THE TRAGEDIES OF
ÆSCHYLOS

A New Translation

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY, AND AN APPENDIX OF
RHymED CHORAL ODES

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DEAN OF WELLS

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THE SEVEN WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THEBES.
ARGUMENT.

When Ædipus king of Thebes discovered that he had unknowingly been the murderer of his father, and had lived in incest with his mother, he blinded himself. And his two sons, Eteocles and Polyneikes, wishing to banish the remembrance of these horrors from the eyes of men, at first kept him in confinement. And he, being wroth with them, prayed that they might divide their inheritance with the sword. And they, in fear lest the prayer should be accomplished, agreed to reign in turn, each for a year, and Eteocles, as the elder of the two, took the first turn. But when at the end of the year Polyneikes came to ask for the kingdom, Eteocles refused to give way, and sent him away empty. So Polyneikes went to Argos and married the daughter of Adrastos the king of that country, and gathered together a great army under six great captains, himself coming as the seventh, and led it against Thebes. And so they compassed it about, and at each of the seven gates of the city was stationed one of the divisions of the army.

Note.—The Seven against Thebes appears to have been produced B.C. 47 the year after The Persians.
Dramatis Personae.

Eteocles.

Scout.

Ismene.

Antigone.

Herald.

Chorus of Theban Maidens.
THE SEVEN WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THEBES.

SCENE.—Thebes in front of the Acropolis.

Enter ETEOCLES, and crowd of Theban Citizens.

Eteoc. Ye citizens of Cadmos, it behoves
That one who standeth at the stern of State
Guiding the helm, with eyes un closed in sleep,
Should speak the things that meet occasion's need.
For should we prosper, God gets all the praise:
But if (which God forbid!) disaster falls,
Eteocles, much blame on one head falling,
Would find his name the by-word of the State,¹
Sung in the slanderous ballads of the town;
Yes, and with groanings, which may Zeus the Averter,
True to his name, from us Cadmeians turn!
But now 'tis meet for all, both him who fails
Of full-grown age, and him advanced in years,
Yet boasting still a stalwart strength of frame,
And each in life's full prime, as it is fit,
The State to succour and the altars here
Of these our country's Gods, that never more
Their votive honours cease,—to help our sons,
And Earth, our dearest mother and kind nurse;
For she, when young ye crept her kindly plain,
Bearing the whole charge of your nourishment,
Reared you as denizens that bear the shield,

(1) Probably directed against the tendency of the Athenians, as shown in their treatment of Miltiades, and later in that of Thukydides, to punish their unsuccessful generals, "pour encourager les autres."
That ye should trusty prove in this her need.
And now thus far God turns the scale for us;
For unto us, beleaguered these long days,
War doth in most things with God’s help speed well,
But now, as saith the seer, the augur skilled,¹
Watching with ear and mind, apart from fire,
The birds oracular with mind unerring,
He, lord and master of these prophet-arts,
Says that the great attack of the Achaæans
This very night is talked of, and their plots
Dovised against the town. But ye, haste all
Unto the walls and gateways of the forts;
Rush ye full-armed, and fill the outer space,
And stand upon the platforms of the towers,
And at the entrance of the gates abiding
Be of good cheer, nor fear ye overmuch
The host of aliens. Well will God work all.
And I have sent my scouts and watchers forth,
And trust their errand is no fruitless one.
I shall not, hearing them, be caught with guile.

[Execute Citizens.

Enter one of the Scouts.

Mess. King of Cadmeians, great Eteocles,
I from the army come with tidings clear,
And am myself eye-witness of its acts;
For seven brave warriors, leading arméd bands,
Cutting a bull’s throat o’er a black-rimmed shield,
And dipping in the bull’s blood with their hands,
Swore before Ares, Enyo,² murderous Fear,
That they would bring destruction on our town,
And trample under foot the tower of Cadmos,
Or dying, with their own blood stain our soil;
And they memorials for their sires at home
Placed with their hands upon Adrastos’ car,³

(1) Teiresias, as in Sophocles, (Antig. v. 1006,) sitting, though blind,
and listening, as the birds sit by him, and the flames burn steadily or
fitfully; a various reading gives “apart from sight.”
(2) Enyo, the goddess of war, and companion of Ares.
(3) Amphiaraoe the seer had prophesied that Adrastos alone should
Weeping, but no wail uttering with their lips,
For courage iron-hearted breathed out fire
In manliness unconquered, as when lions
Flash battle from their eyeballs. And report
Of these things does not linger on the way.
I left them casting lots, that each might take,
As the lot fell, his station at the gate.
Wherefore do thou our city's chosen ones
Array with speed at entrance of the gates;
For near already is the Argive host,
Marching through clouds of dust, and whitening foam.
Spots all the plain with drops from horses' mouths.
And thou, as prudent helmsman of the ship,
Guard thou our fortress ere the blasts of Ares
Swoop on it wildly; for there comes the roar
Of the land-wave of armies. And do thou
Seize for these things the swiftest tide and time;
And I, in all that comes, will keep my eye
As faithful sentry; so through speech full clear,
Thou, knowing all things yonder, shalt be safe.

[Exit.]

Etoc. O Zeus and Earth, and all ye guardian Gods!
Thou Curse and strong Erinny's of my sire!
Destroy ye not my city root and branch,
With sore destruction smitten, one whose voice
Is that of Hellas, nor our hearths and homes;¹
Grant that they never hold in yoke of bondage
Our country free, and town of Cadmos named;
But be ye our defence. I deem I speak
Of what concerns us both; for still 'tis true,
A prosperous city honours well the Gods.

[Exit.]

Enter Chorus of Theban Maidens in solemn procession as suppliants.

Chor. I in wild terror utter cries of woe;

return home in safety. On his car, therefore, the other chieftains hung
the clasps, or locks of hair, or other memorials which in the event of
their death were to be taken to their parents.

(1) The Hellenic feeling, such as the Plataeans appealed to in the
An army leaves its camp and is let loose:
Hither the vanguard of the horsemen flows,
And the thick cloud of dust,
That suddenly is seen,
Dumb herald, yet full clear,
Constrains me to believe;
And smitten with the horses' hoofs, the plain
Of this my country rings with noise of war;
It floats and echoes round,
Like voice of mountain torrent dashing down
Resistless in its might.
Ah Gods! Ah Goddesses!
Ward off the coming woe.
With battle-shout that rises o'er the walls,
The host whose shields are white
Marches in full array against our city.
Who then, of all the Gods
Or Goddesses, will come to help and save?
Say, shall I fall before the shrines of Gods?
O blessed Ones firm fixed!
'Tis time to clasp your sacred images.
Why linger we in wailing overmuch?
Hear ye, or hear ye not, the din of shields?
When, if not now, shall we
Engage in prayer with peplos and with boughs?
I hear a mighty sound; it is the din
Not of a single spear.
O Ares! ancient guardian of our land!
What wilt thou do? Wilt thou betray thy land?
O God of golden casque,

Peloponnesian war, (Thuc. iii. 58, 59,) that it was noble and right for Hellenes to destroy a city of the barbarians, but that they should spare one belonging to a people of their own stock.

(1) The characteristic feature of the Argive soldiers was, that they bore a shield painted white, (comp. Sophocles, Antig. v. 114.) The leaders alone appear to have embellished this with devices and mottoes.

(2) In solemn supplications, the liturgies of the ancient world, especially in those to Pallas, the suppliants carried with them in procession the shawl or peplos of the Goddess, and with it enwrap her statue. To carry boughs of trees in the hands was one of the uniform, probably indispensable, accompaniments of such processions.
Look on our city, yea, with favour look,
   The city thou did’st love.
And ye, ye Gods who o’er the city rule,
   Come all of you, come all.
Behold the band of maidens suppliant,
   In fear of bondage foul;
For now around the town
The wave of warriors bearing slopèd crests,
With blasts of Ares rushing, hoarsely sounds:
But thou, O Zeus! true father of us all,
Ward off, ward off our capture by the foe.

