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THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

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AESCHYLUS

THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

[SEPTEM CONTRA THEBAS]

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH RHYMING VERSE
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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PREFACE

When Aeschylus is challenged in the *Frogs* to show that he is a better poet than Euripides he cites as his first piece of evidence *The Seven Against Thebes*. This is sometimes taken to imply that the *Seven* was regarded—by Aeschylus himself or by Aristophanes or by public opinion—as his masterpiece, but the context does not bear out this view. Aeschylus is arguing that Euripides has lowered the general moral tone of Athenian society with his erotic heroines and sophistical impieties. He has made people altogether "weaker and worse":

Well, think what they were when he had them from me! Good six-footers, solid of limb,
Well-born, well-bred, not ready to fly from obeying their country's call,
Nor in latter-day fashion to loiter and lie, and keep their consciences small.
Their life was in shafts of ash and of elm, in bright plumes fluttering wide,
In lance and greaves and corslet and helm, and hearts of sevenfold hide!

EURIPIDES (*Aside*).

Oh, now he's begun and will probably run a whole armourer's shop on my head!
(*To* AESCHYLUS) Stop! How was it due in especial to you, if they were so very—well-bred?

DIONYSUS.

Come, answer him, Aeschylus! Don't be so hot, or smoulder in silent disdain.

AESCHYLUS (*crushingly*).

By a tragedy "brimming with Ares"!

DIONYSUS.

A what?

AESCHYLUS.

The Seven against Thebes.

DIONYSUS.

Pray explain.

AESCHYLUS.

There wasn't a man could see that play but he hungered for havoc and gore.

DIONYSUS.

I'm afraid that tells in the opposite way. For the Thebans profited more,
It urged them to fight without flinching or fear, and they did so; and long may you rue it!

AESCHYLUS.

The same thing was open to all of you here, but it didn't amuse you to do it!
Then next I taught you for glory to long and against all odds stand fast.
That was the *Persae*, which bodied in song the noblest deed of the past.

If we ask why Aeschylus in this passage cited first the *Seven* and then the *Persae*, the answer is fairly clear. Those plays suited his purpose; and no other play would—at least among those that are extant. The *Oresteia* with its adulterous heroine would never do. Nor yet the *Prometheus* with its blasphemous treatment of Zeus; nor yet the *Supplices*, all about young women and their marriages and their objections to their suitors. The *Seven* is chosen not because it is a specially good play but because it represents the ideal of military *Aretê*. Nevertheless it is clear that the play was much admired in antiquity: it is quoted, I should say, at least as much as any of the other extant Aeschylean tragedies.

It won the first prize in the year 467, or at least the trilogy of which it was part did so. It was described by the orator Gorgias, in the phrase quoted above, as a Δρᾶμα Ἄρεως μεστὸν, *a Drama brimming with Ares*, or the Spirit of War. We are also told (Athenaeus, 22 A) that Telestes, the dancer used by Aeschylus, presumably as Leader of the Chorus, was such an artist that "by his dancing in *The Seven Against Thebes* he made the audience see the things that were being done."

Let us see if we can understand this criticism and this strong admiration.

The trilogy was evidently concerned with the Curse of the House of Laïus, by which the two sons of Oedipus must die childless and divide their kingdom by the sword. (Robert, *Oedipus*, I

168 ff., 263 ff., II 98.) In the hope of escaping their doom the sons, Eteocles and Polynîces, made some agreement about the crown: perhaps that they should reign alternately, perhaps that one should take the crown and the other the royal treasure. Aeschylus in this play does not tell us what the agreement was nor who had broken it. No doubt he had dealt with that subject in one of the earlier plays of the trilogy. In the *Seven* we merely find Eteocles king in Thebes, defending his City against the invading army of Polynîces. The agreement, whatever it was, has failed; and this play would naturally be occupied with the fulfilment of the curse and the death of the two brothers.

But, as a matter of fact, for more than half the play the curse is, except for one line, practically ignored. It has been put into the shade by an issue more thrilling. The scene is a besieged city, and the siege or capture of a city was to the ancient imagination a matter of overpowering interest. The city held all that was safe, all that was sacred. To have your city taken was the most terrible of fates: to take a city the most glorious of achievements. With no artillery, no heavy battering rams, no walls of circumvallation, there was nothing for it but to burn or batter in the gates or climb the walls with ladders. The odds were terrific against the invader getting inside, but woe to those inside if he did! The frescoes of Cnossus in pre-Hellenic days depict more than once an assault on a city; so does the famous silver cup at Mycenae; so did the Shield of Achilles in Homer, and the Shield of Heracles in Hesiod. The two chief martial epics of Greece, the *Thebais* and the *Iliad*, are devoted one to the Siege of Thebes and the other to the Siege of Troy. The horrors committed when Troy was taken form the subject of at least two early Greek epics—the *Little Iliad* and the *Iliu Persis*—and one great tragedy, the *Trojan Women*. The title πτολίπορθος, "Sacker of Cities," is noted by Cicero as the highest of honours; and as such is rejected by the Elders in the *Agamemnon*, who pray "May I never be a Sacker of Cities!" In the *Seven* when the siege-motive enters in, the curse-motive is almost forgotten. We might have had Eteocles treated like Macbeth in the fifth act; a doomed and guilty man, tied to a stake and unable to escape, but resolute to die game. This figure is for a moment suggested in Eteocles' last scene, but through most of the play we have a picture quite different. We have a "drama brimming with Ares", a beleaguered city and a cool-headed heroic soldier defending it.

One reason, perhaps, why this play made such an impression on contemporaries lay in what I can only call its realism, though the word may be misunderstood. In form, metre, and diction it is among the most severe and even rigid of the tragedies now extant. There is no attempt to invent ingenious reasons for the entries and exits, or to make the speeches conversational. It is all in the grand tragic convention. But within the limits of that convention the play does most boldly and successfully make one "see what is being done". Aeschylus has, for the moment, stepped outside the circle of legend to portray an experience, and a peculiarly terrible experience, which might actually be that of any member of his audience. The women who form the Chorus know the attack is beginning, and rush from their homes out into the street and then up to the citadel, to cling to the images and altars of the gods. They hear the shouts of the attacking party, the thunder of horse-hooves. Nay more, there seems almost certainly to have been a whole series of crashes and "noises off". The stage carpenter must have been kept busy. "*Do you hear—or do you not—the clash of shields?*" cries one woman. It would surely be fatal to ask the question in that explicit form if there was no sound to be heard. "*The noise dazzles me!*" cries another: another hears spears striking the gate (ll. 100, 104). What particularly alarms them is the Argive cavalry. There is the clang of the horses' metal bits (l. 123); then the noise of chariots and the scream of the wooden axles. (l. 152. The axles of ancient chariots were made of wood and wetted with water instead of oil.) Then comes a crash of heavy stones flung against the gate, and with it again the clang of shields (l. 158. Cf. ll. 294 ff., and 213).

It seems clear that Aeschylus during this chorus tried to produce the actual noises of an assault upon the gates, while his dancer Telestes made people feel as if they saw the whole thing. We cannot but remember the various other ways in which the stage-craft of Aeschylus showed itself pre-classical and more ambitious than that of his successors. (See my Introduction to the *Prometheus*.)

The next Chorus, though almost equally realistic, seems to have dropped this particular effect of "noises off" and concentrates on a description of what will happen if the besiegers conquer: the City itself—a city was almost a live thing to the Greeks—brought to death; the women dragged by their long hair as men drag horses; violations; robbery and murder; houses on fire; children crying; the mad wastefulness of the looting, the treasured possessions of a house flung out in the street and trampled on, and the housewife weeping with rage and humiliation. It is still, even by modern standards, a vivid and most moving picture.

There is much the same realism in the picture which Aeschylus draws of the internal condition of Thebes in its extreme peril. The women have got out of hand: they remind one of those crowds of terrified women that were to be seen during the air-raids on East London. They rush to the sacred images like a mob, not like an orderly Chorus. They speak severally. They interrupt each other. They scream. When Eteocles enters he falls upon them without mercy, scolds them into silence, and sends them down into the street away from the citadel and the images. Then, since it would be psychologically impossible for them to stay still, he wisely gives them something to do. Instead of demoralizing the town by lamentations, he bids them pull themselves together and go through the streets singing an *ololugmos*—or cry of good omen—and informs them of his vow, after the victory, to dedicate spoils to a large number of gods on different altars. That will give them something cheerful to think about.

I imagine that this kind of scene was pretty true to life as lived in a besieged city in antiquity. But Aeschylus has added another element belonging to an age more savage and romantic than his own. The champions who are attacking the City are described as raging and boasting in a way that belongs to pre-Hellenic or barbaric warfare but would have been out of place, and indeed impossible, in a regular army of the fifth century. They rage like Ares in Hesiod's *Aspis* (l. 99), when he tore round and round the precinct of Apollo to work himself up. They boast as the Franks did in the Middle Ages, and as some few Homeric heroes do, amid general disapproval. Aeschylus is not describing the warfare of his own day, but that of the heroic age when all life was wilder and fiercer.

But, just as Homer's true heroes never boast, as his Greeks advance silently to battle while the Trojans yell and scream, so Aeschylus' hero, Eteocles, shows nothing but ἀνδρέια and σωφροσύνη, the Fortitude and Temperance of the true Hellenic soldier. His brother with a great army of allies has come against the City. Eteocles is apparently in the wrong—though of that we cannot be quite sure; he is certainly under the sway of his father's curse. If the curse holds, his brother and he must die: and the expedition of the Seven in itself is a proof that the Curse is working. Meantime he has to defend his City and keep up the general *morale*. He does it wonderfully well. Only once, for one moment, do we catch a glimpse of his real state of mind. It is when he is left quite alone, after the Scout has gone and before the Chorus has arrived.

