



EVERYMAN, I will go with thee,

and be thy guide,

In thy most need to go by thy side

DEMOSTHENES

Born in the deme of Paeania in Attica,
384 B.C. Entered public life 354 B.C.
Sent as an ambassador. Took poison
to avoid capture after Antipater's
victory at Crannon, 322 B.C.

Demosthenes' Orations

INTRODUCTION BY
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INTRODUCTION

I

THE close of the Peloponnesian War (404 B.C.) left Sparta the predominant power in Greece. It was not until 371 that her armies were overthrown by the Theban Epaminondas at Leuctra. Thebes, however, was reluctant to impose her own hegemony; and the peace of 361, following Mantinea, declared the autonomy of all the mainland cities, an arrangement which was to have grave consequences. Thirteen years before Leuctra, in 384 B.C., Demosthenes was born. He was named after his father, a cutler and cabinet-maker of the deme Paeania. His mother was Cleobule, daughter of Gylon, who was alleged to be of Scythian descent.

It seems that the moral and intellectual qualities of Demosthenes were offset by physical weakness. Aeschines taunts him with having never taken part in sports. Moreover, there have survived, in addition to the *Lives* by Plutarch and others, several copies, evidently authentic, of a statue which was erected in the Agora some fifty years after his death. The literary sources agree in representing Demosthenes as a hard-working, water-drinking, unsociable man. The statues show "a poor, thin figure with lean arms and no muscular development. The face is care-worn and furrowed; there is no geniality, no trace of humour or good nature, as in most Greek portraits; the lower lip is contracted and retreating—a corroboration of the witnesses who tell us of his naturally defective utterance. He looks a disagreeable, painstaking, morose man; nor can we see in his face any clear marks either of the moral greatness which raised him to a foremost place among Greek patriots, or of the intellectual force which made him an orator unsurpassed in the annals of history." ¹

¹ J. P. Mahaffy, *A History of Greek Classical Literature*, vol. ii, part II (p. 92), 1895.

When Demosthenes was seven years old his father died leaving the child with a substantial fortune in the guardianship of two uncles and a family friend. On attaining his majority in 366 the young man claimed his patrimony; but the guardians proved to have been unjust stewards. He had recourse to an action at law, whereby he secured a verdict but only a small fraction of the property. The five speeches¹ composed by the plaintiff on this occasion have survived: they are the first in a series of court speeches which he delivered in person or composed for others at various dates throughout his career.

The orations of Demosthenes fall into three groups, according as they were written (*a*) for delivery in private lawsuits, (*b*) for delivery in public lawsuits, or (*c*) as deliberative, i.e., political, speeches before the Assembly. Those printed in this volume are, with the exception of the *De Corona*,² all of a political nature; and it is therefore with Demosthenes as statesman and deliberative orator that we are here principally concerned. The particular circumstances under which the several orations came to be delivered, as well as the political and military events which helped to frame his policy, are set out in the arguments which introduce each speech and in the Chronological Abstract of Events. We shall, then, make a general survey of the orator's policy and literary characteristics.

The speeches *On the Navy Boards* (354), *For the Megalopolitans* (353), and *On the Liberty of the Rhodians* (351) are described as 'Hellenic' in contrast to those which deal with the relations between Athens and the semi-barbarian state of Macedon. The policy indicated is this: the freedom, the imperial dignity, and the moral greatness of Athens must be maintained at the cost of personal sacrifice and personal danger. Democracy must be supported against despotism, Hellenism against barbarism; and in espousing this cause or

¹ Two against and one in reply to Aphobus (363 B.C.), and two against Onetor (362-361 B.C.).

² This great speech, though delivered before a jury in a public lawsuit, is often treated as political, both on account of its subject-matter and the fact that Demosthenes' refutation of the charge against Ctesiphon takes second place to the orator's review and justification of his own statesmanship and conduct in public life.

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