

Against the sacred walls of Thebes,  
And urgently besought that they to them would give  
Recruits the most renowned. They willing were  
Such help to give and favour showed as was required.  
But Jove them changed, when once he token gave  
By unpropitious signs. So, when they left  
And still were on their way, they reached in time  
Asopus, thick with reeds and grass-o'ergrown.  
And then it was upon an embassy  
The Achæans Tydeus sent. He went forsooth  
And came upon Cadmeans, quite a throng,  
As festival they held within the halls  
Of brave Eteocles. Though stranger lie,  
And even alone among so many men  
The good knight Tydeus gave no sign of tear;  
But rather challenged he them to contend,  
And overcame them all with ease, so great  
A helpmeet was Minerva fair to him.  
But they, the furious managers of steeds,  
Enraged, with fifty youths in charge, for him  
Returning laid a crafty ambuscade.  
And leaders twain there were, like unto gods,  
Proud Mæon, son of Haemon, and with him  
The son of Antaphon, brave Poluphontes.  
But Tydeus brought upon them bitter death.  
Them all he killed, save only one he let return;  
Since, bowing to the omens of the gods,  
He Mæon homeward sent upon his way.  
Such was Ætolian Tydeus; but the son  
He hath begotten inferior is in war  
To him, however great in council he may be.

Thus spoke he, but brave Diomede said naught,  
Abiding the revered king's rebuke;  
Yet him the son of Capaneus addressed.  
"Lie not, O son of Atreus! knowing well  
How 'tis to tell the truth. We boast, indeed,  
To be of better stuff than were our sires;  
We, too, have ta'en of seven-gated Thebes  
The citadel, trusting Heaven's signs  
As well as promised aid from Jupiter,  
And leading fewer men beneath the walls  
That sacred are to Mars; while they, our sires,  
Have perished aye to violence their own.  
Ne'er place them, then, in equal rank with me."

But looking at him sternly, Diomede thus spoke :