> O Zeus, O Mother Earth, O gods that keep
> Our wall! . . . O spirit of Evil, vast and deep,
> Sprung from my father's curse. . . I pray you, not
> My City!

μή τοι πόλιν γε. We see that the Curse is on his mind, and notice that he asks nothing for himself, only for Thebes. Apart from that one flash of revelation, we see him only as a cool capable leader of men, always ready with a cheering word. The ideal of a Ἕκτωρ, the "holder" or "upholder" of his city against dangers and enemies, was strong in the Greek mind from Homer's time onward, and has provided the name of the principal defender of Troy. Eteocles is a true "upholder". In the opening scene he comes to the citadel with his bodyguard and addresses the crowd of townspeople who are too young or too old to be in the regular army. He cheers them, inspires them, and sends them to the walls. The attack is coming; but all is prepared and they need not be afraid of the "foreigners". A Messenger or Scout comes, reports and departs. Eteocles goes to see to the wall. Then comes the rushing entry of the Chorus accompanied by a crowd of women, and the next appearance of Eteocles is when he returns in anger and reduces

them to obedience in the way which we have described.

Then we have a series of scenes in which the Scout describes, one by one, the boasts of the Argive chieftains at each of the Seven Gates, and the signs upon their shields. Eteocles with six chosen champions is prepared to meet them one by one; and has a cheerful retort to all their blazons. At the first gate is Tydeus, with a figure of Night upon his shield, a central moon with stars shining round. "Good, let Night cover him, since he is asking for it." Capaneus rages, defying the thunderbolts of Zeus to keep him out of the City. "Let us hope he will have the opportunity of meeting one." The next assailant has the figure of a man scaling a city wall. "Well, our champion will have two men and a city to carry home." Hippomedon has the fiery monster Typhon on his shield. "Excellent, we will send Hyperbios, who has Zeus on his. Zeus has always beaten Typhon." Parthenopaios holds before him on his shield the Sphinx, the old enemy of Thebes. "She will get such a thrashing, if she tries to come in here, that she will turn and bite him!" At the sixth gate, however, there is Amphiaraüs, the righteous, making no boast. That seems a harder case to meet but Eteocles is ready. "A righteous man by himself is formidable. But a righteous man conjoined with the wicked perishes with them." To him goes the sixth champion and Eteocles is left alone. At every point we have found him cool and at his ease, ready-witted and never failing to take thought for his people. "But who is the seventh Argive?" "Your brother, Polynîces: on his shield a figure of Justice and the words I RESTORE THE RIGHT." In a flash Eteocles is changed. His coolness and self-control are gone. He is a desperate man, overmastered by the Curse.

> "O race god-maddened, god-abhorrèd, sown
> In endless tears, my father's and my own. . .

I myself will go to meet him. King against King, brother against brother, enemy against enemy." The Chorus, formerly such feeble and frightened folk, turn to calm him, to dissuade him from this awful sin, the spilling of kindred blood. They address him as τέκνον, "*My son*"; so much have the relative positions changed. But he is firm. "If disaster must come, let it be disaster without shame. A man's honour is the only thing that remains to him after death." "Calm yourself, my son, and think. Be cool as you were but now," says the Leader. "What is the good? Apollo hates us. Better let the whole race of Laïus perish!" The Leader pleads but Eteocles will not listen:

> My father's curse—the hate of him whose love
> Was owed me—hangeth like a cloud above
> These dry and tearless eyes, but whispereth
> Its hope of one good moment before death.

The one good moment, of course, will be the slaying of his brother. So Eteocles goes out, to kill and to die. The race of Oedipus has perished and the City is saved.

A last scene has been added to the play in our MSS., introducing the sisters Antigonê and Ismênê, and raising the question of the burial or non-burial of Polynîces, but Wilamowitz has convincingly shown that it cannot well be the work of Aeschylus. It is not consistent with the rest of the play and it seems to be inspired by the *Antigonê* of Sophocles. In Aeschylus the race is wiped out, and the two brothers divide their inheritance equally, each having (ll. 908, 914) just land enough for a grave in his country's soil.

The play is no doubt rhetorical rather than dramatic. It is stiff in construction. Even its language, apart from the lyrics, has not quite the same romantic beauty of diction as the *Persae* and the *Prometheus*. It is majestic and strong; and, if Gorgias was right in describing it as a "drama brimming with the War God", it certainly depicts him in both his aspects with rare imaginative insight. The dialogue of the actors is full of the splendour and heroism with which those particular people are facing their immediate ordeal, and which constitute the common accompaniments of war; the lyrics of the Chorus, impersonal and eternal, show the depths of horror and pity which are the essence of War itself, the abiding reality which lies deep below the justifications and excuses, the glories, vanities, and tragedies, of each particular quarrel.

It is worth noting that the *Seven* does not deal with its story as a great world-problem, as do all the other Aeschylean tragedies that have come down to us. If the play itself had been lost and we had only known the general story, we should have expected Aeschylus to treat it broadly as an issue between *Dikê* and *Eusebeia*, Justice and Piety. One could imagine long choruses in the style of the *Agamemnon*, explaining how every offence against Justice must inevitably bring its own punishment, so that Eteocles must suffer for his injustice to his brother, and his City suffer with him; and yet marvelling that any man, whether wronged or not, should be so blind as to commit the last impiety of making war against the land that was his mother. In fact we have hardly a word about this issue, though of course it may have been discussed in one of the earlier plays. We have here merely the vivid and unforgettable picture of the population of the besieged city, and one clearly outlined individual character, the doomed warrior doing his duty to the last. Eteocles fits curiously well into Aristotle's famous description of the tragic hero: the noble character with the fatal flaw. He is clearly in his general nature one of those "higher than ourselves" who are suitable subjects of tragedy, but there is just one region, the hatred of his brother brought about by the Curse, in which he has neither wisdom nor justice nor self-control. Of the four cardinal virtues only Courage remains. He is, if I am not mistaken, the first clearly studied individual character in dramatic literature.

G. M.

THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ETEOCLÊS, son of Oedipus, King of Thebes.
A SCOUT.
A HERALD.
CHORUS *of* THEBAN WOMEN, with their LEADER and Second Leader.

The sisters of Eteoclês, ANTIGONÊ and ISMÊNÊ, appear at the end of the play. His brother, POLYNÎCES, is mentioned, but does not appear. Six Armed Men accompany Eteoclês.

[Pronunciation of names: In Eteoclês all syllables are short except the last. In Polynîces the *i* is long. Laïus has three syllables, the *a* being long and the *i* short.]

"The play was produced when Theagenes was archon, Olympiad 78, year 2 (467 B.C.). Aeschylus won the first prize with *Laïus*, *Oedipus*, *The Seven Against Thebes*, and *The Sphinx*, a Satyr-play. Second, Aristias with *Perseus*, *Tantalus*, *Wrestlers*, a Satyr-play of his father, Pratinas. Third, Polyphrasmon with his Lycurgean tetralogy."

(From the *Didascalia*, or ancient Official Record in Athens.)

THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

The citadel of Thebes. At the back is a Common Altar with images of the chief Theban gods. A crowd of men, armed and unarmed, are waiting for the King. To them enter ETEOCLES.

ETEOCLES.

Children of Cadmus, he must ponder well
His words, who watcheth in the citadel,
An ever-sleepless pilot, hand on oar.
For, if good issue, all the thanks therefor
Is given to God; but if some evil thing—
May such not be!—befall us, 'tis the King,
Great and alone, 'tis Eteocles must meet
The clamorous wrath of Thebes in every street,
And curses: from all which may Zeus, whose own
Dear name is Saviour, safe preserve our town.
For you, my citizens, both him whose score
Is not yet full, and him whose prime is o'er,
Well garnering all the strength that in you lies,
Well heeding where each several need may rise,
All have one duty: help our City's Pale,
Help our gods' altars lest their worship fail,
Help your young children, help this Earth, your own,
Your nurse, your mother, your belovèd one!
She, when you crawled upon her kindly soil,
Accepted you and fed you, bore the toil
To train you hers, harnessed with shield and spear,
True men, to meet such need as now is here.
Up to this hour our fortune, men, is good.
These many days our city hath withstood
Its siegers, and the most of war runs fair.
But now our prophet, herdsman of the air,
Who fireless, lightless, knoweth every bird
And reads their meaning with unerring word,
With all the mastery of his inward sight
Hath seen that men prepare, this very night,
A most large onslaught—yea, a plan that all
The Achaian host be hurled against our wall.
Up then, to arms! Take each his station straight
By every battlement and towered gate.
There man the breastworks; on the steps take stand,
And see the exits of the gates be manned.
Wait in good heart. Fear not so sore this horde
Of outland men; God's eye doth watch the board.
Already scouts and watchers I have sent
To o'erlook their doings, and am confident
Their ward will not be wasted. Through their eyes
I watch and shall be caught by no surprise.

[*The men disperse to their posts. Enter the* SCOUT.

SCOUT.

