

ORATION

AGAINST THE GRAIN DEALERS.

1. MANY have come to me, Judges, expressing surprise that I have entered an accusation in the Boulè against the corn dealers, and saying that you, even if you think them ever so guilty, nevertheless think that those who bring charges against them act as sycophants. Accordingly I first wish to show you why I was compelled to accuse them.

2. When the Prytanes reported them to the Boulè, feeling ran so high that some of the speakers said that without a trial they should be handed to the Eleven to be put to death. But I, thinking that it would be a terrible precedent for the Boulè to do this, rose and said that it seemed best to me to try the dealers by law, as I thought that if they had committed a capital crime you no less than we would decide justly, but if they had done nothing wrong they need not have died without a trial.

3. When the Boulè had agreed to this some tried to slander me, saying I made these speeches for the safety of the dealers. Before the Boulè, since the preliminary trial was before them, I made a practical defence. For while the rest were sitting still I got up and accused them, making it clear to all that I had not spoken in their behalf, but had been upholding the established laws.

4. I took up the matter on account of this, fearing the charges. And I think it base to stop until you have voted what you wish.

5. First stand up and tell me whether you are a metic? Yes. Are you a metic on condition of obeying the laws of the city or doing what you please? On condition of obeying. So you think to escape death if you transgress the laws of which the penalty is death? I do not. Tell me then whether you confess that you bought more than the fifty measures of corn which the law allows. I bought it, advised to do so by the officers.

6. If he can show, Judges, that there is a law which permits dealers to buy corn when ordered to do so by the officers, you must acquit them. If not, consign them to punishment. But we will show you the law which forbids any one in the city buying more than fifty measures of corn.

7. This, Judges, ought to end the accusation, since he admits that he bought corn which the law plainly forbids, and you have sworn to give judgment according to law. But that you may be convinced that they lied about the officers I must say something further about them.

8. Since they made the charges against them let us call the officers and question them. Four of them say they know nothing about the matter. Anytus says that last winter when corn was high and the dealers were outbidding and fighting against one another, he counselled them to stop quarrelling, thinking it was advantageous to you who buy from these that they should previously buy it as cheap as possible. For they can sell it not more than an abol dearer.

9. That he did not order them to buy the corn and store it up, but advised them not to fight with each other, I will prove by Anytus, and also that he said these words last year, and they have been proved guilty of engrossing corn this year.

10. You have heard that they did not buy the corn

because they were advised to do so by the officers. And I think if they really are speaking the truth about the corn inspectors they will not be defending themselves, but accusing them. Ought they not to be punished for offences concerning which the law is expressly written—both those who do not obey and those who direct to do what is contrary to them?

11. But I do not think, Judges, that they will resort to this argument. Perhaps they will say, just as they did before the Boulè, that they did it out of good will to the city, that you might buy it as cheaply as possible. I will tell you the greatest and most evident proof they lied.

12. They ought, if they bought the corn for your benefit, to have sold it many days for the same price, until the supply ran out; but in truth they sold it at a drachma dearer, as if they were buying it up by the medinnus. I will prove this to you by witnesses.

13. I think it strange that when there is a tax to pay about which all men will know, they do not wish to do their share and plead poverty, but those offences for which the penalty is death, and in which it was for their interest to escape detection, they say they committed out of good will to you. You all know that it is least fitting for them to make such a defence. For their interests and yours are entirely different. They gain most when some disaster has befallen the city and they sell the corn for a high price.

14. Thus when they see your misfortunes they are glad, so that they often hear of some before other people, and others they make up themselves: either the ships have been destroyed in the Pontus, or have been captured sailing by the Lacedemonians, or that the market is closed, or that the truces are about to be made void; and they have come

to such a pitch of enmity (15) that in these times they plot against you as though they were your enemies. When there chances to be the greatest need of corn they heap it up and refuse to sell, that we may not dispute about the price, but may think ourselves lucky if we manage to buy from them at any price whatever. So although there is peace we are besieged by these men.

16. Long ago the city came to have such an opinion of their evil doings and wickedness, that while for all the other trades you appointed clerks as inspectors, for this traffic alone you appointed corn inspectors; and from many of these you have taken heavy punishment, although they were citizens, because they were not able to stop these practices. Ought not, then, those doing this wrong to receive punishment at your hands when you have killed those not able to restrain it?

17. You ought to know that it is impossible to acquit them. For if you acquit those who confess to making a corner against the merchants you seem to plot against the merchants. If they made some other excuse no one would censure those acquitting them; for in such cases it is at your discretion to believe either way. But now if you set free those who confess that they have broken the law would you not seem to be doing a strange thing?

18. Remember, Judges, that you have already condemned many accused of this crime who brought forward witnesses, as you thought the assertions of the accusers more trustworthy. Would it not be strange if, judging those doing wrong, you were more desirous to take punishment from the guiltless?

19. I think, Judges, that it is plain to all, that cases against these men are of the most general interest to those in the city, that they may learn that you have some mind

about them ; for they will think if you condemn them that they must be more careful in future, whereas if you acquit them you will have voted them every opportunity of doing what they wish.

20. It is necessary to punish them, Judges, not only on account of the crimes which have been committed, but as a precedent for those that will be. For in that case they will only be just enduring. Remember that many in this business have been tried for their life. And so great are their profits from it that they prefer to run in danger of their life every day than to stop getting unlawful gain from you.

21. If they beseech you and entreat you you could not justly pity them, but rather have compassion on the citizens who have been dying with hunger on account of their knavery, and the merchants against whom they combined. These you will rejoice and make more jealous if you take punishment on the dealers. But if not, what opinion do you think they will have when they learn that you let off the retail dealers who themselves confess to plotting against the merchants?

22. I do not think I need say more. About other criminals you must be informed by the accuser, but about the knavery of these men you know everything. If you condemn them you take punishment from them and make corn cheaper ; if you acquit them you make it dearer.

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