Macbeth produced by Samuel Phelps at Sadler's Wells in 1847

Era, Sun 26 Sep 1847, 8a

THEATRE ROYAL, SADLER'S WELLS.

Under the management of Mr. PHELPS.

On Monday and Tuesday MACBETH, from the original text. Duncan, Mr. H. Mellon; Malcolm, Mr. J. T. Johnson: Macbeth, Mr. Phelps; Banquo, Mr. G. Bennett: Macduff, Mr. H. Marston; Rosse, Mr. Hoskins; Fleance, Miss St. George; Hecate, Mr. Harrington; Three Witches, Messrs. A. Younge, Scharf, and Wilkins. To conclude with MY FRIEND THE GOVERNOR. Pequillo, Mr. A. Younge; the Governor, Mr. H. Mellon; Beatrice, Miss St. George; Felipa, Mrs, Watson. Wednesday and Thursday, THE HONEYMOON. And other Entertainments.

Times, Tue 28 Sep 1847, 5a

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE.

Rarely has a dramatic event excited a greater sensation in its vicinity than did the revival of Macbeth at Sadler's Wells last night. The ordinary version of Macbeth, with the "singing witches," used to be a stock-piece here in the days of Mrs. Warner, but on this occasion the text of Shakspeare was to be more rigidly followed, and the doors of the theatre were beset by an immense assembly.

The acting drama of Macbeth is not one of those violent departures from Shakspeare of which Richard III. and Romeo and Juliet are such notorious instances. Scenes have been omitted and choruses have been added, but in no incident has the story been altered, nor has its progress been changed. Hence it is highly characteristic of the present disposition to revere the memory of Shakspeare, that his text has been followed with that severe conscientiousness which marked the performance of last night. The music, with the interpolated words to which it is set, has been dropped, Lady Macduff and her son are restored, the old man talks of Duncan's horses eating each other, and last, but not least, Macbeth is killed off the stage in orthodox manner, and his head is brought on the pole. There is no half-measure in this. Mr. Phelps having raised the Shakspearian banner, waves it gallantly indeed.

But this is not all the merit of Mr. Phelps. Any one with

a certain amount of "pluck" might introduce scenes which a predecessor had left out, but Mr. Phelps has gone to work at the production in a style of his own, has boldly avoided conventionality, and placed an impress of genius on the whole affair. To the banquet scene he has given an air of primitive rudeness, and has so arranged the tables that Banquo's ghost appears with better effect. The battle scenes and the groupings on a large scale are all so managed as to produce a massive appearance, and the costumes, being by no means after the ordinary fashion, occasion a novelty of combination. Most admirable is the manner in which the witches are treated, the preternatural aspect which is given to them evincing a spirit really poetical. The common intervention of a gauze half removes them from reality, but the ingenious expedient of thickening the gauze in the lower part, so that they are suddenly concealed when it rises, effects as near an approach to a "vanishing" as possible. When the witches address Macbeth and Banquo, they are not, as usual, placed in the front of the stage, but crouch upon an obscure rock at the back, and when they have vanished thence by means of the gauze, they are seen in profile floating across the sky. As a spectacle, this representation of Macbeth is one of the most original ever seen. There is a spirit of freshness diffused over it, a determination to look at the play from a novel point of view, which is in the highest degree creditable to the directing genius.

If the audience anticipated much, they were not disappointed. Phelps and Miss Addison drew down repeated applause, and the curtain fell amid that enthusiasm which is so well known on the bank of the New River.

Athenaeum, Sat 2 Oct 1847, 1036-7

SADLER'S WELLS. -- On Monday last the tragedy of 'Macbeth' was revived at this theatre restored in many important respects to the integrity of the original text and the original construction. Incantation scenes, interpolated choruses, Lock's music -- with its own prescriptive charm -- and the accustomed multitude of ragged and illegitimate witches were all swept away; while scenes and speeches which belong

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to the original and have been usually omitted from the representation were reinstated in their right. The touching dialogue between Lady Macduff, her son and Rosse is delivered on the stage. Macbeth's Porter moralizes after his own garrulous fashion

while Murder stalks about the chamber within and the Avenger is knocking without -- and finally Macbeth is slain outside, and his head brought in on a pole. These, with a new arrangement of the banquet scene and some new scenic groupings and other effects in the battle, form the marking features of this performance.

