

## THE ORATION ON THE CHERSONESE

### ARGUMENT

THE Athenians had sent a body of citizens, commanded by Diopithes, to receive allotments of land in the Chersonese, and at the same time to protect the interests of Athens by acting as an army of observation. They soon fell into disputes with the Cardians about the limits of their territory. Philip, who at this time was engaged in a Thracian war, sent assistance to the Cardians; but Diopithes, having collected a troop of mercenaries, kept the field successfully, and, not content with acting on the defensive, carried the war into Thrace, assisted the enemies of Philip, and wrested from him some of his conquests. Philip, who, as we have seen in the last oration, had written before to the Athenians on the subject of Cardia, now wrote them a letter complaining of the conduct of Diopithes, charging them with an infringement of the peace. This letter arrived early in the summer of the year B.C. 342, and an assembly was immediately called to consider what measures should be taken. The Macedonian party were vehement in denouncing Diopithes, and urging his recall. Demosthenes, seeing that Athens, though nominally at peace with Philip, was really defending herself against his aggressions, rose to justify Diopithes, insisted on the necessity, which he had so strongly urged in the first Philippic, of keeping a permanent force on the northern coast, and contended that the army of Diopithes should rather be reinforced than recalled at a time when its presence was peculiarly necessary. He again warns his countrymen of impending danger, and points out the measures which, as men of spirit and prudence, they ought to pursue.

This oration is full of good sense and manly eloquence. It had the success which it deserved. Diopithes was continued in his command; and the exertions of Athens in the next few years had the effect of preserving the Chersonese and the Bosphorus.

Diopithes was father to Menander, the celebrated comic poet, whose plays have been copied by Terence.

It were just, men of Athens, that the orators in your assembly should make no speeches to gratify either friendship or malice, but every one declare what he considers for the best, especially when you are deliberating on public measures of importance. However, since there are persons who are impelled to address you from factious motives, or others which I cannot name, it becomes you, Athenians, the majority laying all else aside, to determine and to do what you find

beneficial to the state. The serious question here is, the position of the Chersonese, and the campaign in Thrace, which Philip has now for upwards of ten months been carrying on; yet most of the speeches have been about Diopithes, his conduct and designs. It seems to me, that on a charge against any of these men, whom according to the laws you may punish when you please, it is in your option either to proceed immediately or at a later time, and needless for me, or for any one, to argue the point strongly: but for the defence of our dominions, which Philip, our standing enemy, and now in great force about the Hellespont, is making haste to conquer, and, if we are once too late, we shall never recover, our duty is to consult and prepare with the utmost speed, and not for clamours and charges about other matters to run off from this.

I wonder at many things which are commonly said here, but I have been particularly surprised, Athenians, at what I lately heard a man declare in the Council,<sup>1</sup> that a statesman's advice should be, either to make war decidedly, or to observe the peace. True; if Philip keeps quiet, neither holding any of our territories contrary to the treaty, nor packing a world of enemies against us, there is nothing to say: peace we must absolutely observe, and I see every readiness on your part. But if the conditions of the peace, which we swore to, are recorded and open to inspection; if it appears that from the beginning (before Diopithes and the settlers,<sup>2</sup> who are accused as authors of the war, ever sailed from Athens) Philip has robbed us of divers territories, of which you still complain in these unrepealed resolutions, and has been all along incessantly gathering the spoil of other nations, Greek and barbarian, for the materials of an attack upon you, what mean they by saying we must have war or

<sup>1</sup> The Council or Senate of Five Hundred, of which Demosthenes became a member when he was thirty-six years of age.

<sup>2</sup> The settlers were citizens sent out to receive parcels of land in some country dependent on Athens, but who still retained rights of Athenian citizenship, whether or not they permanently resided abroad. The word signifies "allotment-holders," or "allottees of lands."

