

tions from these two portions of Holinshed's chronicle of Scotland are printed below, followed by a brief selection (relevant to V.viii.39-53) from the chronicle of England telling of Old Seward's response to the news of his son's death. The spelling, except for many proper nouns, has been modernized.

(Published 1587)

Selections from Raphael Holinshed
Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland

Donwald] conceived such an inward malice towards the king (though he showed it not outwardly at the first) that the same continued still boiling in his stomach, and ceased not, till through setting on of his wife, and in revenge of such unthankfulness, he found means to murder the king within the foresaid castle of Fores where he used to sojourn. For the king being in that country, was accustomed to lie most commonly within the same castle, having a special trust in Donwald, as a man whom he never suspected.

But Donwald, not forgetting the reproach which his lineage had sustained by the execution of those his kinsmen, whom the king for a spectacle to the people had caused to be hanged, could not but show manifest tokens of great grief at home amongst his family: which his wife perceiving, ceased not to travel with him, till she understood what the cause was of his displeasure. Which at length when she had learned by his own relation, she as one that bare no less malice in her heart towards the king, for the like cause on her behalf, than her husband did for his friends, counseled him (sith the king oftentimes used to lodge in his house without any guard about him, other than the garrison of the castle, which was wholly at his commandment) to make him away, and

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showed him the means whereby he might soonest accomplish it.

Donwald thus being the more kindled in wrath by the words of his wife, determined to follow her advice in the execution of so heinous an act. Whereupon devising with himself for a while, which way he might best accomplish his cursed intent, at length got opportunity, and sped his purpose as followeth. It chanced that the king upon the day before he purposed to depart forth of the castle, was long in his oratory at his prayers, and there continued till it was late in the night. At the last, coming forth, he called such afore him as had faithfully served him in pursuit and apprehension of the rebels, and giving them hearty thanks, he bestowed sundry honorable gifts amongst them, of the which number Donwald was one, as he that had been ever accounted a most faithful servant to the king.

At length, having talked with them a long time, he got him into his privy chamber, only with two of his chamberlains, who having brought him to bed, came forth again, and then fell to banqueting with Donwald and his wife, who had prepared diverse delicate dishes, and sundry sorts of drinks for their rear supper or collation, wherewith they sat up so long, till they had charged their stomachs with such full gorges, that their heads were no sooner got to the pillow, but asleep they were so fast, that a man might have removed the chamber over them, sooner than to have awaked them out of their drunken sleep.

Then Donwald, though he abhorred the act greatly in heart, yet through instigation of his wife he called four of his servants unto him (whom he had made privy to his wicked intent before, and framed to his purpose with large gifts) and now declaring unto them, after what sort they should work the feat, they gladly obeyed his instructions, & speedily going about the murder, they enter the chamber (in which the king lay a little before cocks crow, where they secretly cut his throat as he lay sleeping, without any busking at all: and immediately by

a postern gate they carried forth the dead body into the fields....

Donwald, about the time that the murder was in doing, got him amongst them that kept the watch, and so continued in company with them all the residue of the night. But in the morning when the noise was raised in the king's chamber how the king was slain, his body conveyed away, and the bed all betrayed with blood; he with the watch ran thither, as though he had known nothing of the matter, and breaking into the chamber, and finding cakes of blood in the bed, and on the floor about the sides of it, he forthwith slew the chamberlains, as guilty of that heinous murder, and then like a mad man running to and fro, he ransacked every corner within the castle, as though it had been to have seen if he might have found either the body, or any of the murderers hid in any privy place: but at length coming to the postern gate, and finding it open, he burdened the chamberlains, whom he had slain, with all the fault, they having the keys of the gates committed to their keeping all the night, and therefore it could not be otherwise (said he) but that they were of counsel in the committing of that most detestable murder.

Finally, such was his overearnest diligence in the severe inquisition and trial of the offenders herein, that some of the lords began to mistake the matter, and to smell forth shrewd tokens, that he should not be altogether clear himself. But for so much as they were in that country, where he had the whole rule, what by reason of his friends and authority together, they doubted to utter what they thought, till time and place should better serve therunto, and hereupon got them away every man to his home. For the space of six months together, after this heinous murder thus committed, there appeared no sun by day, nor moon by night in any part of the realm, but still was the sky covered with continual clouds, and sometimes such outrageous winds arose, with lightnings and tempests, that the people were in great fear of present destruction....

Monstrous sights also that were seen within the Scottish

kingdom that year were these: horses in Louthian, being of singular beauty and swiftness, did eat their own flesh, and would in no wise taste any other meat. In Angus there was a gentlewoman brought forth a child without eyes, nose, hand, or foot. There was a sparrowhawk also strangled by an owl. Neither was it any less wonder that the sun, as before is said, was continually covered with clouds for six months' space. But all men understood that the abominable murder of King Duffe was the cause hereof....

Thus might he seem happy to all men, having the love both of his lords and commons: but yet to himself he seemed most unhappy, as he that could not but still live in continual fear, lest his wicked practice concerning the death of Malcolme Duffe should come to light and knowledge of the world. For so cometh it to pass, that such as are pricked in conscience for any secret offense committed, have ever an unquiet mind. And (as the fame goeth) it chanced that a voice was heard as he was in bed in the night time to take his rest, uttering unto him these or the like words in effect: "Think not Kenneth that the wicked slaughter of Malcolme Duffe by thee committed, is kept secret from the knowledge of the eternal God: thou art he that didst conspire the innocent's death, enterprising by traitorous means to do that to thy neighbor, which thou wouldst have revenged by cruel punishment in any of thy subjects, if it had been offered to thyself. It shall therefore come to pass, that both thou thyself, and thy issue, through the just vengeance of almighty God, shall suffer worthy punishment, to the infamy of thy house and family for evermore. For even at this present are there in hand secret practices to dispatch both thee and thy issue out of the way, that other may enjoy this kingdom which thou dost endeavor to assure unto thine issue."

The king, with this voice being stricken into great dread and terror, passed that night without any sleep coming in his eyes.