

It served to contrast Theban vindictiveness with Athenian humanity; for it was Theseus who ultimately buried the Argives at Eleusis. If Creon's edict, then, was an Attic invention, it may be conjectured that Antigone's resolve to defy the edict was also the conception of an Attic poet. Aeschylus is the earliest author who refers to the edict against burial, and he is also the first who tells of Antigone's resolve. His Theban trilogy consisted of the *Laius*, the *Oedipus*, and the *Seven against Thebes*<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the last play a herald proclaims an edict just published by the Council of Thebes; sepulture shall be given to Eteocles, but denied to Polyneices. Antigone at once declares her resolve; she will bury Polyneices. The Theban maidens who form the Chorus are divided. One half of their number goes to attend the funeral of Eteocles; the other half accompanies Antigone to her task. There the play ends.

The Aeschylean situation—contrast with the Sophoclean.

§ 2. The situation, as it is thus left by the *Seven against Thebes*, is essentially different from that in the play of Sophocles. The Antigone of Aeschylus is not isolated in her action, but is escorted by a band of maidens who publicly avow their sympathy. Though the herald enters a formal protest, and hints that the rulers are likely to be 'severe,' yet he does not say that death is to be the price of disobedience, nor, indeed, does he specify any penalty. The Chorus represents average civic opinion; and one half of the Chorus openly defies the decree. A plot which began thus could scarcely end in the Council taking the heroine's life. It rather foreshadows a final solution which shall be favourable to her; and we might surmise that, in loosing the knot, Aeschylus would have resorted to a divine mandate or intervention. But the Antigone of Sophocles stands alone; the penalty of a dreadful death is definitely set before her; and, whatever the Thebans may think of Creon's edict, no one dares to utter a word of disapproval. Taking the two primary facts—the veto, and Antigone's resolve—Sophocles has worked in a manner which is characteristically his own.

<sup>1</sup> With regard to this trilogy, see *Introd. to the Oedipus Tyrannus*, p. xvi (2nd ed.).