peace? We have no choice in the matter: there remains but one most just and necessary course, which these men purposely overlook. What is it? To defend ourselves against an aggressor. Unless indeed they mean, that, so long as Philip keeps aloof from Attica and Piræus, he neither wrongs you nor commits hostility.<sup>1</sup> But if they put our rights on this principle, and so define the peace, besides that the argument is iniquitous, monstrous, and perilous for Athens, as I imagine is evident to all, it happens also to be inconsistent with their complaint against Diopithes. For why, I wonder, should we give Philip licence to do what he pleases, provided he abstain from Attica, while Diopithes is not suffered even to assist the Thracians, without our saying that he makes war? Here, it will be granted, they are shown in the wrong: but the mercenaries make sad work ravaging the Hellespontine coast, and Diopithes has no right to detain vessels, and we must not allow him! Well; be it so! I am content. Yet I think, if they really give this counsel in good faith, as their object is to disband a force in your service, while they denounce the general who maintains it, they ought likewise to show that Philip's army will be disbanded if you follow their advice. Otherwise, observe, they just bring the country into the same way, through which all our past measures have miscarried. For you surely know that by nothing in the world has Philip beaten us so much as by being earlier in his operations. He with an army always attending him, knowing his own designs, pounces on whom he pleases in a moment: we, when we hear that something is going on, begin to bustle and prepare. Methinks the result is that he very quietly secures what he goes for; we arrive too late, and have incurred all the expense for nothing. Our enmity and our hostile intention we manifest, and get the disgrace of missing the time for action.

<sup>1</sup> Philip sought to conquer Athens in Thrace, as Napoleon to conquer England in Egypt or Portugal. And we shall find that precisely the same arguments were used in our Parliament, to show the necessity of continuing the French war, which Demosthenes here urges to alarm the Athenians against Philip.

Then be sure, Athenians, now, that all the rest is talk and pretence, the real aim and contrivance is, that while you remain at home, and the country has no force abroad, Philip may accomplish what he pleases without interruption. First, consider what is actually going on. Philip is staying with a large army in Thrace, and sending for reinforcements, as eye-witnesses report, from Macedonia and Thessaly. Now, should he wait for the trade-winds, and then march to the siege of Byzantium,<sup>1</sup> think ye the Byzantines would persist in their present folly, and would not invite you and implore your assistance? I don't believe it. No; they will receive any people, even those they distrust more than us, sooner than surrender their city to Philip; unless indeed he is beforehand with them and captures it. If then we are unable to sail northwards, and there be no help at hand, nothing can prevent their destruction. Well! the men are infatuated and besotted. Very likely; yet they must be rescued for all that, because it is good for Athens. And this also is not clear to us, that he will not attack the Chersonese: nay, if we may judge from the letter which he sent us, he says he will chastise the people in the Chersonese. Then if the present army be kept on foot, it will be able to defend that country, and attack some of Philip's dominions; but if it be once disbanded, what shall we do if he march against the Chersonese? Try Diopithes, I suppose. And how will our affairs be bettered? But we shall send succour from Athens. And suppose the winds prevent us? Oh, but he won't come! And who will insure that? Do you mark and consider, men of Athens, the approaching season of the year, against which certain persons desire to get the Hellespont clear of you, and deliver it up to Philip? Suppose he should leave Thrace, and without going near Chersonesus or Byzantium (I beg

<sup>1</sup> Athens and Byzantium had not been on good terms since the Social war. Even at this period the Byzantines looked with more suspicion upon the Athenians than upon Philip. Yet less than a year elapsed before the predictions of Demosthenes were fulfilled. Athens was in alliance with Byzantium, and defending her successfully against Philip.

you also to consider this) he should invade Chalcis or Megara, as he lately did Oreus,<sup>1</sup> think you it is better to resist him here and suffer the war to approach Attica, or to find employment for him yonder? I think the last.

With such facts and arguments before you, so far from disparaging and seeking to disband this army, which Diopithes is endeavouring to organise for Athens, you ought yourselves to provide an additional one, to support him with money and other friendly co-operation. For if Philip were asked, "Which would you prefer, that these soldiers of Diopithes, whatever be their character (I dispute not about that) should thrive and have credit at Athens, and be reinforced with the assistance of the state, or that they should be dispersed and destroyed at the instance of calumniators and accusers?" —I think he would say, the latter. And what Philip would pray to the gods for, certain persons among us are bringing about; and after this you ask how the state is ruined!