On the whole, we know not that we have ever seen 'Macbeth' put more effectively on the stage than it is now at this house -- ever felt its morals more impressively conveyed in stage representation: and so much credit does Mr. Phelps deserve for all his attempts to reintegrate Shakspeare, that we think it worth while to entertain the question of his restoration in a better spirit than that of mere acquiescence. It is clear that nothing short of an assertion of the extreme principle -- of the necessity of keeping Shakspeare's text absolutely intact -- could enable Mr. Phelps to defend any particular restoration save upon its own merits. Either he insists that no line of Shakspeare shall be omitted -- or he restores according to a discretion of which he has not, of course, the monopoly. Now, the first proposition he has practically abandoned -- as the present arrangement proves by some even capricious instances. We agree with him, however, that complete restoration of the text of Shakspeare for stage purposes would be injudicious -- and is not demanded even by our veneration for the poet. Were it a question of the preservation of text, then no line should be surrendered by us to any plea or appeal whatever; but the text being safe, its use for a particular purpose is subject to such reasonable modification as that purpose may require. No play is produced amongst us, from whatever hand, which does not undergo such suppressions as the exigencies of the performance may require -- and Shakspeare, were he with us to-day, would himself assist in such stage arrangement. But the utmost relaxation of the principle of adherence to which we will consent does not admit of a line of interpolation. What we have must be Shakspeare's, if we have not him all. Out of no materials but his own will we hear of arrangement. For this reason it is that, though missing Lock's music, we approve of the omission -- because the introduction of the music brought with it beings who were not of Shakspeare's creation, and in some respect changed the character of his superhuman agencies. -- It is right to say, too, that the manner of presentment of these mysterious

beings on this occasion gave to them far more of spiritual impressiveness than ever they derived from music and from number. In the first scene, the three Weird Sisters grow, as it were, out of the mist: -- and it is with similar suggestions of their spiritual nature that they meet Macbeth on the blasted heath, and melt from him in the shadow of distance "like breath in the wind." -- The poetry of their presence was never, to our feeling, so brought out before.

To the restoration to the stage of the dialogue between Lady Macduff and her child we should have objected a priori -- and object yet more decidedly since we have witnessed its effect. Notwithstanding the natural beauty of the passage, the sort of lesson-scene between the mother and her boy has too much of the nursery smack to be safe in the midst of such excited feelings as by that time we bring to its audience. The seizure of the child before his mother's face by the murderers is, again, too horrible, -- and inflicts a needless pang. -- But still more offensive to us is the gossiping of the Porter in the hour of the royal murder. It is idle to urge as an argument either the pathos or the wisdom that may recommend a passage to which there may be technical objections. Still less to the purpose is it to say that here -- as everywhere else -- Shakspeare presented truth. It is true that Folly plays or prattles on the path where Crime walks, jostling it not -- that the commonplaces of life are enacted under the very shadow of those mighty passions which shake human hearts and destinies: but Art is necessarily restricted in her terms, selective in her principles, -- and cannot turn aside from the direct purpose which she has in view to gather up the many truths that grow incidentally beside it. --

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The introduction of Macbeth's head, too, is to us disagreeable as an effect; but we recognize the soundness of the principle in this case which permits Shakspeare to work up his catastrophe in his own way.