Most noble Eteocles, Cadmean King,
I am come, and trusty is the news I bring.
I saw men seven, princes fiery-eyed,
Who severed o'er a shield of dark brown hide
The throat of a great bull, and as they stood,
Dipping their right hands in the awful blood,
By Ares' self, by Her who spoils the slain,
By craven Fear, the bloodiest of his train,
They swore beneath our deepest towers to thrust
Their engines till this City bite the dust,
Or feed with their own flesh our Theban ground.
Each with some relic of himself had crowned
Adrastus' chariot rail—some memories
For home and parents; tears were in their eyes,
But through their lips nor fear nor pity came.
Out of those hearts of iron breathed a flame
As when a lion's eyes in battle glare.
Nor tarrieth long the proof. I left them there
Trying by lot on whom the choice should lie
To lead against each gate his company.
Have ready then thy champions, ere too late,
Our City's best, for marshals of the gate.
The Argive army comes! There comes amain
The tramp, the dust, the gleam along the plain
Of scattering foam from many an armèd steed.
Be swift, O King! O pilot true at need,
Trim well thy ship. Fence every port before
The war-storm bursts. Even now its billows roar.
Seize thou each swift occasion. I all day
Will keep among our foemen, come what may,
An eye true-watchful, and, well schooled in all
That passeth yonder, thou shalt fear no fall.
[*Exit* SCOUT.

ETEOCLES (*alone*).

O Zeus! O mother Earth! O gods that keep
Our wall! . . . O spirit of evil, vast and deep,
Sprung from my father's Curse. . . . I pray you, not
My City! Tear not from the roots nor blot
Forever out, in slavery and eclipse,
A land that hath Greek speech upon her lips,
Greek fire upon her hearth. Shall Cadmus' folk
And this free land be slaves beneath the yoke?
Be you our strength! I pray no less for you
Than Thebes. A land at peace gives heaven its due.

[*Exit* ETEOCLES: *Enter the* CHORUS *together with a confused crowd of women.*

Fear and a sound of woe!
They are loose! They come, they come!
The army has left the camp.
A river of men, they flow,
And in front the horsemen tramp.
'Tis the dust high in the air
That speaketh, the true, the dumb,
The merciless messenger!
It beats the face of my own
Land with the hooves that stamp;
Nigher and yet more nigh,
A wingèd thing in the sky,
It roars, like a torrent's roar
In the hills, sweeping all before,
Rending the mountain stone.

[*They mount to the Common Altar and kneeling and clinging implore the image of one god after another. A dash before the line indicates a new speaker.*

—Gods and goddesses all,
Beat back the accursèd thing,
Ere up, up, o'er the wall
With a shout, with a spring,
Breaks the white-shielded host!
O gods and goddesses all,
Save us! Uplift the lost!
To whom shall I kneel and call
In prayer? O helpers of old,
Hear us, Ye Blessed Ones
At peace on your happy thrones!
Now is the time to enfold
Their knees. Why wait and weep?
Now hold, fast hold. . . .

(—Heard ye, or heard ye not the bucklers' clash?)

Their robes, their crowns. Oh, keep
Fast hold, and pray!

—I am dazzled with the din; the spears that crash!

—What wilt thou? Wilt cast away,
O Ares, thou of old
Our brother, this thine own
Land, thine own town?

O golden-helmèd god, look down and see
Her who was once beloved of thee!

—Spirits who guard our land
Look down and see
This suppliant virgin band,
On bended knee,
Save them from slavery!

—A billow of plumes tossing foams afar
Straight for the wall, lashed by the winds of war.

[*To Zeus*]

—Nay, Zeus, our Father . . . all
Ends of all deeds below
Are thine! . . . let it not fall
That forth we go,
Captive, to serve the foe!

—They ring us round with arms, with fear! O death,
The iron jangling of the war-steeds' breath!

—Lo, Seven, a chosen band
Towering above the host,
Harnessed and spear in hand,
At the Seven gates to stand,
Each at his lotted post!

[*To Pallas*]

—Child of the Highest, be
All thou art called on earth,
Lover of Battle, She
Who Saveth the City's Hearth,
Pallas, and Victory!

[*To Poseidon*]

—O horse-king, sea-king, raise thy trident spear,
Poseidon; bring release, release from fear!

[*To Ares and Aphrodite*]

—And thou, O Ares, lo,
Thy Cadmus' name we bear,
Help us, that all may know
Thy love, thy care.
—O Cypris, avert the foe!

Mother, 'tis we, thy children! We draw near
And cry to thee, our goddess! Hear, O hear!

[*To Apollo and Artemis*]

—Apollo, wolf-god wild,
A wolf on the horde below

Be thou.—O Leto's child
Artemis, rise and go
Beside him, with bended bow!

[*To various gods and goddesses*]

[*Strophe*

—I hear a noise of chariots round the gate!
(Hera, give aid!)
The grinding axles groan beneath their weight.
(O Leto's Maid!)
The air is maddened with the spears that shower:
What holds the present, what the future hour,
What end in God's mind laid?

[*Antistrophe*

—The turrets feel the slingers' storming stone;
(Apollo mine!)
Hark! In the gates the bronzen targes groan.
Zeus-child, (for thine
The holy hour which maketh battle cease)
O Queen and Blessèd, Onca, bring release
To these Seven Gates divine!

[*Strophe*

—God is enough, whate'er befall;
O gods and goddesses, in whom
Lies the fulfilment and the doom,
Belovèd, Watchers of the Wall,
Forsake not Thebes, nor see her flung
War-broken to a horde of alien tongue.
The Virgins call you: let your hearts have care
For these wide arms, this broken prayer.

[*Antistrophe*

—Defenders true who stand above
This shaken City faint with war,
Gods of deliverance, let the love
Ye bear our people shine afar.
The offerings that our City gave
Remember—and remembering save, Oh save!—
Her very blood, her mysteries. Let them not,
Lords, we beseech thee, be forgot!

[*Enter* Eteocles. *The women are up among the images, kneeling and clinging.*

Eteocles.

Yourselves I ask, ye things invertebrate,
Will this bring aid, will this preserve the state,
Or hearten our beleaguered folk withal,
To kneel before the images, and fall

Wailing and making clamour, till the wise
Abhor you? Nevermore when peril lies
At hand, nor yet in sweet security,
May womankind be sent to house with me!
Victorious, her blind daring is a curse,
Frightened, she does but make all perils worse.
As now, by this wild rushing up and down
Our streets, ye spread mere panic through the town.
Our fortunes in the field stand well begun,
And here within the walls we are half undone,
We fools, who house with women! Understand,
Whoso obeys not my supreme command,
Man, woman, or whate'er there be between,
Shall straight be judged: aye, nor escape, I ween,
The people's doom, the heap of blood-soaked stone.
These be affairs for men to think upon,
This enemy world without. Let woman ask
No question of it. Get thee to thy task
At home, and see that there no mischief come.
Hast heard, or no? Or speak I to the dumb?

[*At the King's words most of the women come running down from the images; the* Chorus *in general hold their ground.*

Chorus Leader.

Dear Son of Oedipus, my spirit reels.
I heard the thunder of the chariots pass,
The axles screaming in the goaded wheels,
The fire-wrought iron and brass,
Jangling about the horses' curbèd jaw.

Eteocles.

How? Did that sailor who forgot the law
And dropt his rudder find the way to save
His vessel labouring in the deep sea wave?

Second Leader.

Straight to the ancient images I fled,
Trusting in God, when first the storm of stones
Roared in the gates. Winged by that very dread
I prayed the Blessed Ones,
To hold above our City their great hand.

Eteocles.

Pray rather that our wall unshaken stand.—
That helps the gods as well: for while the wall

Holds, the gods hold, and when it falls they fall.

LEADER.

Oh, never while I live
May this dear gathering of the gods of old
Desert me! Never may these eyes behold
My City and my people fugitive,
The war-fires blazing and the streets a-throng!

ETEOCLES.

Then seek not to pray well but counsel wrong.
Obedience is the mother of good days,
Bride of the Saviour. So the old proverb says.

SECOND LEADER.

'Tis so, but God's great power
Is higher yet, beyond man's counselling.
Him who despaireth it can raise, and bring
Deliverance none had hoped for, in the hour
Of woe, when the clouds hang about his eyes.

ETEOCLES.

Therefore 'tis man's work to make sacrifice
Before the foe's attack, and seek God's will.
'Tis thine to stay withindoors, and be still.

LEADER.

By God's help is our home inviolate,
Untouched by hating hands the towers thereof.
That faith who dares abate?

ETEOCLES.

I grudge not that ye praise the gods above;
But, lest ye turn to cowards our people, stay
In peace: be not all drunken with dismay.

SECOND LEADER.

I heard a sudden confused clash of sound,
And, trembling, to this blessed fort on high

Fled, and my peace was found.

ETEOCLES.

So be it. But if ye see men carried by,
Wounded or dead, shriek not, nor catch them up
With tears. Blood ever brims in Ares' cup.

A WOMAN.

Ah! 'Tis the champing of the horse I hear.

ETEOCLES.

Hear if thou wilt, but not so passing clear.

ANOTHER.

They are round us. The fort groans beneath our feet.

ETEOCLES.

These are the perils for your king to meet.

ANOTHER.

I am afraid. The uproar grows and grows.

ETEOCLES.

Hush! Speak not in the streets such words as those.

ANOTHER.

O blessed League of Gods, betray us not!

ETEOCLES.

Now curse thee! Hold thy peace. Endure thy lot.

ANOTHER.

Dear gods, Oh, let me not to slavery fall.

ETEOCLES.

Thou dost enslave thyself, and me, and all.

ANOTHER.

Lord Zeus, Oh, turn against our foes thy rod!

ETEOCLES.

What women thou hast sent us, Oh Lord God!

ANOTHER.

Poor trembling things; like men whose town is ta'en!

ETEOCLES.

Wilt answer back, and clutch the shrines again?

LEADER.

I have no heart left. 'Tis terror moves my tongue.

ETEOCLES.

Wilt grant me the one boon for which I long?

LEADER.

I know not what thy boon is. Let me hear.

ETEOCLES.

Be silent, fool! Nor fill thy friends with fear.

LEADER.

I am silent. I can meet what others meet.

[*By now the* CHORUS *have left the Common Altar*.