I wish, therefore, to examine with freedom our present affairs, to consider how we are dealing with them, and what we are ourselves about. We like not to contribute money, we dare not take the field, we cannot abstain from the public funds, we neither give supplies to Diopithes nor approve what he finds for himself, but grumble and inquire how he got them, and what he intends to do, and the like; and yet, though thus disposed, we are not willing to mind our own business, but with our mouths applaud those who speak worthily of the state, whilst in action we co-operate with their adversaries. You like always to ask the speaker—What must we do? I will ask you this—What must I say? For if you will neither contribute, nor take the field, nor abstain from the public funds, nor give supplies to Diopithes, nor let alone what he finds for himself, nor be content to mind your own business, I have nothing to say. If to these men, so prompt to accuse and calumniate, you already give such a

<sup>1</sup> Oreus of Eubœa was betrayed to Philip not long before this time, as explained in the third Philippic. The designs of Philip on Megara were baffled.

licence, as to hear them complain by anticipation of projects which they impute to Diopithes, what can one say?

But the probable effect of such conduct some of you should hear. I will speak frankly; indeed, I could not speak otherwise. All the generals who have ever sailed from Athens (or let me suffer any penalty) take money from Chians, from Erythræans,<sup>1</sup> from whom they severally can, I mean from the people who dwell in Asia. Those who have one or two galleys take less, those who have a greater fleet, more. And the givers give not, either the small or the larger sums, for nothing (they are not so mad), but by way of bargain, that the merchants who leave their harbours may not be wronged or plundered, that their vessels may be convoyed, or the like. They say they give benevolences:<sup>2</sup> that is the name of the presents. And so Diopithes, having an army, is well aware that all these people will give money: for how else do you suppose that a man who has received nothing from you, and has nothing of his own to pay withal, can maintain his troops? From the skies? Impossible. He goes on with what he collects, begs, or borrows. Therefore they, who accuse him before you, in effect warn all people to give him nothing, as being sure to be punished for his intentions, much more for his acts, either as principal or auxiliary. Hence their clamours—he is preparing a siege! he is giving up the Greeks! So concerned are many of these persons for the Asiatic Greeks: perhaps quicker to feel for strangers than for their country. And this is the meaning of our sending another general to the Hellespont. Why, if Diopithes commits outrage and detains vessels, a small, very small summons, men of Athens, can stop it all; and the laws prescribe this, to impeach the guilty parties, but not to watch them ourselves at a great expense and with a large

<sup>1</sup> Erythræ is a city of Asia Minor.

<sup>2</sup> It is singular that the same name should be given so many centuries after to the illegal contributions which were extorted by some of our English kings from their subjects, under the pretence of their being voluntary gifts. Edward IV. and Henry VII. were most oppressive in this way.

navy, for that were the extreme of madness. Against our enemies, whom we cannot bring under the laws, it is right and needful to maintain troops, and despatch a fleet, and contribute money; but against ourselves a decree, an impeachment, the state-galley,<sup>1</sup> are sufficient. Thus would men of discretion act; malignant and mischievous politicians would proceed as these do. And that certain of these men are thus disposed, bad though it be, is not the worst. For you of the assembly are so minded now that if any one comes forward and says that Diopithes is the author of all your misfortunes, or Chares, or Aristophon, or what citizen he likes to name, you instantly assent and shout approbation; but if one rises to speak the truth—Athenians, you are trifling; of all these misfortunes and troubles Philip is the cause; had he only kept quiet, the state would have had no trouble—you are unable to contradict these statements, yet, methinks, you are annoyed, and feel as if something were lost. The reason is—and pray allow me, when I speak for the best, to speak freely—certain statesmen have long since got you to be severe and terrible in the assemblies, in warlike preparations feeble and contemptible. If the party blamed be one whom you are certain to find within your reach, you say aye, and are content: but if one be accused, whom you cannot punish without vanquishing him by arms, you appear confounded and pained at the exposure. It ought, Athenians, to have been the reverse; your statesmen should have accustomed you to be mild and merciful in the assembly, since there your dealings are with citizens and allies; in warlike preparations they should have shown you to be terrible and severe, since in them the contest is with adversaries and foes. But by excessive coaxing and humouring they have brought you to such a condition, that in the assembly you give yourselves airs and are flattered at hearing nothing but compliments,

<sup>1</sup> The Paralus, or the Salaminia, which were employed for state purposes, and sometimes to fetch home criminals to be tried or punished. Thus the Salaminia was despatched to bring Alcibiades back from Sicily.

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