STROPH. I.

For Argives now surround the town of Cadmos,
And dread of Ares’ weapons falls on us;
   And, bound to horses’ mouths,
The bits and curbs ring music as of death;
And seven chief rulers of the mighty host,
With warriors’ arms, at each of seven tall gates,
   Spear-armed and harnessed all,
Stand, having cast their lots.

MESOD. 180

And thou, O Zeus-born power in war delighting,
O Pallas! be our city’s saviour now;
   And Thou who curb’st the steed,
Great King of Ocean’s waves,
Poseidon, with thy trident fish-spear armed,¹
Give respite from our troubles, respite give!
And Thou, O Ares, guard the town that takes
Its name from Cadmos old,²
Watch o’er it visibly.

¹ The words recall our thoughts to the original use of the trident, which became afterwards a symbol of Poseidon, as employed by the sailors of Hellas to spear or harpoon the larger fish of the Archipelago. Comp. Pers. v. 426, where the slaughter of a deèeated army is compared to tunny-fishing.
² Cadmos, probably “the man from the East,” the Phoenikian who had founded Thebes, and sown the dragon’s seed, and taught men a Semitic alphabet for the non-Semitic speech of Hellas.
Antistrophe I.

And thou, O Kyris, of our race the mother,  
Ward off these ills, for we are thine by blood:  
To thee in many a prayer,  
With voice that calls upon the Gods we cry,  
And unto thee draw near as suppliants:

And Thou, Lykeian king, Lykeian be,¹  
Foe of our hated foes,  
For this our wailing cry;  
And Thou, O child of Leto, Artemis,  
Make ready now thy bow.

Strophe II.

Ah! ah! I hear a din of chariot wheels  
Around the city walls;  
O Hera great and dread!  
The heavy axles of the chariots groan,  
O Artemis beloved!

And the air maddens with the clash of spears;  
What must our city bear?  
What now shall come on us?  
When will God give the end?

Antistrophe II.

Ah! ah! a voice of stones is falling fast  
On battlements attacked;²  
O Lord, Apollo loved,  
A din of bronze-bound shields is in the gates;  
And oh! that Zeus may give

A faultless issue of this war we wage!  
And Thou, O blessed queen,  
As Guardian Onca known,³  
Save thy seven-gated seat.

¹ Worthy of his name as the Wolf-destroyer, mighty to destroy his foes.  
² Possibly, “from battlements attacked.” In the primitive sieges of Greek warfare stones were used as missiles alike by besieged and besiegers.  
³ The name of Onca belonged especially to the Theban worship of Pallas, and was said to have been of Phoentian origin, introduced by Cadmus. There seems, however, to have been a town Onke in Boeotia, with which the name was doubtless connected.
STROPH. III.
And ye, all-working Gods,
Of either sex divine,
Protectors of our towers,
Give not our city, captured by the spear,
To host of alien speech.¹
Hear ye our maidens; hear,
As is most meet, our prayers with outstretched hands.

ANTISTROPH. III.
O all ye loving Powers,
Compass our State to save;
Show how that State ye love;
Think on our public votive offerings,
And as ye think, oh, help:
Be mindful ye, I pray,
Of all our city’s rites of sacrifice.

Re-enter ETEOCLES.

ETEOCLES. (to the Chorus.) I ask you, O ye brood intolerable,
Is this course best and safest for our city?
Will it give heart to our beleaguered host,
That ye before the forms of guardian Gods
Should wail and howl, ye loathed of the wise;³
Ne’er be it mine, in ill estate or good,
To dwell together with the race of women;
For when they rule, their daring bars approach,
And when they fear, alike to house and State
Comes greater ill: and now with these your rushings
Hither and thither, ye have troubled sore
Our subjects with a coward want of heart;

(1) “Alien,” on account of the difference of dialect between the speech of Argos and that of Boeotia, though both were Hellenic.
(2) The vehemence with which Eteocles reproves the wild frenzied wailing of the Chorus may be taken as an element of the higher culture showing itself in Athenian life, which led Solon to restrain such lamentations by special laws, (Plutarch, Solon, c. 20.) Here, too, we note in Æschylus an echo of the teaching of Epimenides.
And do your best for those our foes without;
And we are harassed by ourselves within.
This comes to one who dwells with woman-kind.
And if there be that will not own my sway,
Or man or woman in their prime, or those
Who can be classed with neither, they shall take
Their trial for their life, nor shall they 'scape
The fate of stoning. Things outdoors are still
The man's to look to: let not woman counsel.
Stay thou within, and do no mischief more.
Hear'st thou, or no? or speak I to the deaf?

STROPH. I.

Chor. Dear son of Ædipus,
I shuddered as I heard the din, the din
Of many a chariot's noise,
When on the axles creaked the whirling wheels,
*And when I heard the sound
*Of fire-wrought curbs within the horses' mouths.

Etoc. What then? Did ever yet the sailor flee
From stern to stem, and find deliverance so,
While his ship laboured in the ocean's wave? 1

ANTISTROPH. I.

Chor. Nay, to the ancient forms
Of mighty Powers I rushed, as trusting Gods;
And when behind the gates
Was heard the crash of fierce and pelting storm,
Then was it, in my fear,
I prayed the Blessed Ones to guard our city.

Etoc. Pray that our towers hold out 'gainst spear of
foes. 2

Chor. Do not the Gods grant these things?

(1) As now the sailor of the Mediterranean turns to the image of his patron saint, so of old he ran in his distress to the figure of his God upon the prow of his ship, (often, as in Acts xxviii. 11, that of the Dioscuri,) and called to it for deliverance, (comp. Jonah i. 8.)

(2) Eteocles seems to wish for a short, plain prayer for deliverance, instead of the cries and supplications and vain repetitions of the Chorus.
Eteoc. Nay, the Gods,
So say they, leave the captured city's walls.  

STROPH. II.

Chor. Ah! never in my life
May all this goodly company of Gods
Depart; nor may I see
This city scene of rushings to and fro,
*And hostile army burning it with fire!
Eteoc. Nay, call not on the Gods with counsel base;
Obedience is the mother of success,
Child strong to save. 'Tis thus the saying runs.

ANTISTROPH. II.

Chor. True is it; but the Gods
Have yet a mightier power, and oftentimes,
In pressure of sore ill,
It raises one perplexed from direst woe,
When dark clouds gather thickly o'er his eyes.
Eteoc. 'Tis work of men to offer sacrifice
And victims to the Gods, when foes press hard;
Thine to be dumb and keep within the house.

STROPH. III.

Chor. 'Tis through the Gods we live
In city unsubdued, and that our towers
Ward off the multitude of jealous foes.
What Power will grudge us this?
Eteoc. I grudge not your devotion to the Gods;
But lest you make my citizens faint-hearted.
Be tranquil, nor to fear's excess give way.

(1) The thought thus expressed was, that the Gods, yielding to the
mightier law of destiny, or in their wrath at the guilt of men, left
the city before its capture. The feeling was all but universal. Its two
representative instances are found in Virgil, Æn. 351—

"Excessere omnes adytis ariesque relictis
Di quibus imperium hoc steterat;"

and the narrative given alike by Tacitus, (Hist. v. 13,) and Josephus
(Bell. Jud. vi. 5, 8,) that the cry "Let us depart hence," was heard at
midnight through the courts of the Temple, before the destruction of
Jerusalem.
ANTISTROPH. III.