ETEOCLES.

A brave word that, and well I welcome it.
And further, now thou hast left the images,
Pray for the better end, that all of these
Befriend us. Then, when ye have heard my prayer
Uplift your woman's cry, joy's harbinger,
As Hellas useth when the victims fall
At the altar, a sure strengthening to all
Who love us, casting out our enemy, fear.
Meantime to all the gods who are worshipt here,
Who hold the City or who roam the field,
Or watch the market with its twofold shield
Of Dirce's fountain and Ismenus' rill,
I vow upon their altar-stones to spill
The blood of rams, and if these days go well
And bring deliverance to our citadel,
To build a trophy large, and hang withal
In offering on each temple's hallowed wall
Our enemy's war-gear, rent by many a lance.
Be such vows yours, spoke with glad countenance,
Not sobs, nor gasps of unavailing pain.
None may escape that which the Fates ordain.
I will go find six men, in single fray
To meet the foe the old heroic way,
Chief fronting chief before each towered gate,
Myself the seventh. That done, I can wait
Till those we sent return with loud acclaim
And turmoil, and our peril burst aflame.

[*Exit* ETEOCLES.

CHORUS.

[*Strophe 1*

I forget not; but for pain
Thoughts within me dare not rest;
Thoughts that cling about my breast
Light the sleeping dread again
Of the foe that steals above
Tower and rampart, as a dove
For her young within the nest
Fears a serpent's creeping crest.

—They sweep against the tower,
Floods, floods unbounded:
(What can I hope for, I?)
Hurled in a piercing shower
On men surrounded
The stones and arrows fly.

—Gods born of Zeus, by all
Crafts that ye know
Keep Cadmus' folk and wall
Strong 'gainst the foe!

[*Antistrophe 1*

—Whither, whither shall ye go?
Where are fairer fields to reap
If ye cast this land, this deep
Soil of Cadmus, to the foe,
If ye lose sweet Dirce's flow,
Dirce, healthfullest of waters
That Poseidon from below
Sendeth, or old Ocean's daughters?

—Oh, scatter o'er the field
Beyond our towers
Terror that slayeth men,
Madness that drops the shield;
Let pride be ours,
And glory once again!

—Remain our Saviours yet,
As once ye were,
On thrones of mercy set
Hearing our prayer!

[*Strophe 2*

—So proud, so old, Ah Pity!
Flung to the darkness, riven by the spear,
A bondslave in the dust of ashes, here
Lieth the ancient City,
By Argive men and cruelty of God
Dishonoured and downtrod.

Her women, low in scorn,
Dragged, like unmastered horses, by the hair,
The young, the old, with torn
Raiment and bodies bare:
The crying of a great land desolate,
Her riches wasted, riseth evermore
In anguish, voice on voice. . . . So dire a fate
Casteth its fear before.

[*Antistrophe 2*

—Weep, weep for the torn flower,
The flower of maidenhood, the trodden grass
Ravished before its hour.
Away to a strange dwelling-place they pass,
Hating each step. Surely the dead have ease
And comfort more than these!

A City once laid low,
Oh, many and evil are the pangs of her:
Man dragging man they go,
Here slaughtering, burning there,

Till the walls blacken with the smoke of death,
And War, the madman, War, the scourge and rod
Of peoples, mocker of the ways of God,
Fills all with his hot breath.

[*Strophe 3*

Groaning within: without
A net is spread
Gripping the towers about:
Man strikes man dead;
And inarticulately,
Like beasts in dread,
Mother and infant cry,
And blood runs red.
Running, they rob, they fly.

Full hand to full hand shrieks
To grasp yet more;
The empty the empty seeks
To pile a store
Not less, not equal, nay, heaped high above
All others.—Who shall read the end thereof?

[*Antistrophe 3*

All manner of rich store
Defiled in heaps
Lies in the dust; Ah, sore
The housewife weeps.
The abundant gifts of earth
Confusèd fade
In wild floods, nothing worth:
And many a maid,
Who knew no cruel thing
Before, must fall
To him whom chance may bring,
A spear-won thrall.
Hatred hath conquered all.
The one hope is for darkness, for an end
To tears and pain.—O Night, affliction's friend!

LEADER.

Friends! Surely 'tis the watcher from the fray,
Fraught with new tidings hither bends his way,
His fiery footsteps quivering in their speed.

[*Enter* SCOUT.

SECOND LEADER.

And see, to hear his tale, at point of need,
Forth comes my liege, the Child of Oedipus.

He too is eager, that he hasteth thus.

[*Enter* ETEOCLES, *followed by six champions in armour, who take their stand at the back.*

SCOUT.

My liege, I know the enemy's plan, and well
Of each man's station in the Gates can tell.
Before the Proitid Gate is Tydeus, hot
In anger, whom the prophet suffers not
To cross Ismênus till the signs be good.
And Tydeus in his rage, athirst for blood,
Hurls, like the sun-mad hissings of a snake,
His taunts at the wise prophet: "Dost thou quake
At death and war, thou coward heart?" he fumes,
While o'er his helm three great o'ershadowing plumes
Toss in the wind, and 'neath his buckler bright
Wild brazen bells make music of affright;
In front that buckler bears, in blazon proud,
A fiery night of stars without a cloud,
And gleaming midmost on the central bars
A moon, the eye of night, the star of stars.
In such proud harness, by the river waves,
In love with wrath and battle, Tydeus raves,
As some wild war-horse when the trumpets sound
Stiffens and champs the curb and paws the ground.
Who shall withstand him? Who, that dares fling wide
The Proitid Gates and front him in his pride?

ETEOCLES.

I have never trembled at men's garb, nor found
That signs upon a shield could deal a wound,
Or bells and plumes, without a sword-edge, bite.
As for this Night thou tellest of, this night
Darkening his shield beneath a starry sky,
I read its madness for a prophecy;
When night upon the closing eyes shall fall
Of him who bears this sign fantastical,
Then he can boast his emblem is indeed
True, and himself his darkening has decreed!
For champion against Tydeus I will set
Astacus' son, good Warder of the Gate;
A noble heart, the holiness of shame
He honours, and abhors the boaster's name;
Deedless in evil, eager to be true;
A Dragon-child is he, one of the few
Whom Ares spared, sprung from our Theban sod,
Melanippus. Aye, the issue lies with God,
But Right and a son's duty posts him here
From his loved mother to avert the spear.

[*Exit the First Champion.*

CHORUS.

[*Strophe*

God with my champion go,
For country and for right
Speeding to face the foe!
How should I bear the sight
Of these men bleeding, men of pride
Who have fought for those they love and died?

SCOUT.

God go with him indeed! The next, whom fate
Hath cast to stand against the Electran Gate
Is Capaneus: no Tydeus doth he seem,
But giant-like, and more than man may dream
His vauntings—which may Fortune ne'er fulfill!
He swears, with God's will or against God's will,
To sack this City. Not the very wrath
Of Zeus down-flung in fire shall block his path.
The thunderbolt and lightning—for a boon
He counts them, like the blazing sun at noon;
His ensign is a naked man, a brand
Of fire—naught else—held flaming in his hand,
Who cries in golden letters I WILL BURN
THIS CITY. Canst thou find a man to turn
His onset? Who shall dare it, who abide
This giant and the vaunting of his pride?

ETEOCLES.

Our gain is this, and brings a further gain.
When a man's heart is stuffed with vauntings vain
His tongue convicteth him, accuser true.
What this man threatens he would surely do!
All gods forgetting, a mad mouth he plies
In exultation, hurling to the skies
This swell of wild words till they reach the ear
Of Zeus: therefore my confidence is clear.
The levin-bolt he scorneth shall full soon
Show him its strength, not like the sun at noon!
The man to meet him, howsoe'er he rave,
Of fiery mettle, Polyphont the brave,
Is chosen and sent. A bulwark true he is,
Well-loved of our protectress, Artemis,
And other gods. But forward with thy tale!
Who cometh next? What Gate shall he assail?

[*Exit Second Champion.*

CHORUS.

[*Antistrophe*

Perish those lips of sin
That against this city cry!
Quick, ere he enter in,
O shaft of the lightning, fly,
Destroy him, ere that spear of hate
My virgin chamber desecrate.

SCOUT.

I speak. The third lot leaping from the womb
Of the upturned bronzen helmet bore the doom
That Îphis' son on our Neïstan Gates
Should hurl his battled ranks. And there he waits,
His fiery coursers eager to attack
And die; but ever more he wheels them back,
Their frontlets tossing, while the pipes beneath
In barbarous music whistle to their breath.
A wondrous emblem on his shield is hung:
A man full-armed, who climbeth rung by rung
A ladder poised against the foeman's wall
He hath sworn to overthrow: and cries withal
In graven script that man nor God hath power—
Not Ares' self, to cast him from the tower.
Oh, send against him one whom Thebes can trust
To avert the yoke and lift her from the dust!

ETEOCLES.

[*The Third Champion stands forth.*

I send—even now the man is sent, and stands
Silent—no vaunt, save in his armèd hands—
Young Megareus, Prince Creon's son, the fruit
Of Cadmus' sowing and the dragon's root,
He will not leave the Gate through any fear
Of stormy horses or their fluted gear.

[*Exit Third Champion.*

Maybe he will pay back his life to her
Who gave it; maybe homeward he will bear
Two men and a bronze city for his spoil.
Boast of another; never grudge the toil!

CHORUS.

[*Strophe*

Thou that for mine and me
Fightest, I pray for thee,
That here may glory light, and there dismay:

If they speak sin and pride,
These that my land deride,
If in their heart is madness, lo, I pray
That Zeus the Avenger mark them and repay!

SCOUT.