The banquet scene, though good as a scenic effect, involved this one great mistake -- which we recommend Mr. Phelps to reconsider. By throwing Banquo's chair back, the actor is compelled to address the ghost -- who, by the way, was about the most material ghost that we remember to have seen -- with his back to the audience. One of the grandest

psychological expressions of the play is thus utterly lost to the house. A similar mistake was made by Mr. Phelps in the getting-up of 'Romeo and Juliet' -- when he threw the tomb of the Capulets into the background, and the whole of the scenes which include the catastrophe of the piece were played, consequently, in dumb show. To complete that effect of unnecessary distance, the hum of the gathering multitude in the far-off streets was made to reach, and grow upon, the ear -- in itself an excellent effect, but provoking in the case in question because it interfered with effects that are yet more important. In the present play, the same device is used to suggest the swaying of the distant fight; but interrupting on this occasion nothing more important than itself, it is at once recognized as an ingenious and poetical contrivance. And thus it is that we say of all such contrivances and such restorations that they must be judged not intrinsically but by their relations and by their effects.

Of Mr. Phelps's Macbeth, as a well conceived and chastely executed performance, we must speak highly. He failed in the dagger scene: -- and he committed a great mistake when he sat down in the very chair which an instant before had been tenanted by the horror of his own conscience. But his general performance was marked by taste, discrimination, and pathos. He rose with his occasions; -- and was often indisputably great. Miss Addison's Lady Macbeth is a character to which her physique is not equal: -- a defect which she sought to remedy by an undue amount of emphasis. There is much of genius in all Miss Addison does; but nothing in a part like this can substitute the severe style which above all others it demands. Her sleep-walking scene was marked by very fine touches, and promised greatly for a while; but, unfortunately, she forgot that she was asleep, -- and played it with the force and passion of a waker. The part of Lady Macduff was played by Miss Cooper, with feeling -- but without much of the dignity which belongs to the character and the position.

Era, Sun 3 Oct 1847, 11d

SADLER'S WELLS. -- Mr. Phelps continues to exert himself at this house in behalf of what cannot be a hopeless cause, so long as he is so well supported in it. The ancient drama flourishes at Sadler's Wells, and even such

adaptations as Garrick's and Cibber's are thought unnecessary. The original productions, as near to their genuine state as can be permitted, are here represented. Macbeth has been brought out just as Shakspere manufactured it; all approved and customary deviation and breviations are considered not legitimate text and unnecessary alterations. This certainly makes novelty to the playgoing world; to them a Lady Macduff and her son are strangers. They now see Macduff, junior, murdered, while Macbeth retires to die, and his head is brought on after his death; so the closing combat scene is lost, and a false head is substituted. There is much fine language saved by keeping to the printed copy, and there is an additional interest made by these revivals. The plays are excellently got up and performed here. The company work well together, and although they may not always ascend to great histrionic heights, never sink so far as to become ridiculous or even uninteresting. No wonder, then, that Mr. Phelps is successful. His Macbeth is an effective, correct, and highly respectable piece of acting. Miss Laura Addison's Lady Macbeth was well conceived, and carried out to the best of her abilities and capabilities, which are of no ordinary kind. She was not sufficiently terrible in her wickedness; but never other than strikingly earnest and impressive. Miss Cooper, whose delivery is always perfect, and whose notions of what she has to do are never faulty, was much to be admired as Lady Macduff; and all the others who figured in the play were judicious in their acting. The appointments are capital, and the scenery very fine and characteristic. Indeed, the whole play has been got up in an extraordinary manner, and reflects much credit upon all who had a hand in its preparation and representation. Locke's celebrated music is dispensed with. This we, in common with others, deplore; but there are many redeeming introductions in the "Act of Parliament" play. The choruses of "Macbeth" are too good and too important to be lost. They will live so long as music will remain chronicled -- perhaps so long as "Macbeth" shall be known among us, and long after it has ceased to be put upon the stage.

Sunday Times, Sun 3 Oct 1847, 5e

SADLER'S WELLS.