Chor. Hearing but now a din
Strange, wildly mingled, I with shrinking fear
Here to our city's high Acropolis,
   Time-hallowed spot, have come
Eteoc. Nay, if ye hear of wounded men or dying,
Bear them not swiftly off with wailing loud;
*For blood of men is Ares' chosen food.¹
Chor. Hark! now I hear the panting of the steeds.
Eteoc. Clear though thou hear, yet hear not overmuch.
Chor. Lo! from its depths the fortress groans, beleaguered.
Eteoc. It is enough that I provide for this.
Chor. I fear: the din increases at the gates.
Eteoc. Be still, say nought of these things in the city.
Chor. O holy Band!² desert ye not our towers.
Eteoc. A curse fall on thee! wilt thou not be still?
Chor. Gods of my city, from the slave's lot save me!
Eteoc. 'Tis thou enslave'st thyself and all thy city.
Chor. Oh, turn thy darts, great Zeus, against our foes!
Eteoc. Oh, Zeus, what race of women thou hast given us!
Chor. A sorry race, like men whose city falls.
Eteoc. What? Cling to these statues, yet speak words of ill?
Chor. Fear hurries on my tongue in want of courage.
Eteoc. Could'st thou but grant one small boon at my prayer!
Chor. Speak it out quickly, and I soon shall know.
Eteoc. Be still, poor fool, and frighten not thy friends.
Chor. Still am I, and with others bear our fate.
Eteoc. These words of thine I much prefer to those:
And further, though no longer at the shrines,
Pray thou for victory, that the Gods fight with us.

¹ Sc., Blood must be shed in war. Ares would not be Ares without it. It is better to take it as it comes.
² Sc., the company of Gods, Pallas, Hera and the others whom the Chorus had invoked.
And when my prayers thou hearest, then do thou
Raise a loud, welcome, holy pean-shout,
The Hellenes' wonted cry at sacrifice;
So cheer thy friends, and check their fear of foes;
And I unto our country's guardian Gods,
Who hold the plain or watch the agora,
The springs of Dirkè, and Ismenos' stream;—
If things go well, and this our city's saved,—
I vow that staining with the blood of sheep
The altar-hearth of Gods, or slaying bulls,
We'll fix our trophies, and our foemen's robes
On the spear's point on consecrated walls,
Before the shrines I'll hang.¹ Pray thou this prayer,
Not weakly wailing, nor with vain wild sobs,
For no whit more thou'llt 'scape thy destined lot:
And I six warriors, with myself as seventh,
Against our foes in full state like their own,
Will station at the seven gates' entrances,
Ere hurrying heralds and swift-rushing words
Come and inflame them in the stress of need. [Exit.

STROPH. I.

Chor. My heart is full of care and knows not sleep,
   By panic fear o'ercome;
   And troubles throng my soul,
   And set a-glow my dread
Of the great host encamped around our walls,
   As when a trembling dove
   Fears, for her callow brood,
The snakes that come, ill mates for her soft nest;
   For some upon our towers
March in full strength of mingled multitude;
   And what will me befall?
And others on our men on either hand
Hurl rugged blocks of stone.

¹ Reference to this custom, which has passed from Pagan temples into Christian churches, is found in the Agamemnon, v. 563. It was connected, of course, with the general practice of offering as ex votos any personal ornaments or clothing as a token of thanksgiving for special mercies.
In every way, ye Zeus-born Gods, defend
The city and the host
That Cadmos claim as sire.

ANTISTROPH. I.

What better land will ye receive for this,
If ye to foes resign
This rich and fertile clime,
And that Dirkaean stream,
Goodliest of fountains by great Poseidon sent,
Who circleteth earth, or those
Who Tethys parent call? 1
And therefore, O ye Gods that guard our city,
Sending on those without
Our towers a woe that robs men of their life,
And makes them lose their shield,
Gain glory for these countrymen of mine;
And take your standing-ground,
As saviours of the city, firm and true,
In answer to our cry
Of wailing and of prayer.

STROPH. II.

For sad it were to hurl to Hades dark
A city of old fame,
The spoil and prey of war,
With foulest shame in dust and ashes laid,
By an Achaean foe at God's decree;
And that our women, old and young alike,
Be dragged away, ah me!
Like horses, by their hair
Their robes torn off from them.
And lo, the city wails, made desolate,
While with confused cry
The wretched prisoners meet doom worse than death.
Ah, at this grievous fate
I shudder ere it comes.

(1) Rivers and streams as the children of Tethys and Okeanos.
Antistrophe. II.

And piteous 'tis for those whose youth is fresh,
    Before the rites that cull
Their fair and first-ripe fruit,
To take a hateful journey from their homes.
Nay, but I say the dead far better fare
Than these, for when a city is subdued
    It bears full many an ill.
This man takes prisoner that,
    Or slays, or burns with fire;
And all the city is defiled with smoke,
    And Ares fans the flame
In wildest rage, and laying many low,
    Tramples with foot unclean
On all men sacred hold.

Strophe. III.

And hollow din is heard throughout the town,
    Hemmed in by net of towers;
And man by man is slaughtered with the spear,
    And cries of bleeding babes,
Of children at the breast,
    Are heard in piteous wail,
And rapine, sister of the plunderer's rush;
    Spoiler with spoiler meets,
And empty-handed empty-handed calls,
    Wishing for share of gain,
Both eager for a portion no whit less,
    For more than equal lot
With what they deem the others' hands have found.

Antistrophe. III.

And all earth's fruits cast wildly on the ground,
    Meeting the cheerless eye
Of frugal housewives, give them pain of heart;
    And many a gift of earth
In formless heaps is whirled
    In waves of nothingness;
And the young maidens know a sorrow new;  
For now the foe prevails,  
And gains rich prize of wretched captive's bed;  
And now their only hope  
Is that the night of death will come at last,  
Their truest, best ally,  
To rescue them from sorrow fraught with tears.

Enter ETEOCLES, followed by his Chief Captains,  
and by the Scout.

Semi-Chor. A. The army scout, so deem I, brings to us,  
Dear friends, some tidings new, with quickest speed  
Plying the nimble axles of his feet.

Semi-Chor. B. Yea, the king's self, the son of Œdipus,  
Is nigh to hear the scout's exact report;  
And haste denies him too an even step.

Mess. I knowing well, will our foes' state report,  
How each his lot hath stationed at the gates.  
At those of Proctos, Tydeus thunders loud,  
And him the prophet suffers not to cross  
Ismenos' fords, the victims boding ill.¹  
And Tydeus, raging eager for the fight,  
Shouts like a serpent in its noon-tide scream,  
And on the prophet, Œcleus' son, heaps shame,  
That he, in coward fear, doth crouch and fawn  
Before the doom and peril of the fight.  
And with such speech he shakes his triple crest,  
O'ershadowing all his helm, and 'neath his shield  
Bells wrought in bronze ring out their chimes of fear;  
And on his shield he bears this proud device,—  
A firmament enchased, all bright with stars;²

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¹ Here, as in v. 571, Tydeus appears as the real leader of the expedition, who had persuaded Adrastos and the other chiefs to join in it, and Amphiarraos, the prophet, the son of Œcleus, as having all along foreseen its disastrous issue. The account of the expedition in the Œdipus at Colonus (1300–1330) may be compared with this.

² The legend of the Medusa's head on the shield of Athena shows the practice of thus decorating shields to have been of remote date. In Homer it does not appear as common, and the account given of the shield of Achilles lays stress upon the work of the artist (Hephaestos) who
And in the midst the full moon's glittering orb,  
Sovran of stars and eye of Night, shines forth.  
And thus exulting in o'er boastful arms,  
By the stream's bank he shouts in lust of war,  
[E'en as a war-horse panting in his strength  
Against the curb that galls him, who at sound  
Of trumpet's clang chafes hotly.] Whom wilt thou  
Set against him? Who is there strong enough  
When the bolts yield, to guard the Proetan gates?  