The fourth attack: lo, at the Gate hard by
Of Onca Pallas surgeth a great cry,
A shape, a monstrous bulk, Hippomedon.
I saw the vast orb of his buckler thrown
Before him, and I trembled. Openly
I say it. Ah, no common smith was he
Who wrought upon that shield its emblem rare.
Typhon with jaws flame-breathing wallows there
In rolling smoke, bright fire's sister dim,
While round that hollow-bellied orbit's rim
His coil of writhing snakes is welded fast.
He cried his battle cry; and on the blast
Of Ares winged, now rageth, Maenad-wise,
Blood-mad, and Panic spreadeth from his eyes.
A man like this. . . . Oh, check him ere too late.
'Tis Terror's self there raging at the Gate.

ETEOCLES.

First Onca Pallas, who beside the Gate
Neighbours our citadel, in righteous hate
Of madness, shall beat back with wings outspread
This evil serpent from her nestlings' bed.
But, under her, Hyperbios, Oinops' son,
I have chosen, man to man, this race to run
Against him. In our need he puts to touch
His life or death, in all without reproach,
In heart, in form, in shining arms' array;
Ah, well hath Hermes joined these twain in fray,
Man against man, two haters in the field,
And gods that hate upon each blazoned shield!
Hippomedon hath Typhon, breathing fire;
But on Hyperbios' buckler Zeus our Sire
Sits throned, and grips the thunder's blazing star;
And who hath heard of Zeus in any war
Defeated? So the gods who guard them go,
The victor ours, the vanquished for the foe,
If Zeus than Typhon wields a mightier rod
In battle. Shall not man be like his god?
[*Exit Fourth Champion.*
If signs can speak, Hyperbios fareth best
With Zeus the Saviour armed before his breast.

CHORUS.

[*Antistrophe*

One thing I surely know:
The shield that bears God's foe,
The unclean, the loveless, monster of the night,
Hated of man, whose grey
Portion is scarce a day,
Hated of gods with agelong lives of light,
That shield shall fall, that man the dust shall bite!

SCOUT.

So be it!—But lo, there is a fifth, who waits
Lot-chosen, at the fifth and northern Gates,
Hard by the blest Amphion's sepulchre.
His lance he lifteth for an oath to swear,
More than his god and dearer than his eyes,
To sack this town in heaven's despite. So cries
The mountain maiden's son, half man, half child,
A young tree springing, beautiful and wild,
With cheek yet soft, but upward stealing there,
As spring-time calls, the close and clustering hair.
Ah, nowise maidenlike his heart, but grim,
As on he drives, and fierce the eyes of him:
Parthenopaios, of Arcadian birth,
But this debt paying to the Argive earth
That nursed him. Not without his vaunt he came;
To mock our City, midmost in the frame
Of his great orbèd targe, he wields on high,
A ravening Sphinx, with bronzen artistry
Nailed fast, a shining shape far outward thrown;
And in her grasp a man, one of our own
Cadmeans, hath she caught, and holds withal
In front to meet our missiles as they fall.
No trifler he; his battle will not shame
The Arcadian hills and the long road he came.

ETEOCLES.

On their own heads may God fulfill their prayers,
Till they themselves, and these mad vaunts of theirs
Fall in destruction and vast misery!
Howbeit, against thy man from Arcady
A champion, brother to the last, shall stand,
Actôr; no vaunt he bears, only a hand
With eyes to see its work. He will not let
A deedless tongue slip past him to beget
Mischief within, nor one upon whose targe
The abhorrèd She-wolf grins, to roam at large
Within our gates. The beast herself will fain
Turn on her bearer, when she feels the rain
That rattles from our rampart pierce her through.
God grant that to the full my words be true.

[*Exit Fifth Champion.*

CHORUS.

[*Strophe*

My heart is pierced again,
And the tressed hair of my head
Stiff: may the Gods but hear
The threats, the words of fear
From these proud angry men,
And in strange earth lay them dead.

SCOUT.

There cometh sixth a man of wisdom high,
In valour foremost and in prophecy,
Great Amphiaraüs, who on Tydeus great
Hurls scorn before the Homoloian Gate:
"Man-slaughterer, wrecker of the citadel,
Prompter to Argos of the lore of Hell,
The Fury's preacher, minister of death,
Who every ill to Adrastus counselleth",
So calls he him. Then on thy brother born,
Prince Polynîces, will he turn his scorn,
Dividing clear the secret wrath that lies
In that ill-omened name, and flouting cries:
"Oh, goodly deed, and worthy of God's praise,
Fair tale for men to tell in after days:
'My people and my father's gods this hand
Destroyed, which led the strangers to the land.'
It is thy mother here: Shall Justice quell
That life-spring? And thy country's citadel
Wrecked by thy spear, shall she protect thee more?—
For me, I shall but fatten a strange shore,
Mine enemy, with a prophet's hidden tomb.
So be it! I look for no dishonoured doom."
So spake the prophet, while his brazen shield
Hung calmly swinging. No design it held;
Not to seem great he seeketh, but to be.
The fruit of a deep furrow reapeth he
In a rich heart, whence his good counsels rise.
Oh, find a valiant champion and a wise
To meet him. Great is he who feareth God.

ETEOCLES.

Woe to the righteous man whose feet have trod
In the same pathway with the sons of sin!
What work soe'er a man may labour in,
No peril is so dire as partnership
With men of evil. Woe to them that reap

That harvest! One just man who rides the sea
With sailors hot for some dark villainy,
Must die, as these whom God abhorreth must.
One just man in a city of men unjust,
Who wrong the stranger and their gods forget,
Beyond escape, being held in the same net,
Shall die by Heaven's great scourge which spareth none.
Even so, be sure, this prophet, Oicles' son,
Though righteous, holy, wise and valorous,
A speaker of God's will, conjoinèd thus
Despite himself, with wild men on a road
Unholy, but too long to be retrod . . .
God's wrath 'gainst them will drag him to his fall.
I doubt if he will even attack the wall:
Not from a craven spirit, not from fear,
But knowing that his sure end waits him here
If Loxias' word bears fruit. No love hath he
Of speech, and what he speaks shall surely be.
Howbeit, to meet him Lasthenes shall wait,
A warder rude to strangers at the Gate;
An old man's mind, a young man's flesh he keeps,
A swift-foot eye, a hand that never sleeps
Beyond the shield when starts the naked spear.
Aye, man may strive, but God is arbiter!

[*Exit Sixth Champion.*

CHORUS.

[*Antistrophe*

Zeus, lest the City die,
  Our righteous prayers fulfill.
Against the invader turn
The spears, the brands that burn:
Outside the Gates, Oh high
  Thunderer, smite and kill!

SCOUT.

Last, of the champion at the Seventh Gate
I tell thee: thine own brother, and the fate
He invokes with prophecy and words of power
Against this city: when he hath climbed the tower,
Proclaimed his conquest and let all men know
By paeans loud his country's overthrow,
Then he will close with thee, and either kill
And, killing, die with thee; or living still,
Drive his dishonourer, his man-hunter, down
To shame and exile bitter as his own.
So vaunting Polynîces in his rage
Crieth to Heaven: "Gods of my heritage,
Gods of my fatherland, fulfil my prayers!"
  An orbèd shield of fashion strange he bears,

With emblems twain: a woman there doth hold
A warrior's hand, full armed in flashing gold.
Her name is Justice, as the scroll doth read,
And "Here", she cries, "back to his home I lead
This exile. He shall have a land to call
His own once more, and tread his father's hall."
Such be the foe's devices. Do thou scan
Thy powers, and find the man to meet this man. . .
Lord, I can bring but tidings: 'tis for thee,
Holding the helm, to steer us through this sea.

ETEOCLES.

O race god-maddened, god-abhorrèd, sown
In endless tears, my father's and mine own!
The curse hath borne its fruit. But not for me
Are tears nor yet repining, lest there be
Yet worse to follow. . . . As for him who bears
This name so meet, this root of wrath and tears,
We soon shall know what end his blazons bold
Can compass; shall those characters of gold,
Those dreams of vanity that babbling flow
O'er his great buckler, lead him home or no.
But Justice! . . . If that virgin child of Zeus
In deed or thought of his had part or use
This might have been. But never, not when first
From the unknown darkness into life he burst,
Not in his cradle, not when first he neared
The strength of a grown man, not when the beard
Grew full on his dark cheek, hath Justice shown
To him her face or marked him for her own.
Nor deem I now, when on his fatherland
He works this outrage, will she give her hand
To lead him. False and traitor to her name
Were Justice, linked to such a deed of shame.
Therefore I fear not. I myself will go
And meet this man in battle. Who can show
A right more clear? So King with King shall mate,
Brother with brother, hate with mortal hate.
Quick there, my greaves, to baffle spear and stone!

[*The Armour Bearer goes to fetch the King's armour and during the following scene arms him.*

LEADER.

Not so, O truest friend, O King; O son
Of Oedipus! Let not thy mood within
Grow like to his who speaks this word of sin.
Enough that Argive and Cadmean slay
And die! That bloodstain can be washed away
But blood within one house, by brothers twain

Spilt . . . there is no old age for such a stain.

ETEOCLES.

Evil must come: and evil without shame
Is best. The dead keeps nothing but his name.
But evil coupled with dishonour . . . who
Shall find a word to praise it and be true?

LEADER.

[*Strophe*

What seekest thou, O my son?
Let not the passion blind
Of battle beset thy mind,
And madden and sweep thee on!
Ere the lust find its deed,
Quell thou the seed.

ETEOCLES.

Since God so hotly driveth to the deed,
Content ye; and let all of Laïus' breed,
Before the wind of great Apollo's hate
Drift, to the River of Wailing consecrate.