We have to congratulate Mr. Phelps and the management at this theatre for the admirable manner in which the tragedy of Macbeth was performed there on Monday evening, for the first time, in its perfect integrity from the text of Shakspere. The interpolation of

Middleton's words with Locke's music in the witch scenes, which even Mr. Macready, in his zeal for the restoration of Shakspere, never ventured to omit, has been dispensed with at Sadler's Wells with the happiest result, proving that the unadulterated poetry of the great bard of Nature is still superior to anything that can be substituted for it. The weird sisters no longer charm us by their melodious warblings and delicious harmonies. Shakspere claims his own again, and we have them here as he pourtrayed them --

> "So withered and so wild in their attire,
> They look not like th' Inhabitants of this earth,
> And yet are on it."

The manner in which their appearance in the heath scenes has been managed is most artistic, by an ingenious arrangement of diaphanous mediums ascending from the stage, and becoming less transparent as they ascend; the figures of the witches behind them become gradually less distinct until they are completely hidden from the view of the spectator, and the next moment they are seen floating away in the dim distance. The whole scene was as novel as it was effective. Mr. Phelps, indeed, appears to have laboured to disentangle himself from all conventionalities and stage traditions in the production of this piece, and, by his taste, learning, and judgment, has succeeded in giving a character of rude grandeur to the play suitable to the semi barbarous state of society at the period to which the tragedy refers. In the scene where the alarm is given after Duncan's murder by the clanging of the alarm bell, the effect produced by the murmur of distant voices, and the trampling of feet gradually approaching until the amazed guests, guards, and retainers rush into the hall, from all the entrances, bearing torches and hastily snatched-up weapons, is exceedingly dramatic. The banquet scene is another judicious departure from the old manner of setting the scene; the tables are laid round the hall so as to leave a vacant space in the centre, within which the ghost of Banquo rises facing the audience, instead of appearing as we have seen him elsewhere, with his back to the spectators, and then turning round when his cue came, and disclosing his gashed brow and livid features. The battle-field is another triumphant effort of realising a very difficult scene; the whole play may, in effect of stage arrangement, costume, and scenery, boldly challenge anything of a similar kind that has been hitherto done at any theatre. The restoration of the complete text of Shakspere, although it lengthens the play beyond the usual time of performance, recompenses us by some fine scenes and passages. Lady Macduff and her son are again brought upon the stage; Miss Cooper played Lady Macduff so judiciously as to demand our unqualified praise. We did not feel greatly delighted with Miss Laura Addison's Lady Macbeth: it is passionate and energetic enough, but it wants that calm determination, that intellectual power and personal dignity that belongs essentially to the character. Mr. Phelps played Macbeth with extraordinary power and intention; it was a carefully-studied and well-executed realisation of the ambitious, wavering Thane, who wanted resolution to be a good man, and had not daring enough to be completely bad. Mr. G. Bennett's Banquo was an effective and judicious performance. We did not, however, much admire the manner in which his face was made up, after the fashion of the villain in a melodrama. The other characters were adequately sustained; and the play, which was listened to through-

out with the deepest attention and interest, was applauded at the fall of the curtain with genuine enthusiasm by an audience that filled the house to its remotest corner. If any sceptic still doubts the influence that Shakspere possesses over the hearts and minds of English people, let him visit Sadler's Wells Theatre any evening when a play of Shakspere's is performed, and he will have his doubts removed by observing the undivided interest that every individual in a numerous and respectable audience, bestows upon the performance. It is unquestionably a great triumph for Mr. Phelps to have been, with Mrs. Warner, the regenerator of Shakspere in this neglected district.

Phelps and Forbes-Robertson 1886 W. May Phelps and J. Forbes-Robertson, The life and life-work of Samuel Phelps (London, 1886), 96-102.

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3rd September, Werner again for a few nights; 16th, Patrician's Daughter; and those plays, with Cymbeline, were played until 27th September, when he produced Macbeth from the original text, dispensing with the Singing Witches. He played Macbeth; Marston, Macduff; G. Bennett, Banquo; J. T. Johnson, Malcolm; Hoskins, Rosse; Graham, Lennox; Miss Addison, Lady Macbeth; Miss Cooper, Lady Macduff; Harrington, Hecate; the three Witches, A. Younge, Scharf, and Wilkins. This was the first time the tragedy had been thus produced for two hundred years, and it was immensely successful.

