'Macbeth' Act I, Scene ii Text

King Duncan's Camp.

Captain:	Doubtful it stood;	
	As two spent swimmers, that do cling together	
	And choke their art. The merciless Macdonald –	
	Worthy to be a rebel, for to that	10
	The multiplying villainies of nature	
	Do swarm upon him – from the Western Isles	
	Of kerns and galloglasses is supplied,	
	And Fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,	
	Showed like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak:	15
	For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name –	
	Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,	
	Which smoked with bloody execution,	
	Like valour's minion carved out his passage	
	Till he faced the slave;	20
	Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,	
	Till he unseamed him from the nave to the chaps,	
	And fixed his head upon our battlements.	
Duncan:	O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!	
Captain:	As whence the sun 'gins his reflection	25
	Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break,	
	So from that spring whence comfort seemed to come	
	Discomfort swells. Mark, king of Scotland, mark:	
	No sooner justice had, with valour armed,	
	Compelled these skipping kerns to trust their heels,	30
	But the Norwegian lord, surveying vantage,	

With furbished arms and new supplies of men

Began a fresh assault.

Duncan: Dismayed not this our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

Captain: Yes, as sparrows, eagles, or the hare, the lion. 35

If I say sooth, I must report they were

As cannons overcharged with double cracks, so they

Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe.

Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,

Or memorise another Golgotha, 40

I cannot tell.

But I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

Glossary

Chaps: cheeks.

Furbished: freshly polished.

Galloglass: mercenary.

Golgotha: the place of Christ's crucifixion.

Kern: peasant.

Nave: navel.

Sooth: truth.

Spent: exhausted.

Valour: bravery.

Vantage: advantage.

