

## THE ORATION ON THE DUTIES OF THE STATE

### ARGUMENT

THE object of this Oration is to show the necessity of making a proper application of the public revenue, and compelling every citizen to perform service to the state. With respect to the first point, the advice given in the first and third Olynthiacs is in substance repeated, viz., that the Theoric distributions should be put on a different footing; that the fund should either not be distributed at all, or that every man should accept his share as a remuneration for service in the army and navy, or the discharge of some other duty. This was but a circuitous way of proposing that the law of Eubulus should be repealed. (See the Argument to the first Olynthiac.) It is here further recommended that the duties required by the state should be systematically divided among all classes, and performed with regularity. No specific plan, however, is pointed out.

At what time or on what occasion this speech was delivered, we cannot determine. It is mentioned in the exordium that an assembly of the people was held to consider how certain public moneys should be disposed of. But this gives us no clue to the circumstances. There is no mention of Philip, or of any historical event in connection with the subject. It is stated by the orator that he had discussed the same question before; and perhaps it may be inferred from hence that the present speech was later than the Olynthiacs. Again, it may be presumed to have been earlier than the fourth Philippic, in which Demosthenes appears to have changed or modified his views on the subject of the theoric fund.

In consequence of this uncertainty, commentators are not agreed as to the date of the Oration before us. Pabst and some others think it was spoken soon after the Olynthiacs. Mitford, following Ulpian, places it before all the Philippics. Leland and Francis place it after the Philippics; but there is very little ground for their opinion.

Dionysius makes no mention of this speech in his letter to Ammæus; and some critics have thought it spurious.

WITH respect to the present money and the purpose for which you hold the assembly, men of Athens, it appears to me that two courses are equally easy; either to condemn those who distribute and give away the public funds, to gain their esteem who think the commonwealth is injured by such means or to advocate and recommend the system of allowances, to gratify those who are pressingly in need of them. Both parties praise or blame the practice, not out of regard

to the public interest, but according to their several conditions of indigence or affluence. For my part, I would neither propose that the allowances be discontinued, nor speak against them; yet I advise you to consider and reflect in your minds that this money about which you are deliberating is a trifle, but the usage that grows up with it is important. If you will ordain it so, that your allowances be associated with the performance of duty, so far from injuring you will signally benefit the commonwealth and yourselves. But if for your allowances a festival or any excuse be sufficient, while about your further obligations you will not even hear a word, beware lest, what you now consider a right practice, you may hereafter deem a grievous error.

My opinion is—don't clamour at what I am going to say, but hear and judge—that, as we appointed an assembly for the receiving of money, so should we appoint an assembly for the regulation of duties and the making provision for war; and every man should exhibit not only a willingness to hear the discussion, but a readiness to act, that you may derive your hopes of advantage from yourselves, Athenians, and not be inquiring what this or that person is about. All the revenue of the state, what you now expend out of your private fortunes to no purpose, and what is obtained from your allies, I say you ought to receive, every man his share, those of the military age as pay, those exempt from the roll<sup>1</sup> as inspection-money,<sup>2</sup> or what you please to call it; but you must take the field yourselves, yield that privilege to none; the force of the state must be native, and provided from these resources; that you may want for nothing while you perform your obligations. And the general should command that force so that you, Athenians, may experience not the same

<sup>1</sup> The roll in which were inscribed the names of all citizens qualified to serve in the cavalry or heavy-armed infantry. Men past the military age were exempt.

<sup>2</sup> It would be the duty of these persons who received such fees to inspect the militia roll, see that it was complete, that all the qualified citizens took their turns of service, were properly armed and equipped, etc.

results as at present—you try the generals, and the issue of your affairs is, “ Such a one, the son of such a one, impeached such a one; ” nothing else—but what results?—first, that your allies may be attached to you not by garrisons, but by community of interest; secondly, that your generals may not have mercenaries to plunder the allies, without even seeing the enemy (a course from which the emoluments are theirs in private, while the odium and reproach fall upon the whole country), but have citizens to follow them, and do unto the enemy what they now do unto your friends. Besides, many operations require your presence, and (not to mention the advantage of employing our own army for our own wars) it is necessary also for other purposes. If indeed you were content to be quiet, and not to meddle with the politics of Greece, it would be a different matter: but you assume to take the lead and determine the rights of others, and yet have not provided, nor endeavour to provide for yourselves, a force to guard and maintain that superiority. Whilst you never stirred, whilst you kept entirely aloof, the people of Mitylene have lost their constitution; whilst you never stirred, the Rhodians have lost theirs—our enemies, it may be said—true, men of Athens; but a strife with oligarchies for the principle of government should be considered more deadly than a strife with popular states on any account whatsoever.