F. G. Tomlins (editor), in Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper, and Jonas Levy, in Lloyd's Weekly London News, wrote of it as follows: --

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"The production of Macbeth at Sadler's Wells on Monday, shorn of the meretricious additions and adornments that the puerile fancy of Davenant and successive managers had encumbered it with, is a new proof of the soundness of that criticism which has been so long demanding for Shakespeare an unfettered use of his own genius. A great artist (and a great dramatist must be the greatest of artists) casts his productions as a whole; and the production of Macbeth, or any really grand tragedy, can no more be tampered with by inferior artists than St. Peter's at Rome, or our St. Paul's, by a modern builder. The unity of purpose in Macbeth had so far satisfied the newer school that this tragedy had not suffered in so outrageous a manner as Lear and others. Still, however, the French lust for sensation and effect, introduced by the exiled courtiers at Charles's restoration, and the effect of which is still visible in our drama and literature, induced Davenant to introduce a crowd of singers; and, in fact, made it a vehicle for show and music. Of all the attempts to restore Shakespeare's plays we consider this the boldest. Precisely because it had been so little altered, in comparison to others, was it difficult to restore

it. Connected also with noble music, which in a well-conceived opera would be most appropriate, many persons still think it was an allowable innovation. All such thinkers we refer to the reproduction at this theatre, for a better commentary on the purport of the great drama could not be obtained. For the first time for nearly two hundred years could a correct view be obtained by an audience of the play in its entirety; and never did its proportions come out more perfectly. By inserting only the portion of the Witches designed by the author, their agency and their potency became obvious; and it was wonderful to find with how few touches and comparatively few words their important offices are fulfilled. Four short scenes, in curt dialogue, divided between three and sometimes four individuals, make up the whole of this terrible machinery. But never was the supernatural more effectively introduced. These wretched outcasts, a link, by their innate baseness, between humanity and the powers of darkness, hover over the action of the drama like a pestiferous vapour, assuming a tangible form on every vital occasion, being again dissipated into the murky atmosphere under which, as under a canopy, the appalling incidents of the action proceed. They appear but to stimulate the criminal to fresh crimes, and rejoice at the fulfilment of the horrors they have induced. The first scene is a key-note to the sublime series of scenes that is to follow; and admirably managed and most poetically conceived is it in this restoration. On the rising of the curtain the darkened stage presents three wretched, sordid, outcast creatures, whose own vile nature and as vile treatment have made a concentration of malice and misanthropy; and, completely subverted in nature, with them the fair is foul, and all that is loathsome, delightsome. Having prepared in their villainous assignation the minds of the audience for the temptation, they literally (by a mechanical contrivance) vanish in the fog and filthy air. In the temptation scene they are brief,

malevolent, and equivocal; and here again, by well-conceived arrangements, they appeared dimly and indistinctly, and by other mechanical contrivances receded into the very air, again appearing in a pestiferous-looking cloud, huddled together, and 'hovering' in the air. They have now sown the evil seed, and we see them no more until a brief scene at the close of the third act, merely introduced to elevate the catastrophe in which Hecate alone indicates the course to be taken to rouse so important a sinner to 'spurn his fate,' 'scorn death,' and finally blaspheme 'wisdom and grace.' In the fourth and last scene of their appearance (the incantation scene), the grovelling filth and baseness of their nature are displayed, and subtle and tortuous devices and utterances finally pamper the lost man's spirit, and 'by the strength of their illusion' draw him on to a monstrous and utterly remorseless course. Such are the Witches in the original play, and in this restoration, -- brief in discourse, and but seldom introduced, but so effectively that we feel their noxious influence in every utterance. The Davenant additions only overlay the interest, stop the progress of the action, and, confusing the attention, destroy the whole perspective and proportion of the drama. The modern restoration presents also a simpler and juster view of the character of the Witches, which have been, we must think, much misinterpreted and misrepresented by most of the critical commentators, not even excluding the greatest of all, Coleridge. We have dwelt more at length on this portion of the play because it was there that the difficulty of restoration lay.

