

Royalty free

Aeschylus

THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

ETEOCLES

Burghers of Cadmos, timely words beseem
Him at the stern who guards the city's weal,
Guiding the helm with lids unsoothed by sleep;
For, if we prosper, God alone is praised,
But if, which Heaven forfend, mischance befall,
One man, Eteocles, through all the town,
In noiseful rhymes and wailings manifold
Would by the folk be chanted; which may Zeus,
True to his sacred name, Averter, turn
From our Cadmeian city; you meanwhile
It now behoveth--him alike who fails
Of youth's fair prime, and him whose bloom is past,
Yet nursing still his body's stalwart strength,
And each one grown to manhood, as befits--
The State to aid and shrines of native gods,
That ne'er their homes be erased; to aid
Your children too, and this your mother earth,
Beloved nurse, who, while your childish limbs
Crept on her friendly plain, all nurture-toil
Full kindly entertained, and fostered you
Her denizens to be, in strait like this
Shield-bearing champions, trusty in her cause.
And so far, to the present day, in sooth
God in our favour hath inclined the scale;
For unto us, so long beleaguered here,
War prospers in the main, through heaven's high will;--
But now, so speaks the seer, augur divine,
Without fire omens, but in ear and mind
Marking, with faultless skill, presageful birds,--
He, lord of these divining arts, declares
That the prime onset of the Achaian host,
Night-plotted, threatens even now the town;
Haste, to the turrets then and bastion-gates
Rush in full panoply;--the breastwork throng,
Take station on the platforms of the towers,
And, bidding at the outlets of the ports,
Be of good courage, nor this alien swarm
Dread over-much; God will rule all for good.
Myself have scouts sent forth and army spies,
Who, as I trust, no bootless journey make;
And having heard their tidings, in no wise
Shall I by guileful stratagem be caught.