But let me return to the point—I say, your duties must be marshalled; there must be the same rule for receiving money and performing what service is required. I have discussed this question with you before, and shown the method of arranging you all, you of the heavy-armed, you of the cavalry, and you that are neither, and how to make a common provision for all. But what has caused me the greatest despondency, I will tell you without reserve. Amid such a number of important and noble objects, no man remembers any of the rest, but all remember the two obols.<sup>1</sup> Yet two

<sup>1</sup> The sum distributed as the price of admittance to the theatres.

obols can never be worth more than two obols; whilst, what I proposed in connection therewith, is worth the treasures of the Persian king—that a state possessing such a force of infantry, such a navy, cavalry, and revenue, should be put in order and preparation.

Why, it may be asked, do I mention these things now? For this reason. There are men shocked at the idea of enlisting all the citizens on hire, whilst the advantage of order and preparation is universally acknowledged. Here then, I say, you should begin, and permit any person that pleases to deliver his opinion upon the subject. For thus it is. If you can be persuaded to believe that now is the time for making arrangements, when you come to want them they will be ready: but if you neglect the present time as unseasonable, you will be compelled to make preparations when you have occasion for their use.

It has been said before now, I believe, Athenians, not by you the multitude, but by persons who would burst if these measures were carried into effect—"What benefit have we got from the harangues of Demosthenes? He comes forward when he likes, he stuffs our ears with declamation, he abuses the present state of things, he praises our forefathers, he excites and puffs up our imaginations, and then sits down." I can only say, could I persuade you to follow some of my counsels, I should confer upon the state such important benefits, as, if I now attempted to describe them, would appear incredible to many, as exceeding possibility. Yet even this I conceive to be no small advantage, if I accustom you to hear the best advice. For it is necessary, O men of Athens, that whosoever desires to render your commonwealth a service, should begin by curing your ears. They are corrupted: so many falsehoods have you been accustomed to hear, anything indeed rather than what is salutary. For instance—let me not be interrupted by clamour, before I have finished—certain persons lately, you know, broke open the treasury: and all the orators cried out that the

democracy was overthrown, the laws were annihilated; or to that effect. Now, ye men of Athens—only see whether I speak truly—the guilty parties committed a crime worthy of death; but the democracy is not overthrown by such means. Again, some oars were stolen: and people clamoured for stripes and torture, saying the democracy was in danger. But what do I say? I agree with them, that the thief merits death; but I deny that the constitution is by such means overturned. How indeed it is in danger of subversion, no man is bold enough to tell you; but I will declare. It is when you, men of Athens, are under bad leading, a helpless multitude, without arms, without order, without unanimity! when neither general nor any other person pays regard to your resolutions, no one will inform you of your errors, or correct them, or endeavour to effect a change. This it is that happens now.

And by Jupiter, O Athenians, another sort of language is current among you, false and most injurious to the constitution; such as this, that your safety lies in the courts of justice, and you must guard the constitution by your votes. It is true, these courts are public tribunals for the decision of your mutual rights; but by arms must your enemies be vanquished, by arms the safety of the constitution must be maintained. Voting will not make your soldiers victorious, but they who by soldiership have overcome the enemy provide you with liberty and security for voting and doing what you please. In arms you should be terrible, in courts of justice humane.