"The restoration of the part of Lady Macduff, and several other intermediate scenes, all written with a view of softening the horror of the theme, or bringing the great moral more effectively out, shows how complete an artist Shakespeare was, comprehending the laws that produce effect, and equally possessing the poetic element that must animate a drama. Mr. Phelps's performance was conceived in the highest poetry, -- with no 'false starts,' no spouting, no pointed ranting, no misdirected energy that fires the unreflecting many into sudden admiration. It was all deep, genuine, well-uttered passion and emotion, from the first agitated 'Stay, you imperfect speakers,' to the frantic courage of 'Yet, I will try the last.' The fearful intermediate emotions were as 'a wild and violent sea' with their colossal passion and awe-striking succession, almost too much to see, and certainly almost too arduous to perform. Mr. Phelps has the one great requisite for acting: he possesses a plastic imagination, and, like Henderson, who in some physical defects he also resembles, he seems to put on the character with the dress. Certainly we have never seen the character so completely portrayed; the key-note being struck gently at the first, the harmony was preserved throughout. Some particular scenes other actors might give more grace or force to, but as an entire conception of the valiant chieftain, drawn into the darkest crimes by the solicitations of the ministers of evil, we have never seen it rivalled. The great moral of the play was thus absolutely protruded on the mind, and as crime succeeded crime, until the catalogue is

exhausted, and their utter inutility is displayed, the mind was shaken with terror at the fury of the passions and their 'fatal dismal end.'

"Of the other characters we need not say much. 'The play was the thing,' and there was nothing so bad as materially to interfere with the general effect. The Witches were well depicted and attired; very properly, scarcely grotesque, but squalid, and unearthly, and picturesque. Banquo and Macduff (Mr. Bennett and Mr. Marston) were sensibly, and the last effectively, performed. Lady Macbeth is so awful a part, hallowed by such traditional notions of excellence, and requiring so much natural dignity, that it was not to be expected so young and inexperienced an actress as Miss Addison could perform it. She would do better if she made less effort, and did not by continual emphasis mar the effect of her own energy. The accenting almost every alternate syllable produces a monotony, almost amounting to sing-song, that prevents all expression of emotion. In the more literal parts she was the most effective; and we still have every hope that this young lady will make a fine actress. But she must labour unceasingly in her art, and should seek the highest advice. The appointments of the play were good in their kind, and the arrangement of the banquet scene novel and effective. The introducing the head of Macbeth was, however, a mistaken literality. The house was crowded to excess by a most attentive and delighted audience."

"The decline of the English drama -- the degradation of the English stage -- has of late been a cry, which has been repeated and re-echoed till it has become a sort of cant -- a form of words which people have got into the habit of using, without any distinct notion of its meaning. The stage is pretty much in the same predicament as the currency -- subject to fluctuations that cannot be traced with precision to their causes, but for which everybody imagines he has discovered the true

remedy. It will be found in the one case as well as in the other, that the influences which stimulate or depress are so mixed and uncertain, and so exposed to modification from circumstances, as to evade the application of any general principles, except those which are fundamental and unalterable. At all events, any one who sees what is now going on at Sadler's Wells Theatre -- any one in particular who mingled in the dense crowd assembled on Monday night on the representation of Macbeth, and who had the good fortune to obtain admission, and witness its enthusiastic reception, must be convinced that there is small reason, or rather no reason at all, for the complaint that has been proclaimed aloud of the degenerate state of the British drama, and the degraded position of the English stage. Macbeth was written in 1606, and, perhaps, has undergone less alteration than any of Shakespeare's other plays. In 1674, Sir William Davenant produced a version of Macbeth, introducing the dancing and singing witches, and the music of Locke. This has kept possession of the stage till the present time, when Mr. Phelps boldly steps forward and restores the play, as near as circumstances allow, to its pristine form. He

