enough is given for my purpose to make it likely that Middleton was a recaster of the play, not a joint author.

Before giving my theory as to this play, and the metrical confirmations of it, I had better perhaps add a Table of the parts I do believe to be Shakespeare's.

SHAKESPEARE.	MIDDLETON. /1
	I. i. (Witches).
I. ii. (altered)	
	iii. 1--37. (Witches),
iii. 38--146.	
iv.	* rhyme-tag.
v.	
vi.	
vii.	

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 II. i.                          rhyme-tag.
    ii.
   iii.                       * rhyme-tag.
    iv.                       * rhyme-tag.
III. i.
    ii.                         rhyme-tag.
   iii.
    iv.                         bit at end.
                        III. v. (Hecate).
    vi.
 IV. i.                       Hecate and * 6-line bit and * tag.
    ii.
   iii.                         140--158 (touching for evil).
  V. i.                       * one line.
    ii. (altered)               rhyme-tag.
   iii.                       * rhyme-tag.
    iv.                       * rhyme-tag.
     v.                         rhyme-tag.
    vi.                       * rhyme-tag.
   vii.                       * rhyme-tag. -- (l. 12 & 13).
  viii. (altered)
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/1 The part assigned by me to Middleton, but not by the Cambridge editors, is not 30 lines in all; I have asterised it in the table. -- F. G. F.

This is an instance in which such editions as I have given in the *Transactions* of the New Shakspere Society of *Marina* (*Pericles*) and *Timon* would be worthless. Middleton certainly did not confine himself to adding to Shakespeare's work: he also re-modelled, re-wrote, and made large excisions. We ought to have an edition of this play in two types: the presumed alterations, and additions of Middleton's being in a smaller type than the rest, so that the better and more important portion might be read by itself.

I now give my theory as to the composition of the play. It was written by Shakespeare during his Third period: I think after *Hamlet* and *Lear* (see Malone); so that its date was probably 1606. Metrical evidence is of no use in determining the date: as we cannot tell how Middleton altered the play, or *how much he omitted*, except that the weak-ending test is not opposed to Malone's date. At some time after this, Middleton revised and abridged it: I agree with the Cambridge editors in saying not earlier than 1613. There is a decisive argument that he did so after he wrote the *Witch*, namely, that he borrows the songs from the latter play, and repeats himself a good deal. It is to me very likely that he should repeat himself in *Macbeth*, and somewhat improve on his original conception, as he has done in the corresponding passages: and yet be unable to do a couple of new songs, or to avoid the monotony of introducing Hecate in both plays (Hecate being a witch in both, remember). I can quite understand a third-rate man, who in all his work shows reminiscences of others, and repetitions of Shakespeare, being unable to vary such conceptions as he had formed on the subject. I believe that Middleton, having found the groundlings more taken with the witches, and the cauldron, and the visions in IV. i. than with the grander art displayed in the Fate goddesses of I. iii., determined to amalgamate these, and to give us plenty of them. Hence the witches call themselves weird sisters in the lyric part

of I. iii.: hence the speech of Macbeth, "I will to-morrow to the weird sisters," &c. I believe also the extra fighting in the last scenes was inserted for the same reason. But finding that the magic and the singing and the fighting made the play too long -- for a play of that kind cannot be endured to the length of an ordinary tragedy of Shakespeare's -- he cut out large portions of the psychological Shakespeare work, in which, as far as quantity is concerned, this

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play is very deficient compared with the three other masterpieces of world-poetry, and left us the torso we now have. That the taste of the mob is of the nature I assign to it, is evident enough from the way this play is put on the stage now. I am not play-goer enough to say how often it has been represented in my time without still further additions from Middleton's lyrics and Locke's music, but I think it cannot be very often. To hide the excisions, Middleton put on tags at the places where he made the scenes end: and to my thinking, if any one will compare the endings of the scenes where Shakespeare has left them without tags with those where I have tried to show that Middleton put them in, he will find that there is a great difference in the completeness of the scenes. Or try another experiment: cut off the tags from the scenes where Shakespeare put them and those where Middleton put them; a similarly decisive result will be felt. It is impossible to show this in a paper: if I were doing an edition of the play with the opportunity of summing up the aesthetic of each scene at the end of it as I went on, I am certain I could make it manifest: not to mention many smaller details I cannot stay to discuss here, such as the stage direction in IV. i. about Banquo's carrying the glass. But I must stay to protest against the modern way of altering and inserting stage directions *ad libitum*; it has thrown back our criticism twenty years. I could not myself stir in this matter till I obtained reprints of Folio and Quartos, which I could not for many years, for reasons I need not dwell on here. I do not think we should do well in issuing mere reprints only, but no alteration even in popular editions should be made without being marked by brackets or italics, or some warning that there is an alteration: unless in correction of mere printers' errors, or in arranging the lines, or in punctuation.

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On the other uses to be made of this table this is not the place to dwell: I wish only to call attention to the fact that in this play more scenes end with tags than in any other play in Shakespeare: that the number of tag-rhymes is also greater than in any other play, including his very earliest. In other words, that at a time when he had given up the use of rhyme in great measure (for all critics admit this for his Third period), in that part of the play where the super-

natural is not introduced, he has on the common theory used more than twice as many tag-rhymes as he has used in any play subsequent to *The Merchant of Venice*: and these for the most part, as Clark and Wright have so justly pointed out, of the baldest and most feeble description. If the difference were small, it might be explained perhaps from the nature of the play; but such a difference is only explicable on the hypothesis of a second writer: the conclusion we have reached on other grounds.