

THE FRATRICIDAL PRINCES.

A Scene from the "Phænissæ."

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Eteocles, regent of Thebes, who agreed with his brother to keep their afflicted father in confinement and to reign alternately, but who declined to vacate the throne at the expiration of his term.

Polynices, his brother, who, to enforce his rights, has led a foreign army against his native city.

Jocasta, their mother, who had arranged the conference now ending ineffectually.

Eteocles. Mother, a truce to words; they merely waste

The time for deeds, and all thy zeal is vain.

For we shall sign no treaty that denies

My claim to keep the sceptre of this Thebes.

So, waiving admonitions, let me be;

And thou, fare forth beyond the walls, or die.

Polynices. Pray, at whose hands? Who is so proof to steel

That shall draw blade to slay me without scath?

Eteocles. He is not far; see'st not this good right hand?

Polynices. But craven wealth loves life too well to dare.

Eteocles. Why all these legions 'gainst a dastard foe?

Polynices. A prudent leader ranks above a rash.

Eteocles. Immune thou boastest, sheltered by the truce.

Polynices. Once more I claim the sceptre in my turn.

Eteocles. Thy claim I grant not; I shall hold mine own.

Polynices. More than thine own.

Eteocles. I grant it; and now go.

Polynices. O altars of my fathers' gods,

Eteocles Which thou hast come to sack.