Eteoc. No fear have I of any man's array;  
Devices have no power to pierce or wound,  
And crest and bells bite not without a spear;  
And for this picture of the heavens at night,  
Of which thou tellest, glittering on his shield,  
*Perchance his madness may a prophet prove;  
For if night fall upon his dying eyes,  
Then for the man who bears that boastful sign  
It may right well be all too truly named,  
And his own pride shall prophet be of ill.  
And against Tydeus, to defend the gates,  
I'll set this valiant son of Astacos;  
Noble is he, and honouring well the throne  
Of Reverence, and hating vaunting speech,  
Slow to all baseness, unattuned to ill:  
And of the dragon-race that Ares spared  
He as a scion grows, a native true,  
E'en Melanippos; Ares soon will test  
His valour in the hazard of the die:  
And kindred Justice sends him forth to war,  
For her that bore him foeman's spear to check.  

Strophe. I.

Chor. May the Gods grant my champion good success!

wrought the shield in relief, not, as here, upon painted insignia. They  
were obviously common in the time of Æschylus.  
(1) The older families of Thebes boasted that they sprung from the sur-  
vivors of the Sparti, who, sprung from the Dragon's teeth, waged deadly  
war against each other, till all but five were slain. The later settlers, who  
were said to have come with Cadmus, stood to these as the "greater" to  
the "lesser gentes" at Rome.
For justly he goes forth
For this our State to fight;
But yet I quake with fear
To see the deaths of those who die for friends.

Mess. Yea, may the Gods give good success to him!
The Electran gates have fallen to Capaneus,
A second giant, taller far than he
Just named, with boast above a mortal's bounds;
And dread his threats against our towers (O Fortune,
Turn them aside!)—for whether God doth will,
Or willeth not, he says that he will sack
The city, nor shall e'en the wrath of Zeus,
On the plain swooping, turn him from his will;
And the dread lightnings and hot thunderbolts
He likens to the heat of noon-day sun.
And his device, the naked form of one
Who bears a torch; and bright the blaze shines forth
And in gold characters he speaks the words,
"The city I will burn." Against this man
Send forth . . . but who will meet him in the fight?
Who, without fear, await this warrior proud?

Eteoc. Herein, too, profit upon profit comes;
And 'gainst the vain and boastful thoughts of men,
Their tongue itself is found accuser true.
Threatening, equipped for work is Capaneus,
Scorning the Gods: and giving speech full play,
And in wild joy, though mortal, vents at Zeus,
High in the heavens, loud-spoken foaming words.
And well I trust on him shall rightly come
Fire-bearing thunder, nothing likened then
To heat of noon-day sun. And so 'gainst him,
Though very bold of speech, a man is set
Of fiery tanner, Polyphontes strong,
A trusty bulwark, by the loving grace
Of guardian Artemis and other Gods.
Describe another, placed at other gates.

(1) So in the Antigone of Sophocles, (v. 134,) Capaneus appears as the special representative of boastful, reckless impiety.
(2) Artemis, as one of the special Deities to whom Thebes was consecrated.
ANTISTROPH. I.

Chor. A curse on him who 'gainst our city boasts!
May thunder smite him down
Before he force his way
Into my home, and drive
Me from my maiden bower with haughty spear!

Mess. And now I'll tell of him who by the gates
Stands next; for to Eteocles, as third,
To march his cohort to Neistian gates,
Leaped the third lot from upturned brazen helm:
And he his mares, in head-gear snorting, whirls,
Full eager at the gates to fall and die;
Their whistling nozzles of barbaric mode,
Are filled with loud blast of the panting nostrils.¹
In no poor fashion is his shield devised;
A full-armed warrior climbs a ladder's rungs,
And mounts his foeman's towers as bent to sack;
And he too cries, in words of written speech,
That "Not E'en Ares from the towers shall drive
Him."

Send thou against him some defender true,
To ward the yoke of bondage from our State.

Eteoc. Such would I send now; by good luck indeed
He has been sent, his vaunting in his deeds,
Megareus, Creon's son, who claims descent
From those as Sparti known, and not by noise
Of neighings loud of warlike steeds dismayed,
Will he the gates abandon, but in death
Will pay our land his nurture's debt in full,²
Or taking two men, and a town to boot,
(That on the shield,) will deck his father's house
With those his trophies. Of another tell
The bragging tale, nor grudge thy words to me.

(1) Apparently an Asiatic invention, to increase the terror of an attack of war-chariots.

(2) The phrase and thought were almost proverbial in Athens. Men, as citizens, were thought of as fed at a common table, bound to contribute their gifts to the common stock. When they offered up their lives in battle, they were giving, as Pericles says, (Thucyd. ii. 43,) their noblest "contribution," paying in full their subscription to the society of which they were members.
Strophe II.

Chor. Him I wish good success,
O guardian of my home, and for his foes
All ill success I pray;
And since against our land their haughty words
With maddened soul they speak,
May Zeus, the sovran judge,
With fiery, hot displeasure look on them!

Mess. Another stands as fourth at gates hard by,
Onca-Athenà’s, with a shout of war,
Hippomedon’s great form and massive limbs;
And as he whirled his orb, his vast shield’s disk,
I shuddered; yea, no idle words I speak.
No cheap and common draughtsman sure was he
Who wrought this cunning ensign on his shield:
Typhon emitting from his lips hot blast
Of darkling smoke, the flickering twin of fire:
And round the belly of the hollow shield
A rim was made with wreaths of twisted snakes.
And he too shouts his war-cry, and in frenzy,
As man possessed by Ares, hastes to battle,
Like Thyiad, darting terror from his eyes.¹
'Gainst such a hero’s might we well may guard;
Already at the gates men brag of rout.

Etoc. First, the great Onca-Pallas, dwelling nigh
Our city’s gates, and hating man’s bold pride,
Shall ward him from her nestlings like a snake
Of venom dread; and next Hyperbios,
The stalwart son of Ænops, has been chosen,
A hero ’gainst this hero, willing found
To try his destiny at Fortune’s best.
No fault has he in form, or heart, or arms;
And Hermes with good reason pairs them off;
For man with man will fight as enemy,
And on their shields they’ll bring opposing Gods;
For this man beareth Typhon, breathing fire,

(1) Thyiad, another name for the Meenads, the frenzied attendants on Dionysos.
And on Hyperbios' shield sits father Zeus,
Full firm, with burning thunderbolt in hand;
And never yet has man seen Zeus, I trow,
O'ercome. Such then the favour of the Gods,
We with the winners, they with losers are: 1
Good reason then the rivals so should fare,
If Zeus than Typhon stronger be in fight,
And to Hyperbios Zeus will saviour prove,
As that device upon his shield presents him.

ANTISTRAT. II.

Chor. Now do I trust that he
Who bears upon his shield the hated form
Of Power whom Earth doth shroud,
Antagonist to Zeus, unloved by men
And by the ageless Gods,
Before those gates of ours
To his own hurt may dash his haughty head.

Mess. So may it be! And now the fifth I tell,
Who the fifth gates, the Northern, occupies,
Hard by Amphion's tomb, the son of Zeus;
And by his spear he swears, (which he is bold
To honour more than God or his own eyes,)
That he will sack the fort of the Cadmeians
With that spear's might. So speaks the offspring fair
Of mother mountain-bred, a stripling hero;
And the soft down is creeping o'er his cheeks,
Youth's growth, and hair that floweth full and thick;
And he with soul, not maiden's like his name, 2
But stern, with flashing eye, is standing there.
Nor stands he at the gate without a vaunt;
For on his brass-wrought buckler, strong defence,
Full-orbed, his body guarding, he the shame
Of this our city bears, the ravenous Sphinx,
With rivets fixed, all burnished and embossed; 3

(1) See, in the legends of Typhon, not he, but Zeus, had proved the conqueror. The warrior, therefore, who chose Typhon for his badge was identifying himself with the losing, not the winning side.
(2) The name, as we are told in v. 543, is Parthenopesos, the maiden-faced.
(3) The Sphinx, besides its general character as an emblem of terror,
And under her she holdeth a Cadmeian,
That so on him most arrows might be shot.
No chance that he will fight a peddling fight,
Nor shame the long, long journey he hath come,
Parthenopæos, in Arcadia born:
This man did Argos welcome as a guest,
And now he pays her for her goodly rearing,
And threatens these our towers with ... God avert it!