If any one thinks I talk a language above my position, this very quality of the speech is laudable. An oration to be spoken for a state so illustrious, and on affairs so important, should transcend the character of the speaker, whoever he be; it should approximate to your dignity rather than his. Why none of your favourites speak in such a style I will explain to you. The candidates for office and employment go about and cringe to the voting interest, each ambitious to

be created general, not to perform any manlike deed. Or if there be a man capable of noble enterprise, he thinks now that starting with the name and reputation of the state, profiting by the absence of opponents, holding out hopes to you, and nothing else, he shall himself inherit your advantages—which really happens—whereas, if you did everything by yourselves, you would share with the rest, not in the actions only, but also in their results. Your politicians and that class of men, neglecting to give you honest advice, ally themselves to the former class: and as you once had boards for taxes, so now you have boards for politics; an orator presiding, a general under him, and three hundred men to shout on either side; while the rest of you are attached some to one party, some to the other. Accordingly—this is what you get by the system—such and such a person has a brazen statue; here and there is an individual more thriving than the commonwealth: you, the people, sit as witnesses of their good fortune, abandoning to them for an ephemeral indolence your great and glorious heritage of prosperity.

But see how it was in the time of your ancestors; for by domestic (not foreign) examples you may learn your lesson of duty. Themistocles who commanded in the sea-fight at Salamis, and Miltiades who led at Marathon, and many others, who performed services unlike the generals of the present day—assuredly they were not set up in brass nor overvalued by your forefathers, who honoured them, but only as persons on a level with themselves. Your forefathers, O my countrymen, surrendered not their part in any of those glories. There is no man who will attribute the victory of Salamis to Themistocles, but to the Athenians; nor the battle of Marathon to Miltiades, but to the republic. But now people say that Timotheus took Corcyra,<sup>1</sup> and Iphicrates cut off the Spartan division,<sup>2</sup> and Chabrias won the naval

<sup>1</sup> Timotheus brought back Corcyra to the Athenian alliance, B.C. 376. The Lacedæmonians attempted to recover it three years after, but were defeated.

<sup>2</sup> At Lechæum near Corinth. See the first Philippic, p. 148, note 1.

victory at Naxos:<sup>1</sup> for you seem to resign the merit of these actions, by the extravagance of the honours which you have bestowed on their account upon each of the commanders.

So wisely did the Athenians of that day confer political rewards; so improperly do you. But how the rewards of foreigners? To Menon the Pharsalian, who gave twelve talents in money for the war at Eion<sup>2</sup> by Amphipolis, and assisted them with two hundred horsemen of his own retainers, the Athenians then voted not the freedom of their city, but only granted immunity from imposts. And in earlier times to Perdiccas,<sup>3</sup> who reigned in Macedonia during the invasion of the Barbarian—when he had destroyed the Persians who retreated from Plataea after their defeat, and completed the disaster of the king—they voted not the freedom of their city, but only granted immunity from imposts; doubtless esteeming their country to be of high value, honour, and dignity, surpassing all possible obligation. But now, ye men of Athens, ye adopt the vilest of mankind, menials and the sons of menials, to be your citizens, receiving a price as for any other saleable commodity. And you have fallen into such a practice, not because your natures are inferior to your ancestors, but because they were in a condition to think highly of themselves, while from you, men of Athens, this power is taken away. It can never be, methinks, that your spirit is generous and noble while you are engaged

The division of the Lacedæmonian army which Iphicrates defeated, was little more than four hundred men. The fame of the exploit, so disproportioned to the numbers engaged, was owing partly to the great renown of the Spartan infantry, which had not been defeated in a pitched battle for a long period before, and partly to the new kind of troops employed by the Athenian general.

<sup>1</sup> Which annihilated the Spartan navy, B.C. 376. In this battle Phocion first distinguished himself.

<sup>2</sup> Eion is a city on the Strymon below Amphipolis. In the eighth year of the Peloponnesian war, when Brasidas had taken Amphipolis, he sailed down the Strymon to attack Eion, but the town had been put in a posture of defence by Thucydides the historian, who came to its relief with some ships from Thasos. There is no mention in Thucydides of Menon the Pharsalian.

<sup>3</sup> It was Alexander who reigned in Macedonia at this time. This then is either a mistake of the orator, or we may suppose with Lucchesini, that Perdiccas, the son of Alexander, was governor of a principality, and therefore dignified with the kingly title.

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