

ACT I. SCENE II.

15

Duncan.

Great happiness!

That now

*Sweno, the Norway's king, craves composition;
Nor would we deign him burial of his men
Till he disbursed, at Saint Colme's Inch,
Ten thousand dollars to our general use.*

*Duncan. No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive
Our bosom interest.—go pronounce his present death,
And with his former title greet Macbeth.*

Ross. I'll see it done.

Duncan. What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won.

[*Exeunt.*]

little doubt that Duncan believes lines 54-58 to refer to a combat between Macbeth and Cawdor: it seems more than highly probable that Johnson and other annotators have been similarly misled by Ross's deceitful sentence. Angus however who is present (according to the first Folio) takes these lines (Scene 3, I. 100) as referring in a general way to Norway and his forces, as of course they do according to a grammatical analysis. If any proof of this were needed it might be had by placing in brackets as we have ventured to do above all that really refers to Cawdor ("assisted by that most disloyal traitor, the thane of Cawdor") and reading the speech without it. When however Duncan exclaims "great happiness!" Ross knows he has taken his words to mean that Cawdor was overcome and captured and he resumes his speech by naming "Sweno, the Norway's king" fully, which he would never have done if Duncan had taken the preceding five lines to refer to this same Sweno. Is it possible to suppose that Ross would here mention Sweno elaborately if he had not been deceiving Duncan and Angus by speaking ambiguously in the lines before?

63-65. If any doubt remained as to what had silenced Duncan during this prolonged speech his words in these lines would dispel it: his whole mind is taken up with the traitorous conduct of Cawdor. He commissions Ross and Angus to (a) see to the execution of Cawdor, (b) greet Macbeth as the new Thane of Cawdor.

66-67. Ross has gained his point: while pretending to Angus to speak mainly of Norway he has pretended to Duncan to speak mainly of Cawdor. The king closes the scene by showing his rage against Cawdor.

The duplicity of Ross in this scene is excelled only by his duplicity in reporting it to Macbeth in Scene 3. It weakens both scenes greatly to remove, as some have removed, the thane of Angus from Scene 2. Cawdor has been condemned merely upon a parenthetical line and a half from Ross. *There is absolutely no other proof of his guilt in the play.*

It is like Ross to ignore Angus, who is also commissioned by Duncan. In Sc. 3, Angus says "we are sent." The "exeunt" of the Folio at the end of Sc. 2 probably refers to Ross and Angus but not to Duncan and his attendants.