CHORUS.

[*Antistrophe*

Pangs as of hunger bite
And madden thee; forth they flood
To the spilling of blood, yea blood
Of man, of brother: which Right
Forbiddeth, and bitter things
Its harvest brings.

ETEOCLES.

My father's curse, the hate of him whose love
Was owed me, hangeth like a cloud above
These dry and tearless eyes, but whispereth
Its hope of one good moment before death.

CHORUS.

[*Strophe*

Haste not to meet it, thou!

Win life, win victory,
And none shall cry shame on thee.
Then shall the storm-black brow
Of the old Erinys lift
And the gods accept thy gift.

ETEOCLES.

The gods have long forgot us. And we twain
Have no gift left to make them laugh again
Except our death. Why fawn upon the Fates
And cringe to avoid the end that surely waits?

CHORUS.

[*Antistrophe*

Aye, now when it standeth near;
But wait and the wind may turn,
Yea, after many a year
The wrath no longer burn,
And the Curse have gentler breath:
But its flame still quivereth.

ETEOCLES.

Hath not the Curse of Oedipus that flame
First lighted? Know I not the shapes that came
Too true in midnight visions to presage
How we shall share our father's heritage?

LEADER.

List to a woman, though thy scorn be strong.

ETEOCLES.

Speak things that may be done; nor speak for long.

LEADER.

Son, go not to the Seventh Gate! Not thou!

ETEOCLES.

My blade is whetted. Shall words blunt me now?

LEADER.

A safe life, without glory, God may bless.

ETEOCLES.

No soldier listens to such littleness.

LEADER.

Thy will is set: thou wilt spill thy brother's blood?

ETEOCLES.

Who can escape the sin ordained by God?
[*Exit* ETEOCLES *fully armed*.

CHORUS.

[*Strophe 1*
I have fear of One that Watcheth till the House of Kings be broken;
'Tis a Word, or 'tis a God, but unlike the Gods we know;
Ever true and ever evil, in a father's fury spoken
And for Oedipus fulfilling to the end his will of woe.
The last meeting of his children draweth near;
Death is here.

[*Antistrophe 1*
By a stranger on the hearthstone shall their heritage be parted,
Whom the Scythian and the Chalyb have unloosed from caverns deep;
'Tis a bitter wealth-divider, it is Iron, the cold-hearted,
Giveth each his land, no more than is enough for them that sleep.
The wide acres lie above them, but no shares
Shall be theirs.

[*Strophe 2*
And when by their own hands they die,
Brother by brother hacked and slain,
When the grey dust in which they lie
Has drunk the dark and clotting stain
Of slaughter, who shall purify,
Who wash those dead hands clean again?
O House of Anguish, where new woe
Is blent with woes of long ago!

[*Antistrophe 2*
A deed was done which brought of old
Quick vengeance, yet doth still abide
The children's children to enfold,

What time that ancient King defied
Apollo's oracle threefold
At Earth's mid altar prophesied:
"Go thou, O Laïus, to thy grave
Unchilded, and thy people save."

[*Strophe 3*

He heard his own heart's passion dire,
He gat unto himself a doom,
Even Oedipus, who slew his sire,
And planted in that field wherefrom
He sprang, a root of blood and fire.
In darkness and in blind desire
They met, and knew not, bride and groom.

[*Antistrophe 3*

The sea unto its waves doth call;
One past, a second swelleth high,
Three-crested, overtowering all
Our City's helm, and very nigh
Is death—the thickness of a wall
Distant: I tremble, in the fall
Of princes, lest our City die.

[*Strophe 4*

For grievous is the fruit, and sure
The shaft from ancient curses hurled:
God's anger passeth by the poor;
Only the princes of the world,
When glory swells too high, at last
Uprooted to the void are cast.

[*Antistrophe 4*

For who had glory both from God,
From those who shared his city's hearth,
And all the far-flung tribes who trod
The sheepfolds—who had praise on earth
Like Oedipus, who swept away
The Terror that made man her prey?

[*Strophe 5*

But after, when he read aright
The secret of that marriage night,
He rose, he shrieked, he counselled not:
Two deeds he wrought of darkness dire—
Tore, with the hand that slew his sire,
His eyes, that nevermore their light
Might show what things he had begot.

[*Antistrophe 5*

And on his sons, in wrath to pay
For ancient homage fallen away,

Most bitter malison he cast:
With lifted hand they should divide
By iron their heritage of pride:
I tremble lest the Curse this day,
Swift-footed, reach her goal at last.

[*Enter the* SCOUT.

SCOUT.

Ye mother's children! Tremble, then, no more!
Thebes hath escaped the yoke; our dread is o'er
And fallen to dust the vauntings of the proud.
Our barque on a soft sea without a cloud
Glides onward and, for all the waves that rolled
So high, hath shipped no water in the hold.
Our walls stand firm. Our open gates were barred
By strong men's arms, whose valour was our guard.
Aye, almost all, in six gates, well hath gone.
The Seventh, our Lord Apollo for his own
The Prince of Sevens, hath chosen, and doth fulfil
On the son's sons that dead king's evil will.

LEADER.

How? Thebes not safe? What further happenings? . . .

SCOUT.

Thebes is delivered; but the brother kings. . .

LEADER.

Who? Tell thy tale, though fear should palsy us!

SCOUT.

Be calm and hear. The race of Oedipus

LEADER.

Ah, woe is me! What did my dreams foretell?

SCOUT.

The men are dead. By their own hands they fell.

LEADER.

By hands of one blood, of one nature, slain!

SCOUT.

Aye, single is the doom that bound these twain
And moves on, the whole kindred to destroy.
Now may ye weep for grief, now laugh for joy!
The City is saved; but they who held her sway,
The chieftains twain—their heritage this day
Cold iron, hard-beaten by the Scythian's hand,
Hath parted, granting each such share of land
As a grave measures. On to the end they fare
Down the dead river of their father's prayer.

CHORUS.

O Zeus, O guardian gods, who see
With love our towers, shall I rejoice
For Thebes, and praise with lifted voice
The Saviour who hath made us free?

Or mourn those twain who, side by side,
Their names deep-written in their life,
Were True-in-fame, were Rich-in-strife;
And childless, cursing God, they died?

[*Strophe*

And art thou ended thus,
Black prayer of Oedipus?
An ice-cold fear about my heart is spread:
My song above their tomb
Riseth, a seer of doom,
To gaze on these torn bodies of the dead.
O comradeship of war ill-counsellèd!

[*Antistrophe*

The father's curse hath wrought
Its end and faltered not:
The sin of Laïus its reward hath won.
The City murmureth, pale,
That God's word shall not fail;
O Sons of Sorrow, these things have ye done,
Not words ye bring but deeds, and tears that run.

[*The two bodies are brought in, followed by the* SISTERS.

[*Epode*

'Tis all self-clear, too plain the Herald's tale!

Two aching thoughts, a twofold hardihood.
Oh, twofold sore and perfect guilt of blood,
What art thou? Bane on bane,
Hate on the hearth, sorrow in sorrow's train.

But down the wind, O women, of your wail
Beat, beat, the chime that, echoing hand on hand,
O'er Acheron guides that Ship of sable pall,
That sad uncrownèd ship of festival,
Where no Apollo treads, no sunbeams fall,
On to the extreme land,
The land beyond the storm, which welcomes all.

LEADER.

But gathered for sad service, lo,
Ismênê and Antigonê,
To mourn their brothers. Bitterly
From those deep-hearted breasts shall flow

Meet sorrow. Ere the word be said,
Let us go join with them, to raise
The hymn of the Erinyes' praise,
The unloved paean of the dead.

O most ill-brothered twain, of all
Who round their garb the girdle bind,
I wail, I weep; and all my mind
And heart are in these tears that fall.

CHORUS.

[*Strophe 1*

Alas, Alas! Hard of heart,
Could no friend soften you, no pain outwear?
Your father's House, lo, ye have rent apart
Ill-starred, with sword and spear.
Ill-starred in truth, for whom
Long-sought came their own death, their kindred's doom!

[*Antistrophe 1*

Alas, Alas! Wall by wall
Ye have wrecked the House; ye have won your crown, and rued
The winning. Ye have found your peace withal,
Your iron brotherhood.
Your father's Curse hath wrought
Even to the end the fulness of her thought.

[*Strophe 2*

Deep to the heart, through each left breast
Ye are smitten, where the flesh within

In the same mother's flesh had been,
From the same life had drawn its breath!
Alas, Oh men possessed,
Alas, the curse of death requiting death!

The heart, the house, are smitten with the sword;
They are smitten through, their wrath no tongue can tell;
Their lots, cast by a father's curse, yet fell
To both in one accord.

[*Antistrophe 2*

A groan through all the City flows,
The towers groan, the Theban floor
Groans for the men it loved of yore:
Their goods another garnereth;
The goods, Oh men of woes,
For which came hatred and the end of death.

With courage high they shared their heritage,
Justly, with law equal and reconciled.
Yet on their Reconciler no friend smiled,
None praised their high courage.

[*Strophe 3*

With iron pierced they met their doom;
With iron pierced they wait—oh, whom?
Or what await they? King with King,
Their equal share in a King's tomb!

They go, and with them goes a rending groan
For our own sorrows and for wounds our own:
Its thoughts are wrath, it loves not joy, it brings
Tears from this heart, which falters as I moan
In grief for these two kings.

[*Antistrophe 3*

What praise above them shall men say?
"They did great doings in their day
For their own people, and on all
The ranks of strangers slain in fray."

Ill-starred beyond all mothers known of yore
The mother who these ill-starred children bore:
To her own son she bore them, and the twain
Each other slew, and on them evermore
Is blood, their own blood's stain.