has brought it out with a profusion of magnificence, and a propriety of decoration and pomp, which one could scarcely imagine the resources of the theatre to be capable of. The first scene was very skilfully managed, and elicited a round of well-deserved applause. The stage was darkened to a much greater degree than usual, so much so that but the imperfect outlines of the weird sisters were visible. In front only a dim lurid light played, and as the hags stepped backwards, the darkness, aided by a combination of gauze screens, procured one of the most perfect effects of vanishing we ever saw. The gradual clearing of the air too, after Macbeth's interview with the sisters, disclosing the lines of the victorious army in the distance, was well conceived and cleverly executed. It seemed the natural brightening up of nature relieved of the presence of the foul sorcerers. Macbeth's castle at Inverness was another effective scene, but we mention it principally as being the first attempt we have seen to reproduce some of the local features of the 'pleasant site' -- the steep wall-crowned hill, and the clear river rushing beneath. The alarm scene of the murder was admirable. Nobles, knights, squires, pages, and vassals, armed with every species of ancient weapons picked up on the spur of the moment -- here a halberd, there a battle-axe, now a pike, anon a blazing pine torch, rushed tumultuously upon the stage, as from every portion of a huge and garrisoned castle. The cauldron scene, too, was effective. The final scenes were spirited in the extreme. The old conventional business of a general action -- a flourish of trumpets every two or three minutes, with a single combat between, was very properly dispensed with. If ever a mêlée was well imitated upon the stage, it was in the representation of this tragedy. Looking through heavy Gothic balustrades, you saw the crowds of combatants. A sally of the defenders of the castle now driving out their besiegers; anon a fierce rally of the English soldiers beating back the troops of Macbeth; while forth from the mêlée, with difficulty disentangling themselves from the fighting, rushing crowd -- now Macbeth, now Macduff, now Siward, would struggle forward for a more conspicuous place. Macbeth's head is also introduced on a pole, as directed by Shakespeare. He is not killed by Macduff in the sight of the audience, as heretofore on the representation of the play. We have heard many objections to

bringing on 'the tyrant's head'; but in our opinion Mr. Phelps has done well in adhering strictly to the author. We have no desire for a regular picturesque death; no doubt it tells with astonishing effect upon the nerves of the susceptible and delicate part of the audience; but would not such a spectacle be more appropriate in Rugantino, Timour the Tartar, or The Assassin of the Rock? The costumes were got up with taste, judgment, and splendour. There was no tartan -- although the play has generally been so dressed./* Tartan is comparatively a late introduction into Scotland, and its use in representing

/* Tartan, though not perhaps in the strict clan-pattern sense, as we know it, is as old as the heather, if not the hills, which it clothes and glorifies. Macbeth may, or may not, have had a touch of it in his dress. -- J. F. R.