Eteoc. Should the Gods give them what they plan 'gainst us,
Then they, with those their godless boastings high,
Would perish shamefully and utterly.
And for this man of Arcady thou tell'st of,
We have a man who boasts not, but his hand
Sees the right thing to do;—Actôr, of him
I named but now the brother,—who no tongue
Divorced from deeds will ever let within
Our gates, to spread and multiply our ills,
Nor him who bears upon his foeman's shield
The image of the hateful venomed beast;
But she without shall blame him as he tries
To take her in, when she beneath our walls
Gets sorely bruised and battered.¹ And herein,
If the Gods will, I prophet true shall prove.

Stroph. III.

Chor. Thy words thrill through my breast;
My hair stands all on end,
To hear the boastings great
Of those who speak great things
Unholy. May the Gods
Destroy them in our land!

Mess. A sixth I tell of, one of noblest mood.
Amphiaraos, seer and warrior famed;
He, stationed at the Homolóian gates,

had, of course, a special meaning as directed to the Thebans. The warrior
who bore it threatened to renew the old days when the monster whom
Oedipus had overcome had laid waste their city.

(1) Sc., the Sphinx on his shield will not be allowed to enter the city.
It will only serve as a mark, attracting men to attack both it and the
warrior who bears it.
Reproves the mighty Tydeus with sharp words
As ‘murderer,’ and ‘troubler of the State,’
‘To Argos teacher of all direst ills,
Erinny’s sumpbour,’ 2 ‘murder’s minister,’
Whose counsels led Adrastos to these ills.
*And at thy brother Polyniakes glancing
With eyes uplifted for his father’s fate,
And ending, twice he syllabled his name, 3
And called him, and thus speaketh with his lips:—
“A goodly deed, and pleasant to the Gods,
Noble for after age to hear and tell,
Thy father’s city and thy country’s Gods
To waste through might of mercenary host!
And how shall Justice stay thy mother’s tears? 4
And how, when conquered, shall thy fatherland,
Laid waste, become a true ally to thee?
As for myself, I shall that land make rich, 5
A prophet buried in a foeman’s soil:
To arms! I look for no inglorious death.”
So spake the prophet, bearing full-orbed shield
Wrought all of bronze, no ensign on that orb.
He wishes to be just, and not to seem, 6

(1) The quarrel between Tydeus and the seer Amphiaraoes had been
already touched upon.
(2) I have used the old English word to express a term of like technical
use in Athenian law processes. As the “sumpbour” called witnesses or
parties to a suit into court, so Tydeus had summoned the Erinny’s to do
her work of destruction.
(3) Sc., so pronounced his name as to emphasize the significance of its
two component parts, as indicating that he who bore it was a man of
much contention.
(4) The words are obscure, but seem to refer to the badge of Polyniikes,
the figure of Justice described in v. 643 as on his shield. How shall
that Justice, the seer asks, console Jocasta for her son’s death? Another
rendering gives,

“And how shall Justice quench a mother’s life?”
the “mother” being the country against which Polyniikes wars.
(5) The words had a twofold fulfillment, (1) in the burial of Amphiaraoes,
in the Theban soil; and (2) in the honour which accrued to Thebes after
his death, through the fame of the oracle at his shrine.
(6) The passage cannot be passed over without noticing the old tradi-
tion, (Plutarch, Aristides c. 3, ) that when the actor uttered these words, he
and the whole audience looked to Aristeides, surnamed the Just, as
recognising that the words were true of him as they were of no one else.
“Best,” instead of “just,” is, however, a very old various reading.
Reaping full harvest from his soul's deep furrows,
Whence ever new and noble counsels spring.

690
I bid thee send defenders wise and brave
Against him. Dread is he who fears the Gods.

Eteoc. Fie on the chance that brings the righteous man
Close-mated with the ungodly! In all deeds
Nought is there worse than evil fellowship,
A crop men should not reap. Death still is found
The harvest of the field of frenzied pride;
For either hath the godly man embarked
With sailors hot in insolence and guile, ¹
And perished with the race the Gods did loathe;
Or just himself, with citizens who wrong
The stranger and are heedless of the Gods,
Falling most justly in the self-same snare,
By God's scourge smitten, shares the common doom.
And thus this seer I speak of, Oeclus' son,
Righteous, and wise, and good, and reverent,
A mighty prophet, mingling with the godless
*And men full bold of speech in reason's spite,
Who take long march to reach a far-off city,²
If Zeus so will, shall be hurled down with them.
And he, I trow, shall not draw nigh the gates,
Not through faint-heart or any vice of mood,
But well he knows this war shall bring his death,
If any fruit is found in Loxias' words;
And He or holds his speech or speaks in season.
Yet against him the hero Lasthenes,
A foe of strangers, at the gates we'll set;
Old is his mind, his body in its prime,
His eye swift-footed, and his hand not slow
To grasp the spear from 'neath the shield laid bare:³
Yet 'tis by God's gift men must win success.

(1) If the former reference to Aristeides be admitted, we can scarcely
avoid seeing in this passage an allusion to Themistocles, as one with
whose reckless and democratic policy it was dangerous for the more con-
servative leader to associate himself.
(2) The far-off city, not of Thebes, but Hades. In the legend of Thebes,
the earth opened and swallowed up Amphiaraos, as in 583.
(3) The short spear was usually carried under the shelter of the shield;
when brought into action, it was, of course, laid bare.
Antistrophe. III.

Chor. Hear, O ye Gods! our prayers,
    Our just entreaties grant,
    That so our State be blest.
    Turn ye the toils of war
    Upon the invading host.
    Outside the walls may Zeus
    With thunder smite them low!

Mess. The seventh chief then who at the seventh gate
stands,
Thine own, own brother, I will speak of now,
What curses on our State he pours, and prays
That he the towers ascending, and proclaimed
By herald's voice to all the territory,
And shouting out the captor's pean-cry,
May so fight with thee, slay, and with thee die;
Or driving thee alive, who did' st him wrong,
May on thee a vengeance wreak like in kind.
So clamours he, and bids his father's Gods,
His country's guardians, look upon his prayers,
[And grant them all. So Polyneikes prays.]
And he a new and well-wrought shield doth bear,
And twofold sign upon it riveted;
For there a woman with a stately tread
Leads one who seems a warrior wrought in gold:
Justice she calls herself, and thus she speaks:
"I WILL BRING BACK THIS MAN, AND HE SHALL HAVE
THE CITY AND HIS FATHER'S DWELLING-PLACE."
Such are the signs and mottoes of those men;
And thou, know well whom thou dost mean to send:
So thou shalt never blame my heraldings;
And thou thyself know how to steer the State.

Eteoc. O frenzy-stricken, hated sore of Gods!
O woe-fraught race (my race!) of OEdipus!
Ah me! my father's curse is now fulfilled;
But neither is it meet to weep or wail,
Lest cry more grievous on the issue come.
Of Polyneikes, name and omen true,
We soon shall know what way his badge shall end,
Whether his gold-wrought letters shall restore him,
His shield's great swelling words with frenzied soul.
An if great Justice, Zeus's virgin child,
Ruled o'er his words and acts, this might have been;
But neither when he left his mother's womb,
Nor in his youth, nor yet in ripening age,
Nor when his beard was gathered on his chin,
Did Justice count him meet for fellowship;
Nor do I think that she befriends him now
In this great outrage on his father's land.
Yea, justly Justice would as falsely named
Be known, if she with one all-daring joined.
In this I trust, and I myself will face him:
Who else could claim a greater right than I?
Brother with brother fighting, king with king,
And foe with foe, I'll stand. Come, quickly fetch
My greaves that guard against the spear and stones.

