

ACT I. SCENE IV.

27

*He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust.—*

13

14.

Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS.

O worthiest cousin!

14

The sin of my ingratitude even now

15

Was heavy on me: thou art so far before

16

That swiftest wing of recompense is slow

17

To overtake thee: Would thou had less deserved,

18

That the proportion both of thanks and payment

19

Might have been mine! only I have left to say,

20

More is thy due than more than all can pay.

21

Macbeth. The service and the loyalty I owe,

22

In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part

23

Is to receive our duties: and our duties'

24

Are to your throne and state, children and servants;

25

Which do but what they should, by doing every thing

26

Safe toward your love and honour.

Duncan.

Welcome hither:

27

I have begun to plant thee, and will labour

28

To make thee full of growing.—Noble Banquo,

29

That hast no less deserved, nor must be known

30

No less to have done so: let me infold thee

31

And hold thee to my heart.

Banquo.

There if I grow,

32

12-14. This speech is Duncan's death-warrant.

It is not undertaking too much to say that in this play Shakespeare is most careful to preserve an exalted conception of retributive justice. Even Lady Macduff is most untrue to her noble husband before the murderers enter: Banquo forfeits his life (not to Macbeth but to poetic justice) by his failure to warn Duncan and to defend Cawdor. Duncan forfeits his life by weakly condemning on the parenthetical accusation of the thane of Ross, a nobleman who had been trusted with the "bosom interest" of the king, "a gentleman on whom I built an absolute trust:" one clearly who had rivalled Macbeth and Banquo in his counsels.

15-17. Though these lines apply to Macbeth yet the "sin of my ingratitude" seems an echo of his feelings for the murdered Cawdor.