the costume of the period of Macbeth must be erroneous. The primitive-looking mantles, with their heavy bars and ponderous folds, in which most of the characters were dressed, harmonized well with our notions of the early, almost traditional period of the play. Mr. Phelps played Macbeth. On the first night he appeared over excited and exhausted in his performance. On the second representation, his delineation and conception of the character was not only just, but in some parts original and new. He throws into it much vigour and nice discrimination. His elocution is excellent, and his taste correct. His performance of the character, as a whole, was a masterly one. In the soliloquy on the visionary dagger, he gave the picture of an imagination affected with the dread design he was about to put in execution with appalling truth, and ably marked the sinking horror that benumbed his faculties after the perpetration of the horrid deed. He seemed deeply impressed with the grandeur of the poet's conception, and to feel all that he said or did. Instead of at once starting at the ideal dagger, as if he was fully convinced of its appearance, he kept his eye fixed on the 'painting of his fear,' till the brain-sick, bewildered imagination made it real; shrinking from its belief, and returning to it with a struggling conviction, until it obtained full possession of him. In the banquet scene he was not quite so successful, because dignity and kingly courtesy were wanting; but his address to the ghost of Banquo was most excellent, his attitude admirable, and his action good; his expression, too, was in perfect union with all, and the whole of the latter part of the scene presented as true a resemblance of a murderer's dismay before the shadow of his victim, as the fancy could form. His last scene was alike excellent; like the former Thane of Cawdor, 'nothing became his life more than leaving it.' He gallantly bore up against Macduff to the last, and quitted the stage accompanied by the loud applause of the audience. Mr. Marston's performance of Macduff was most meritorious; it was well studied and carefully enacted; he exhibited the touches of domestic woe, which require the feelings of the tender father and affectionate husband, very effectively. Malcolm was very well played by Mr. J. T. Johnson; as was Rosse by Mr. Hoskins, and Duncan by Mr. H. Mellon -- the latter part is said to have been originally played by Shakespeare himself. Mr. Bennett's Banquo is a superior performance; and the Witches of Messrs. Younge, Scharf, and Wilkins are entitled to their full meed of praise. Mr. Harrington's Hecate is not so good an embodiment as his Pisanio; it was carelessly done, the text delivered with too much rapidity, thereby destroying the rhythm. The minor parts were suffi-

ciently sustained. Miss Laura Addison was the Lady Macbeth. She has a good conception of the part, draws a just outline of it, but is incapable of filling up the difficult and tremendous character of Lady Macbeth. We have acknowledged Miss Addison to be a very talented young lady; and we admit she is a rising actress. It therefore gives us pain to depress the hopes of one so talented; but in great things, as in small, truth should be spoken; it is ultimately beneficial

to the performer herself, and is a debt of justice to other professors of the same art. Although by no means a great performance, there are several parts of Miss Addison's Lady Macbeth that deserve honourable mention. Her manner of reading her husband's letter on her entrance was good; and so was her delivery of the succeeding soliloquy; but when she came to 'The raven himself is hoarse,' it was immediately discovered that her want of physical energy would militate considerably against her Lady Macbeth being recorded as a first-rate specimen of the histrionic art. The reception of her new-titled husband was effective; and the swelling ambition that prompts her murderous hints to him, correctly depicted; but we fear she is acquiring a bad habit of declaiming when she should feel, and of studying to produce effect, when, if she yielded to the impulse of the moment, she would achieve her object without effort. In her first interview with Duncan, she mingled a graceful hospitable frankness with the stern looks that occasionally were darted on the king as he is about to enter the castle. The scene in which she works up Macbeth to do the deed was well conceived, but feebly executed. We must award her all praise for an excellent distinctness, and for the effectiveness of her whispering speeches during the progress of the murder, particularly where she exclaims, in a suppressed but contemptuous tone, --

> 'Infirm of purpose,
> Give me the daggers,' &c.

Her best scene was the one of the banquet, where she dismisses her guests, commanding them to

> 'Stand not upon the order of your going,
> But go at once.'

In conclusion, we have only to remark that Miss Addison is deficient of the high and superior powers which are required to give effect to Lady Macbeth. She is a clever actress, with a very laudable intelligence of the character, but with natural powers completely inadequate to its just exhibition. Lady Macduff, in itself an unimportant part, was rendered very important by the excellence with which it was enacted by Miss Cooper. A talented little child, a Miss Mandlebert, made quite an impression in her performance of Macduff's son; it was a clever impersonation. The house was crowded in every part, and hundreds went away disappointed, not being able to obtain admission. The play was listened to with the greatest attention; its success was most triumphant. The curtain descended amid a volley of cheers, Phelps, Marston, and Miss Addison being called for by the audience, which was an indiscriminate one, drawn from all classes of society, and representing the experiences of every condition of life. Such an audience is, upon the whole, the soundest tribunal before which the merits of an actor or a play can be tried. If it be not guided in its

decisions by critical canons and fine distinctions, it is governed by the instinct of feelings that are keenly sensitive to the appeals of nature, and rarely erroneous in the final award."