Chor. Nay, dearest friend, thou son of Oedipus,
Be ye not like to him with that ill name.
It is enough Cadmeian men should fight
Against the Argives. That blood may be cleansed;
But death so murderous of two brothers born,
This is pollution that will ne'er wax old.

Etoc. If a man must bear evil, let him still
Be without shame—sole profit that in death.
[No glory comes of base and evil deeds].

Chor. What dost thou crave, my son? Let no ill fate,
Frenzied and hot for war,
Carry thee headlong on;
Check the first onset of an evil lust.

Etoc. Since God so hotly urges on the matter,
Let all of Laios' race whom Phoebos hates,
Drift with the breeze upon Cokytos' wave.

Chor. An over-fierce and passionate desire
Stirs thee and pricks thee on
To work an evil deed
Of guilt of blood thy hand should never shed.
Eteoc. Nay, my dear father's curse, in full-grown hate,
Dwells on dry eyes that cannot shed a tear,
And speaks of gain before the after-doom.

Chor. But be not thou urged on. The coward's name
Shall not be thine, for thou
Hast ordered well thy life.
Dark-robbed Erinny enters not the house,
When at men's hands the Gods
Accept their sacrifice.

Eteoc. As for the Gods, they scorned us long ago,
And smile but on the offering of our deaths;
What boots it then on death's doom still to fawn?

Chor. Nay do it now, while yet 'tis in thy power;¹
Perchance may fortune shift
With tardy change of mood,
And come with spirit less implacable:
At present fierce and hot
She waxeth in her rage.

Eteoc. Yea, fierce and hot the Curse of Oædipus;
And all too true the visions of the night,
My father's treasured store distributing.

Chor. Yield to us women, though thou lov'st us not.
Eteoc. Speak then what may be done, and be not long. ⁷¹¹
Chor. Tread not the path that to the seventh gate leads.
Eteoc. Thou shalt not blunt my sharpened edge with words.

Chor. And yet God loves the victory that submits.²
Eteoc. That word a warrior must not tolerate.
Chor. Dost thou then haste thy brother's blood to shed?
Eteoc. If the Gods grant it, he shall not 'scape harm.

[Exeunt Eteocles, Scout, and Captains.

Strophe I.

Chor. I fear her might who doth this whole house wreck,

¹ Perhaps "since death is nigh at hand."
² The Chorus means that if Eteocles would allow himself to be overcome in this contest of his wishes with their prayers, the Gods would honour that defeat as if it were indeed a victory. He makes answer that the very thought of being overcome implied in the word "defeat" in anything is one which the true warrior cannot bear.
The Goddess unlike Gods,
The prophetess of evil all too true,
The Erinnys of thy father's imprecations,
Lest she fulfil the curse,
O'er-wrathful, frenzy-fraught,
The curse of Oedipus,
Laying his children low.
This Strife doth urge them on.

Antistrophe. I.

And now a stranger doth divide the lots,
The Chalyb,¹ from the Skythians emigrant,
The stern distributor of heaped-up wealth,
The iron that hath assigned them just so much
Of land as theirs, no more,
As may suffice for them
As grave when they shall fall,
Without or part or lot
In the broad-spreading plains.

Strophe. II.

And when the hands of each
The other's blood have shed,
And the earth's dust shall drink
The black and clotted gore,
Who then can purify?
Who cleanse them from the guilt?
Ah me! O sorrows new,
That mingle with the old woes of our house!

Antistrophe. II.

I tell the ancient tale
Of sin that brought swift doom;
Till the third age it waits,
Since Laios, heeding not
Apollo's oracle,
(Though spoken thrice to him

(1) The 'Chalyb stranger' is the sword, thought of as taking its name from the Skythian tribe of the Chalybes, between Colchis and Armenia, and passing through the Thrakians into Greece.
In Pythia's central shrine,)
That dying childless, he should save the State.

Strophe III.

But he by those he loved full rashly swayed,
Doom for himself begat,
His murderer (Œdipus,
Who dared to sow in field
Unholy, whence he sprang,
A root of blood-flecked woe.
Madness together brought
Bridegroom and bride accursed.

Antistrophe III.

And now the sea of evils pours its flood:
This falling, others rise,
As with a triple crest,
Which round the State's stern roars:
And but a bulwark slight,
A tower's poor breadth, defends:
And lest the city fall
With its two kings I fear.

Strophe IV.

*And that atonement of the ancient curse
Receives fulfilment now; ¹
*And when they come, the evils pass not by.
E'en so the wealth of sea-adventurers,
When heaped up in excess,
Leads but to cargo from the stern thrown out.²

Antistrophe IV.

For whom of mortals did the Gods so praise,
And fellow-worshippers,
*And race of those who feed their flocks and herds,³

¹ The two brothers, i.e., are set at one again, but it is not in the bonds of friendship, but in those of death.
² The image meets us again in Agam. 980. Here the thought is, that a man too prosperous is like a ship too heavily freighted. He must part with a portion of his possession in order to save the rest. Not to part with them leads, when the storm rages, to an enforced abandonment and utter loss.
³ Another reading gives —
"And race of those who crowd the Agora."
As much as then they honoured Oedipus,
Who from our country's bounds
Had driven the monster, murderess of men?

Strophe. V.

And when too late he knew,
Ah, miserable man! his wedlock dire,
Vexed sore with that dread shame,
With heart to madness driven,
He wrought a two-fold ill,
And with the hand that smote his father's life
*Blinded the eyes that might his sons have seen.

Antistroph. V.

And with a mind provoked
By nurture scant, he at his sons did hurl¹
His curses dire and dark,
(Ah, bitter curses those!)
That they with spear in hand
Should one day share their father's wealth; and I
Fear now lest swift Erinnyes should fulfil them.

Enter Messenger.

Mess. Be of good cheer, ye maidens, mother-reared;
Our city has escaped the yoke of bondage,
The boasts of mighty men are fallen low,
And this our city in calm waters floats,
And, though by waves lashed, springs not any leak.
Our fortress still holds out, and we did guard
The gates with champions who redeemed their pledge.
In the six gateways almost all goes well;
But the seventh gate did King Apollo choose,²

(1) This seems to have been one form of the legends as to the cause of the curse which Oedipus had launched upon his sons. An alternative rendering is——

   And with a mind enrag'd
   At thought of what they were whom he had reared,
   He at his sons did hurl
   His curses dire and dark.

(2) Sc., when Eteocles fell, Apollo took his place at the seventh gate, and turned the tide of war in favour of the Thebans.
Seventh mighty chief, avenging Laios' want
Of counsel on the sons of Ædipus.

Chor. What new disaster happens to our city?¹

Mess. The city's saved, but both the royal brothers, . . .

Chor. Who? and what of them? I'm distraught with fear.

Mess. Be calm, and hear: the sons of Ædipus, . . . .

Chor. Oh wretched me! a prophet I of ill!

Mess. Slain by each other, earth has drunk their blood.

Chor. Came they to that? 'Tis dire; yet tell it me.

Mess. Too true, by brother's hand our chiefs are slain.

Chor. What, did the brother's hands the brother slay?

Mess. No doubt is there that they are laid in dust.

Chor. Thus was there then a common fate for both?

Mess. *Yea, it lays low the whole ill-fated race.

Chor. These things give cause for gladness and for tears,

Seeing that our city prospers, and our lords,
The generals twain, with well-wrought Skythian steel,
Have shared between them all their store of goods,
And now shall have their portion in a grave,
Borne on, as spake their father's grievous curse.²

Mess. [The city's saved, but of the brother-kings
The earth has drunk the blood, each slain by each.]

Chor. Great Zeus! and ye, O Gods!