[*Strophe 4*

One flesh, one flesh, one utter desolation;
Loveless dividings, and a long feud ended
At last in flame.
So peace is come to the hate of a generation,
Their lives in the blood-soaked soil as one are blended,

One blood now and the same!
A hard hand was the maker of their peace:
A stranger came to them from beyond the seas,
He leapt on them from the fire,
Even Iron the Slayer. Their wealth in order due
His hard hand portioned. So Ares hath made true
The curse of their sire's sire.

[*Antistrophe 4*

They have their portion: manifold tribulation
God hath bestowed, and all the Earth's deep treasure
Under their body lies.
Behold, in these the kindred's desolation
Hath burst a-flower, the sorrows without measure
Are ended, and lo, what cries
What triumph-shouts the Ancient Curse hath raised,
Now Hope is dead and the kindred fled amazed!
Henceforth shall Atê stand
In the place where they killed and fell, and set in the portal
Her trophy. Both are conquered, and now the immortal
Evil hath stayed its hand.

THE SISTERS *in responsion*.

—Smitten thou smotest
—Thou didst slay and die
—The spear in hand
—Beneath the spear to lie.
—Hard-hearted
—Hard-fated
—Thou liest
—Thou slewest.
—O sorrow, awaken!
—Awaken, O tears!
—My bosom is shaken with the madness it bears.
—My heart is o'erfreighted with its burden of tears.
—Alas, thou all-dearest
—Alas, thou all-truest
—Slain by thy nearest
—Thy nearest thou slewest
—Two tales, one and other
—Two sights, one and other
—Sorrow close beside sorrow
—Sister close beside brother.

CHORUS.

Alas, for Fate, for Fate!
O labouring Doom, thou grievous giver,
O Oedipus, a shade for ever,
O black Erinys, strong thou art and great.

THE SISTERS.

—Alas! Alas!
—Wounds most sore for eyes to see.
—Exile returned, he showeth me.
—The conqueror came not home again.
—In battles saved, the saved is slain.
—He killed his foe,
—And this man his.
—Dire tale it is,
—Dire sight to show.

CHORUS.

Alas, for Fate, for Fate!
O labouring Doom, thou grievous giver,
O Oedipus, a shade for ever,
O black Erinys, strong thou art and great.

THE SISTERS.

—Hast crossed the river? Dost thou know?
—And thou no later, hast thou learned?
—Exile to thy home returned.
—To face this dead man blow for blow.
—O sore in birth . . .
—In fortune sore!
—O heavy toil . . .
—O evil toil . . .
—For kindred
—And for Theban soil
—But most for me!
—For me yet more!

CHORUS.

O King of tears, King of calamities,
Farewell our Lord, our master, Eteocles!

Alas, Alas!
Most lamentable of human kind,
By grief and haunting gods made blind.
Where shall we lay them in their pride?
Where royal honour waits them best.
Lay them by their father's side,
A thorn to pierce his rest.

[*Enter a* HERALD.

HERALD.

'Tis mine to announce the pleasure and decree
Of those who hold the people's sovereignty
In this Cadmeian land. King Eteocles
Mid all good will and loving obsequies
In earth shall sleep. He hated them who hate
Our city, and won his death before the Gate
That shrines our gods. Unstained, in honour high,
He died where it becomes a man to die.
And on his funeral rite they thus decide.
    The other, who in deep dishonour died,
Who, save some God had turned aside his spear,
Had been this land's destroyer, dogs shall tear,
Ungraved and cast away. Dead though he is,
The eternal stain shall be for ever his
Of sin against those gods whom he denied
When here he came with foreign foes allied
To wreck their City. Therefore 'tis decreed,
From wingèd vultures let him seek his meed
Of burial without honour. By this doom
No offerings shall go with him to the tomb,
No sound of lamentation do him grace,
No comrades bear him to his resting-place.
The Regents of Cadmeia have willed it so.

ANTIGONÊ.

Then let the Regents of Cadmeia know,
If none dare lay him in his grave save me,
I will alone. So much for their decree!
This man is mine own brother, in whose cause
Unshamèd I defy my City's laws.
We are one flesh—is that as nothing?—born
Of one doomed mother and one sire forlorn.
    Therefore, my soul, since he hath now no will,
Will thou to share the burden of his ill,
Be thou a living sister to the dead.
This flesh no vulture screaming overhead,
No hollow-bellied wolf shall make its prey.
Let none believe it! I myself will lay
His limbs in earth, and, woman though I be,
Heap o'er him the grave's covering canopy . . .
Aye, though I find but what these hands can hold
Of earth within my mantle's linen fold. . . .
Let no man doubt me: when the heart will dare,
The thoughts come quick—and, lo, the deed is there!

HERALD.

I warn thee, strive not 'gainst the State's decree!

ANTIGONÊ.

I warn thee, waste no warnings upon me.

HERALD.

Men's hearts are hard when just escaped from war.

ANTIGONÊ.

He lies not graveless, howso hard they are.

HERALD.

Wilt honour this man whom thy people hate?

ANTIGONÊ.

God hath not held these two so separate.

HERALD.

Not till this man his country's ruin sought.

ANTIGONÊ.

Being foully wronged, an answering wrong he wrought.

HERALD.

For one man's wrong, he struck at the whole state.

ANTIGONÊ.

O, Strife speaks ever last, when gods debate!
Waste not thy words; buried this man shall be.

HERALD.

Walk thine own ways. I have shown and counselled thee.
[*Exit* HERALD.

CHORUS.

O Voices dire, Destroyers true,
Ye Furies fraught with Fate, who thus

Have wrecked the House of Oedipus,
What may I suffer now, or do,
Or think? How dare I leave the dead
Unwept, unfollowed to the tomb?
Yet to defy the people's doom
I tremble. God avert that dread!

To Eteocles.

For thee shall many tears be shed,
While he, forlorn, alone must go,
Save for a sister's lonely woe
Unwept. Who dares so wrong the dead?

SOME WOMEN.

Oh, let the city rage, or no,
'Gainst all who Polynîces weep,
His burial we will join, and keep
Procession, mourning as we go.

These things are not the sin of one,
But woe on all the kindred wrought;
And changefully the people's thought
Deems good or evil of things done.

OTHERS.

We go with Eteocles: we see
Both Law and Justice here at one.
Beneath the high gods and the Throne
Of Zeus o'er-ruling all, 'twas he

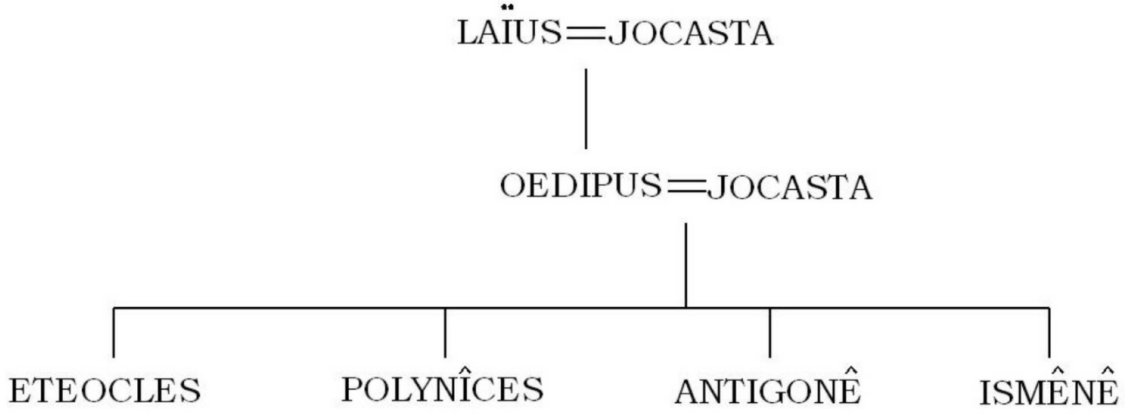
Who saved our City to this day.
Though battle shook her towers, they stand:
Though hordes of strange tongue o'er the land
Flooded, she was not swept away.

[*Exeunt in two separate parties.*

NOTES

P. 27, l. 1, Cadmus was the founder of Thebes, which throughout this play is called by Aeschylus *Cadmeia*. I have substituted the common name.

Eteocles.—The family tree is as follows:



The Seven Against Thebes was the third play of a tetralogy: *Laïus*, *Oedipus*, *Seven Against Thebes*, and *The Sphinx*, the last being a satyr-play.

The *Laïus* seems to have related a sin of Laïus, after which Apollo warned him that, if he begot a child, his whole City—or else his whole house—would be destroyed. In particular, the child would kill his father. He disobeyed, and Oedipus was born, but given to a faithful Shepherd to put out of the way.

In the next play Oedipus, who had been saved and reared in Corinth without any knowledge of his parents, returned to Thebes, killed Laïus in a quarrel, saved Thebes from the Sphinx, and was given the hand of the Queen, Jocasta, in marriage. When he discovered what he had done, he put out his eyes and laid a curse upon his sons, that "they should divide their inheritance with iron". (The reason of the curse is variously given; either it was their incestuous birth, or some dishonour or breach of taboo committed against their father.) In order to avoid this curse they agreed, after the death of Oedipus, to divide their patrimony at once. In the usual version of the story they agreed to hold the crown in alternate years, one reigning while the other stayed abroad. Polynîces ruled first, while Eteocles left the country, but when Eteocles got the throne he kept it. Polynîces, being thus wronged, appealed to Adrastus, King of Argos, whose daughter he had married, to lead a great army against Thebes to restore him to the throne. Adrastus collected various heroes from Argos, Arcadia, Aetolia, and the wilder parts of Greece, and laid siege to Thebes. The name Polynîces means "*Much-Strife*."

