

HYPOTHESIS.

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8. Scene 4, of Act II., is not considered essential to the plot; is not acted on the stage, and has never been assigned an adequate motive.

9. There is a difference of opinion as to whether Banquo's relation to Macbeth was a guilty relation: Flathe holds that it was so, the greater number of critics regard Banquo as a simple and upright soldier untainted by wrong ambitions.

10. The majority of editors regard the third murderer as an unknown assassin. Paton believes Macbeth was the third murderer; many accept Paton's belief and reasons.

11. Sc. 6, Act III, is rejected in Irving's arrangement for the stage; it is not considered essential to the plot.

12. No adequate motive is given for the presence of Ross at Macduff's castle a few moments before the murder of Lady Macduff, nor is any adequate motive given for the entrance of the Messenger who warns her of her impending fate.

It will be observed that minute points have been omitted from this scheme of difficulties; but if the hypothesis prove sound and workable it will explain some verbal difficulties as well as these twelve points and the speeches connected with them.

The hypothesis offered as an explanation of all these difficulties may be briefly stated as follows:—

The Thane of Ross, though a subordinate character, is more important than has yet been shown: he is not merely loquacious and weak but an ambitious intriguer, a man of some ability but no moral worth, a coward, spy, and murderer.

The most important departure from orthodox explanation of the play is the proposition that *Cawdor was in fact a loyal gentleman; that Ross from a desire to curry favour with Macbeth, and from other motives traduced and ruined Cawdor; that Macbeth and Banquo allowed Cawdor to be ruined, that the words of the witches might prove true; that Cawdor was in the camp unaware of the plot against him, and that*