Guardians of this our town,
Who save in very deed
The towers of Cadmos old,
Shall I rejoice and shout
Over the happy chance
That frees our State from harm;
Or weep that ill-starred pair,

The war-chiefs, childless and most miserable,
Who, true to that ill name
Of Polyneikes, died in impious mood,
Contending overmuch?

(1) I follow in this dialogue the arrangement which Paley adopts from Hermann.
(2) There seems an intentional ambiguity. They are "borne on," but it is as the corpses of the dead are borne to the sepulchre.
Strophe.

Oh dark, and all too true
That curse of Œdipus and all his race,1
An evil chill is falling on my heart,
And, like a Thyiad wild,
Over his grave I sing a dirge of grief,
Hearing the dead have died by evil fate,
Each in foul bloodshed steeped;
Ah me! Ill-omened is the spear's accord.2

Antistrophe.

It hath wrought out its end,
And hath not failed, that prayer the father poured;
And Laios' reckless counsels work till now:
I fear me for the State;
The oracles have not yet lost their edge;
O men of many sorrows, ye have wrought
This deed incredible;
Not now in word come woes most lamentable.

[As the Chorus are speaking, the bodies of Eteocles and Polyneices are brought in solemn procession by the Theban Citizens.

Eode.

Yea, it is all too clear,
The herald's tale of woe comes full in sight;
Twofold our cares, twin evils born of pride,
Murderous, with double doom,
Wrought unto full completeness all these ills.
What shall I say? What else
Are they than woes that make this house their home?
But oh! my friends, ply, ply with swift, strong gale,
That even stroke of hands upon your head.3

(1) Not here the curse uttered by Œdipus, but that which rested on him and all his kin. There is possibly an allusion to the curse which Pelops is said to have uttered against Laios when he stole his son Chrysippus. Comp. v. 837.
(2) As in v. 763, we read of the brothers as made one in death, so now of the concord which is wrought out by conflict, the concord, i.e., of the grave.
(3) The Chorus are called on to change their character, and to pass
THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES. 79

In funeral order, such as evermore
O'er Acheron sends on
*That bark of State, dark-rigged, accursed its voyage,
Which nor Apollo visits nor the sun,¹
On to the shore unseen,
The resting-place of all.

[ISMENE and ANTIGONE are seen approaching in mourning garments, followed by a procession of women wailing and lamenting.]

For see, they come to bitter deed called forth,
Ismene and the maid Antigone,
To wail their brothers' fall;
With little doubt I deem,
That they will pour from fond, deep-bosomed breasts
A worthy strain of grief:
But it is meet that we,
Before we hear their cry,
Should utter the harsh hymn Erinny's loves,
And sing to Hades dark
The Paeon of distress.

O ye, most evil-fated in your kin,
Of all who gird their robes with maiden's band,
I weep and wail, and feigning know I none,
That I should fail to speak
My sorrow from my heart.

STRPH. I.

Semi-Chor. A. Alas! alas!
Men of stern mood, who would not list to friends,
Unwearied in all ills,

from the attitude of suppliants, with outstretched arms, to that of mourners at a funeral, beating on their breasts. But, perhaps, the call is addressed to the mourners who are seen approaching with Ismene and Antigone.

(1) The thought is drawn from the theoris or pilgrim-ship, which went with snow-white sails, and accompanied by joyful psalms, on a solemn mission from Athens to Delos. In contrast with this type of joy, Eschylus draws the picture of the boat of Charon, which passes over the gloomy pool accompanied by the sighs and gestures of bitter lamentation. So, in the old Attic legend, the ship that annually carried seven youths and maidens to the Minotaur of Crete was conspicuous for its black sails.
Seizing your father's house, O wretched ones
   With the spear's murderous point.
_Semi-Chor. B._ Yea, wretched they who found a
   wretched doom,
   With havoc of the house.

_Antistrophe. I._

_Semi-Chor. A._ Alas! alas!
Ye who laid low the ancient walls of home,
   On sovereignty, ill won,
Your eyes have looked, and ye at last are brought
   To concord by the sword.
_Semi-Chor. B._ Yea, of a truth, the curse of ÕEdipus 980
   Erinnys dread fulfilts.

_Strophe. II._

_Semi-Chor. A._ Yea, smitten through the heart,
Smitten through sides where flowed the blood of brothers.
   Ah me! ye doomed of God!
   Ah me! the curses dire
Of deaths ye met with each at other's hands!
_Semi-Chor. B._ Thou tell'st of men death-smitten
   through and through,
   Both in their homes and lives,
   With wrath beyond all speech,
      And doom of discord fell,
That sprang from out the curse their father spake.

_Antistrophe. II._

_Semi-Chor. A._ Yea, through the city runs
A wailing cry. The high towers wail aloud;
Wails all the plain that loves her heroes well;
   And to their children’s sons
   The wealth will go for which
The strife of those ill-starred ones brought forth death.
_Semi-Chor. B._ Quick to resent, they shared their for-
   tune so,
   That each like portion won;
   *Nor can their friends regard
Their umpire without blame;
Nor is our voice in thanks to Ares raised.

Semi-Chor. A. By the sword smitten low,
Thus are they now;
By the sword smitten low,
There wait them ... Nay,
Doth one perchance ask what?
Shares in their old ancestral sepulchres.

Semi-Chor. B. * The sorrow of the house is borne to
them
By my heartrending wail.
Mine own the cries I pour;
Mine own the woes I weep,
Bitter and joyless, shedding truest tears
From heart that faileth, even as they fall,
For these two kingly chiefs.

Antistroph. III.

Semi-Chor. A. Yes; one may say of them,
That wretched pair,
That they much ill have wrought
To their own host;
Yea, and to alien ranks
Of many nations fallen in the fray.

Semi-Chor. B. Ah! miserable she who bare those twain,
'Bove all of women born
Who boast a mother's name!
Taking her son, her own,
As spouse, she bare these children, and they both,
By mutual slaughter and by brothers' hands,
Have found their end in death.

Semi-Chor. A. Yes; of the same womb born, and
doomed both,
* Not as friends part, they fell,
In strife to madness pushed
In this their quarrel's end.
Semi-Chor. B. The quarrel now is hushed,
And in the ensanguined earth their lives are blent;
    Full near in blood are they.
    Stern umpire of their strifes
Has been the stranger from beyond the sea,¹
Fresh from the furnace, keen and sharpened steel.
    Stern, too, is Ares found,
    Distributing their goods,
Making their father's curses all too true.

Antistroph. IV.

Semi-Chor. A. At last they have their share, ah,
    wretched ones!
Of burdens sent from God.
And now, beneath them lies
A boundless wealth of——earth.

Semi-Chor. B. O ye who your own race
Have made to burgeon out with many woes!
Over the end at last
The brood of Curses raise
Their shrill, sharp cry of lamentation loud,
The race being put to flight of utmost rout,
    And Até's trophy stands,
    Where in the gates they fell;
And Fate, now both are conquered, rests at last.

Enter Antigone and Ismene, followed by mourning
maiden.²

Ant. Thou wast smitten, and thou smotest.
Ism. Thou did'st slaughter, and wast slaughtered.

(1) The 'Chalyb,' or iron sword, which the Hellenes had imported
from the Skythians. Comp. vv. 70, 86.
(2) The lyrical, operatic character of Greek tragedies has to be borne in
mind as we read passages like that which follows. They we c not meant
to be read. Uttered in a passionate recitativo, accompanied by expres-
sive action, they probably formed a very effective element in the actual
representation of the tragedy. We may look on it as the only extant
specimen of the kind of wailing which was characteristic of Eastern
burials, and which was slowly passing away in Greece under the influence
of a higher culture. The early fondness of Æschylus for a finale of this
nature is seen also in The Persians, and in a more solemn and subdued
Ant. Thou with spear to death did'st smite him.
Ism. Thou with spear to death wast smitten.
Ant. Oh, the woe of all your labours!
Ism. Oh, the woe of all ye suffered!
Ant. Pour the cry of lamentation.
Ism. Pour the tears of bitter weeping.
Ant. There in death thou liest prostrate.
Ism. Having wrought a great destruction.

