

ACT I. SCENE III.

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Ross. *The king hath happily received, Macbeth,
The news of thy success; and when he reads
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,
His wonders and his praises do contend
Which should be thine or his: silenced with that,
In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,
He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,
Strange images of death. As thick as hail
Came post with post; and every one did bear
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,
And pour'd them down before him.*

Angus.

We are sent

100

80-100. Much of the argument depends upon the comparison of this speech with Ross' speech to Duncan in Act 2. It certainly supports the First Folio in making Angus appear with Ross in Sc. 2, to find them together in discharging Duncan's message.

This speech is perhaps the shrewdest example of the subtle handling of ambiguous phrases by an intriguer to be met with anywhere.

Many will say no doubt that it is easy to read subtle meanings into any speeches, but in fairness let it be remembered that all the annotators who have grappled with this speech have come to one of two conclusions, (a) That it is corrupt or unintelligible, (b) That Ross forgot what he actually had said to Duncan. In reply to the former, one need but say that an explanation that gives coherence and clearness to every word is at least plausible: in reply to the latter it is urged that while a play whose very subject is murder is hardly complete without a spy and intriguer, such a play has no particular need of a weak-minded thane who cannot remember a few hours after, the most important words of his life-time. Daniel, who is accepted by most recent editors and who has indeed the best appreciation of the difficulties involved, gives up the explanation in despair: "Ross and Angus come from the King. Ross describes how the news of Macbeth's success reached the King, by post after post. He appears to have entirely forgotten that he himself was the messenger; he however greets Macbeth with the title of Cawdor, and Angus informs Macbeth that Cawdor lies under sentence of death for 'treasons capital,' but whether he was in league with Norway, or with the rebel [Macdonwald], or with both, he knows not. Ross did know when, in the preceding scene, he took the news of the victory to the King; but he also appears to have forgotten it; at any rate he does not betray his knowledge. *Macbeth's loss of memory is even more remarkable than Ross's.* He doesn't recollect having himself defeated Cawdor but a few short hours—we might say minutes—ago; and the Witches' prophetic greeting of him by that title, and Ross's