

## INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. THE *Oedipus Tyrannus* is concerned with the fall of the Theban king; the *Coloneus*, with the close of his life; and the *Antigone*, with a later episode in the fortunes of his children. But the order of composition was, *Antigone*, *Tyrannus*, *Coloneus*; and the first was separated from the last by perhaps more than thirty years of the poet's life. The priority of the *Antigone* admits of a probable explanation, which is not without interest. There is some ground for thinking that the subject—though not the treatment—was suggested by Aeschylus.

The sisters Antigone and Ismene are not mentioned by Homer, Hesiod, or Pindar<sup>1</sup>. Antigone's heroism presupposes a legend that burial had been refused to Polyneices. Pindar knows nothing of such a refusal. He speaks of the seven funeral-pyres provided at Thebes for the seven divisions of the Argive army<sup>2</sup>. Similarly Pausanias records a Theban legend that the corpse of Polyneices was burned on the same pyre with that of Eteocles, and that the very flames refused to mingle<sup>3</sup>. The refusal of burial was evidently an Attic addition to the story.

Earliest  
trace of  
the story.

<sup>1</sup> Salustius, in his Argument to this play (p. 5), notices that the fortunes of the sisters were differently related by other writers. Mimnermus (c. 620 B.C.) spoke of Ismene having been slain at Thebes by Tydeus, one of the Argive chiefs. Ion of Chios (c. 450 B.C.) said that both sisters were burned in the Theban temple of Hera by Laodamas, son of Eteocles, when Thebes was taken in the later war of the Epigoni. Here, then, we have an Ionian contemporary of Sophocles who did not know the legend of Antigone's deed,—another indication that the legend was of Attic growth.

<sup>2</sup> Pind. *Ol.* 6. 15; *Nem.* 9. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Paus. 9. 18. 3.