_Esto._

Ant. Ah! my mind is crazed with wailing.
Ism. Yea, my heart within me groaneth.
Ant. Thou for whom the city weepeth!
Ism. Thou too, doomed to all ill-fortune!
Ant. By a loved hand thou hast perished.
Ism. And a loved form thou hast slaughtered.
Ant. Double woes are ours to tell of.
Ism. Double woes too ours to look on.
Ant. *Twofold sorrows from near kindred.
Ism. *Sisters we by brothers standing.
Ant. Terrible are they to tell of.
Ism. Terrible are they to look on.

Chor. Ah me, thou Destiny,
Giver of evil gifts, and working woe,
And thou dread spectral form of Oedipus,
And swarth Erinnys too,
A mighty one art thou.

Antistrophe.

Ant. Ah me! ah me! woes dread to look on . . .
Ism. Ye showed to me, returned from exile.
Ant. Not, when he had slain, returned he.
Ism. Nay, he, saved from exile, perished.
Ant. Yea, I trow too well, he perished.
Ism. And his brother, too, he murdered.
Ant. Woeful, piteous, are those brothers!

_form, in the Eumenides._ The feeling that there was something barbaric in these outward displays of grief, showed itself alike in the legislation of Solon, and the eloquence of Pericles.
\[ Ism. \] Woeful, piteous, all they suffered!
\[ Ant. \] Woes of kindred wrath enkindling!
\[ Ism. \] Saturate with threefold horrors!
\[ Ant. \] Terrible are they to tell of.
\[ Ism. \] Terrible are they to look on.
\[ _Chor._ \] Ah me, thou Destiny,
\[       \] Giver of evil gifts, and stern of soul,
\[       \] And thou dread spectral form of Ædipus,
\[       \] And swarth Erinnys too,
\[       \] A mighty one art thou.

\[ Epode, \]
\[ Ant. \] Thou, then, by full trial knowest . . .
\[ Ism. \] Thou, too, no whit later learning . . .
\[ Ant. \] When thou cam'st back to this city.¹ . . .
\[ Ism. \] Rival to our chief in warfare.
\[ Ant. \] Woe, alas! for all our troubles!
\[ Ism. \] Woe, alas! for all our evils!
\[ Ant. \] Evils fallen on our houses!
\[ Ism. \] Evils fallen on our country!
\[ Ant. \] And on me before all others . . .
\[ Ism. \] And to me the future waiting . . .
\[ Ant. \] Woe for those two brothers luckless!
\[ Ism. \] King Eteocles, our leader!
\[ Ant. \] Oh, before all others wretched!
\[ Ism. \] . . .
\[ Ant. \] Ah, by Até frenzy-stricken!
\[ Ism. \] Ah, where now shall they be buried?
\[ Ant. \] There where grave is highest honour.
\[ Ism. \] Ah, the woe my father wedded!

\[ Enter a Herald. \]

\[ Her. \] 'Tis mine the judgment and decrees to publish
Of this Cadmeian city's counsellors:
It is decreed Eteocles to honour,
For his goodwill towards this land of ours,

¹ Here, and perhaps throughout, we must think of Antigone as addressing and looking on the corpse of Polyneices, Ismene on that of Eteocles.
THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES.

With seemly burial, such as friend may claim;
For warding off our foes he courted death;
Pure as regards his country’s holy things,
Blameless he died where death the young beseems;
This then I’m ordered to proclaim of him.
But for his brother’s, Polyneikes’ corpse,
To cast it out unburied, prey for dogs,
As working havoc on Cadmeian land,
Unless some God had hindered by the spear
Of this our prince;¹ and he, though dead, shall gain ¹⁰κ
The curse of all his father’s Gods, whom he

[Pointing to Polyneikes.]

With alien host dishonouring, sought to take
Our city. Him by ravenous birds interred
Ingloriously, they sentence to receive
His full deserts; and none may take in hand
To heap up there a tomb, nor honour him
With shrill-voiced wailings; but he still must lie,
Without the meed of burial by his friends.
So do the high Cadmeian powers decree.

Ant. And I those rulers of Cadmeians tell,²
That if no other care to bury him,
I will inter him, facing all the risk,
Burying my brother: nor am I ashamed
To thwart the State in rank disloyalty;
Strange power there is in ties of blood, that we,
Born of woe-laden mother, sire ill-starred,
Are bound by: therefore of thy full free-will,
Share thou, my soul, in woes he did not will,
Thou living, he being dead, with sister’s heart.
And this I say, no wolves with ravening maw,

(1) Perhaps—

"Unless some God had stood against the spear
This chief did wield."

(2) The speech of Antigone becomes the starting-point, in the hands of Sophocles, of the noblest of his tragedies. The denial of burial, it will be remembered, was looked on as not merely an indignity and outrage against the feelings of the living, but as depriving the souls of the dead of all rest and peace. As such it was the punishment of parricides and traitors.
Shall tear his flesh—No! no! let none think that!
For tomb and burial I will scheme for him,
Though I be but weak woman, bringing earth
Within my byssine raiment's fold, and so
Myself will bury him; let no man think
(I say 't again) aught else. Take heart, my soul!
There shall not fail the means effectual.

_Her._ I bid thee not defy the State in this.
_Ant._ I bid thee not proclaim vain words to me.
_Her._ Stern is the people now, with victory flushed.
_Ant._ Stern let them be, he shall not tombless lie.
_Her._ And wilt thou honour whom the State doth loathe?

_Ant._ *Yea, from the Gods he gets an honour due.¹
_Her._ It was not so till he this land attacked.
_Ant._ He, suffering evil, evil would repay.
_Her._ Not against one his arms were turned, but all.
_Ant._ Strife is the last of Gods to end disputes:

Him I will bury; talk no more of it.

_Her._ Choose for thyself then, I forbid the deed.

_Chor._ Alas! alas! alas!
Ye haughty boasters, race-destroying,
Now Fates and now Erinnyes, smiting
The sons of OEdipus, ye slew them,
With a root-and-branch destruction.
What shall I then do, what suffer?
What shall I devise in counsel?
How should I dare nor to weep thee,
Nor escort thee to the burial?
But I tremble and I shrink from
All the terrors which they threatened,
They who are my fellow-townsmen.

(1) The words are obscure enough, the point lying, it may be, in their ambiguity. Antigone here, as in the tragedy of Sophocles, pleads that the Gods have pardoned; they still command and love the reverence for the dead, which she is about to show. The herald catches up her words and takes them in another sense, as though all the honour he had met with from the Gods had been defeat, and death, and shame, as the reward of his sacrilege. Another rendering, however, gives—

"Yes, so the Gods have done with honouring him."
Many mourners thou (looking to the bier of Eteocles) shalt meet with;
But he, lost one, unlamented,
With his sister's wailing only
Passeth. Who with this complieth?

Semi-Chor. A. Let the city doom or not doom
Those who weep for Polyneikes;
We will go, and we will bury,
Maidens we in sad procession;
For the woe to all is common,
And our State with voice uncertain,
Of the claims of Right and Justice;
Hither, thither, shifts its praises.

Semi-Chor. B. We will thus, our chief attending,
Speak, as speaks the State, our praises:
Of the claims of Right and Justice;¹
For next those the Blessed Rulers,
And the strength of Zeus, he chiefly
Saved the city of Cadmeians
From the doom of fell destruction,
From the doom of whelming utter,
In the flood of alien warriors.

[Exeunt Antigone and Semi-Chorus A., following the corpse of Polyneikes; Ismene and Semi-Chorus B. that of Eteocles.

¹ The words are probably a protest against the changeableness of the Athenian demos, as seen especially in their treatment of Aristides.]