It is curious, however, that Aeschylus never says a word about the rights and wrongs of the quarrel. Euripides in the *Phoenissae* has a long and brilliant scene between the two brothers, in which Eteocles frankly argues that Justice is a mere word, and that he means at all costs to keep his throne.

> "These words that thou wilt praise
> The Equal and the Just—in all men's ways
> I have not found them! These be names, not things.
> Mother, I will unveil to thee the springs
> That well within me. I would break the bars
> Of Heaven, and past the risings of the stars
> Climb, aye, or sink beneath dark Earth and Sea,
> To clasp my goddess-bride, my Sovranty.
> This is my good, which never by mine own
> Will shall man touch, save Eteocles alone!"

In Aeschylus the sympathy is with Eteocles, and it is possible that he followed some other form of the story. The old historian, Hellanîcus, for instance, knows only of an agreement that Eteocles should have the kingship and Polynîces the royal treasure. (He certainly had it, and used the magic necklace of Harmonia to win Eriphylê, the wife of Amphiaraüs, over to his side.)

P. 28, l. 28, The plan was to launch an attack on all the Seven Gates of Thebes at once. The attackers being, of course, much more numerous than the defenders, the chances were that at some one gate the defence would be very weak.

P. 29, l. 50, Adrastus did not take part in the attack, and did return safe.

P. 29, l. 61, Armed steed.—Aeschylus seems to be representing an early heroic age when the horse was newly introduced and inspired terror, as elephants did in the Hellenistic Age. Cf. the language of the first Chorus throughout and the description of the horses of "Îphis' son" (p. 49, l. 461). He also seems to treat iron swords as a new invention.

P. 30, l. 69, Observe the change in Eteocles as soon as he is alone. In public he thinks only of keeping up the *morale* of his people. There is no despondency, no thought of the curse. Only when he is alone do we catch a glimpse of his real state of mind. Compare the sudden change wrought in him at l. 653.

P. 30, l. 78, On the tumultuous entry of these terrified women, see the Preface.

P. 35, l. 181, Yourselves I ask.—Again a touch of Aeschylean realism. Probably many of the audience had been in a besieged city and seen the streets suddenly thronged by women, who normally seldom ventured outside their own houses except to go to worship. Eteocles has violently to dominate them, bring them to order and then—adroitly—give them something useful to do. The semi-choral dialogue is done with great skill. One must not think of Eteocles as impious because he interrupts these disorderly and panicky prayers. He is markedly god-fearing in his answers to the boasts of the assailants in the following scene. I think he makes no mistakes until the Curse comes upon him and he is fey (p. 57, l. 631 ff.).

P. 41, l. 283, The old heroic way: as the heroes in Homer went forth to single combat. In Aeschylus' own time the battle was between hoplite armies in disciplined ranks. See below, p. 85, l. 375 ff.

P. 41, l. 287 ff., This beautiful chorus is very different from the first, though equally realistic. The first was all panic and "noises off". This is full of human pity, and the misery involved in what men call "victory". In this tragic conception of war it leads up to the great choruses of the *Agamemnon*, and even to the *Trojan Women* of Euripides.

P. 45 ff., ll. 375-652, The descriptions of these seven champions take us right away from the time of Aeschylus to the heroic age. Each has a great shield; we hear of greaves, spear, and plumes, but of no breastplate. It is not fifth-century hoplite armour. The boasting and the rage, too, suggest barbarians rather than true Greek warriors. This is curious. Aeschylus cannot have wished to suggest that in the heroic age Thebes, which he generally calls "Cadmeia" after its Phoenician founder, was more Hellenic than Argos; but one may remember that Tydeus and Capaneus have a bad name in legend, and an expedition like that of Polynîces would attract many dare-devils. Also, it is natural that the defenders should conceive of the attackers as huge and ferocious people. The hero whom I call (l. 459) Îphis' son is in the original "Eteoclus," an Argive champion who must not be confused with Eteocles of Thebes. See note on p. 87.

P. 45, l. 377, Tydeus, an Aetolian hero, small in stature but a desperate and ferocious fighter. His son, Diomêdês, is one of the chief heroes of the *Iliad*.

Proitid gates: The order of these more or less mythical "Seven Gates" varies in different accounts, nor is the same gate generally assigned to the same hero. There was no worship of Eteocles or Polynîces at Thebes, which seems to show that they are merely inventions of the

poets, but Pausanias (ix, 25, 2) was shown the place where the two brothers fell, and it was "near the Neïstan Gate"—which in Aeschylus is the post of Eteoclus. Pausanias was shown three gates, but these belonged to the city of Thebes. In Aeschylus the fight is for the fort or citadel, which, like Tiryns or Mycenae, would at most have one heavily defended main gate and a postern. Professor Robert suggests that originally the main entrance to the citadel may have led into a long narrow passage, as at Tiryns, and that this had seven successive barriers across it.

P. 45, l. 378, The prophet: Amphiaraüs. See below, p. 87, l. 568.

P. 47, l. 412, A dragon-child: Cadmus, having killed the dragon, sowed its teeth in the earth, and they grew up as armed men. Most of them were killed fighting one another.

P. 46 ff., l. 407 ff., The Theban champions: Melanippus was a hero really worshipped in Thebes; we hear from Herodotus that Cleisthenês, tyrant of Sikyon, wishing to reduce the influence of Argos in his city, brought the bones, or at least the worship, of Melanippus into Sikyon. This drove out his enemy Adrastus! One story tells that he and Tydeus wounded each other mortally, and that Tydeus, getting hold of his enemy's head, tried to eat his brains—possibly a remnant of some practice of the savage pre-Hellenic Aetolians. Megareus also had some roots in Thebes: one story makes him give his life in sacrifice for the city. Sophocles, *Antigonê*, 1303. The rest of the six Theban champions are shadowy figures.

Of the assailants, the gigantic Capaneus (the name suggested καπνός "smoke") is chiefly known for his death by the thunderbolt: in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* his wife Euadnê throws herself on his pyre. Hippomedon and Parthenopaios are chiefly known from this legend; Amphiaraüs was a great prophet whose temple, on the borders of Attica and Boeotia, was important in the Peloponnesian War. "Eteoclus", son of Îphis of Argos, is a curious figure, originally no doubt identical with Eteocles, though here differentiated into an enemy, while in Euripides' account of the battle Adrastus takes his place and Eteoclus disappears. These doublet-names constitute a well-known problem: we have Eteoclus against Eteocles, Teucros against the Teucroi, Aeneas against the Aeniânes, and so on. To avoid confusion I have substituted the patronymic "Îphis' son" for the name Eteoclus.

If, as seems pretty certain, Eteocles (l. 282) brings the six champions with him to the citadel, presumably they will have shields of the great Mycenean type, and, since Amphiaraüs is remarkable for having no emblem on his shield, presumably the others have them. Perhaps we may conjecture that Melanippus has Justice (l. 415), Polyphontes Artemis (l. 450), Megareus Fortune (l. 472), Hyperbios Zeus (l. 512), Actôr a hand (l. 554), Lasthenes either an eye or a gate (ll. 623, 621). Eteocles' own emblem is never mentioned: possibly it was a plain K or Θ—for Kadmeia or Thebae—possibly a city wall.

P. 63, l. 776, The Terror, etc.: The Sphinx.

P. 65, l. 804 ff., How, Thebes not safe? etc.: The lines of this scene seem to have become disordered in the MSS. I have taken the re-arrangement that seems to me most probable.

P. 66, l. 829, Their names deep written in their life: See note on l. 1. Eteocles would mean "*True-in-fame*", or "*Famed-as-True*".

P. 66, l. 831, Childless: Another version, followed in some of the lost epics, tells how the Epigoni, or Descendants of the Seven, came later, with Thersandros, son of Polynîces, and did take Thebes, which was then ruled by Laodamas, son of Eteocles. Aeschylus wrote a play on the subject, called *Epigoni*, but we do not know how he treated it.

P. 67, l. 856, The chime: i.e. the rhythmic beating of the breast, or of the breast and head, which was the chief sign of mourning.

P. 67, l. 861, Ismênê and Antigonê: It seems clear that the last scene has been added to the play by some producer under the influence of Sophocles' *Antigone*. That tragedy established a

canonical form of the story, so that everyone who heard of the death of Polynîces expected to hear how Antigonê buried his body in defiance of the rulers of Thebes. Such a version, however, is not consistent with this play, in which Aeschylus insists on the exact equality of fate between the two brothers and the exact fulfilment of the Curse. The Iron has made equal division between the brothers, giving each just enough land for a grave—"And now the immortal Evil hath stayed her hand". There can have been no wrangling about burial rites after that. Much of the antiphonal dirge attributed to the two sisters may well have been composed by Aeschylus for the two divisions of the Chorus; but all that follows the entrance of the Herald at l. 1005 belongs to the later producer.

P. 71, l. 950, Earth's deep treasure under their body lies: Thus they have not only divided their inheritance equally, each having a grave; they are also rich, having all the treasures of the earth —lying beneath them!

P. 73, l. 999, Our Lord, our master Eteocles: This mention of Eteocles alone seems to belong to the later addition.

P. 73, l. 1006, Those who hold the people's sovereignty: Observe, as a point of technique, that the producer has avoided introducing Creon, who is generally essential in the Antigonê story. A new character would be a needless disturbance.

P. 76, l. 1049, Being foully wronged: The only line in which we are told this, except by implication in Polynîces' own speech.

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The line numbers refer to the lines in the original Greek text, not the lines as translated.

Minor punctuation errors corrected.

[The end of *The Seven Against Thebes* by Gilbert Murray]