

of public opinion, when the fickle populace of Athens drifted now hither and then yon, the formal prosecution languished for nearly six years, during which time the arms of Macedon were turned against the Persians. But, when the fortune of war declared for Macedon, Æschines, thinking that his party was strong enough to command a majority in the Assembly, hastened the proceedings against Ctesiphon and, with vindictive hatred, sought to censure and to ruin Demosthenes before any accident of politics could intervene in his favour.

Poor Æschines! Poor dupe of his own malignity! Engineer hoist with his own petard! The blow that he aimed at his great rival recoiled upon himself with mortal force. It was the very prototype, in some ways, of that closing scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, wherein Shylock goes out to face the jeers of the rabble, with his hand to his brow and his heart on fire. But the scene at Athens was no fancy of a dramatist. It was a grim reality.

This proud citizen of Athens, this Æschines, who boasted that he had sat at the tables of princes, that he was the intimate of Philip and of Alexander, that he had been, notwithstanding, a true friend of the State and a lover of the people, this man had stood for hours before the dikasts in the pitiless storm of his opponent's stern logic and resistless rhetoric; had seen all his pretensions scattered to the winds; had heard, and heard proven, that he was no scion of a princely line, but the son of a vile slave, and well for him if he could establish legitimate parentage even from such a source! He had listened to the statement, and could not disprove it, that he had been, indeed, the intimate of Philip and of Alexander, but only the intimate sharer in all their intrigues against the liberty of Greece, only the wretched tool that they had contemptuously used to subserve the most infamous designs against his own country. And when it was all over and when he went forth from that presence a broken and a ruined man, hanging his head for very shame and beating his breast in agony, we scarcely know whether then to admire more the nobility of Demosthenes, who followed his beaten foe and forced silver into his hands, that so he might not eat the bitter bread of beggary in exile, or the magnanimity of this same Æschines

years afterwards acknowledging to his pupils at Rhodes the superior merit of his victor and himself outstripping their rapturous plaudits of Demosthenes' masterpiece by his own fervent, "O, had you been there to hear him!"

To have conquered such a man was surely not the least glory of the world's greatest orator—for this beaten Æschines had a grand soul, after all, and in spite of the mire of the gutter out of which the Democracy of Athens picked him, we can see the sparkle of his native talent. He was a man of talent, but Demosthenes was a man of genius.

Genius, as well as the diamond, has base imitators, and often, in the heat and the glare of the crowded popular assembly—be it ball-room or be it Senate-house—the flash and glitter of the meretricious article pass current with the vulgar and the vain for the imperishable beauty and brilliancy of the true.

Yet even as the diamond itself reveals an added glory through the cunning art of the lapidary, so genius flashes with new splendours from the adventitious aids of time and place and language. And Demosthenes, as an orator, and as the prince of orators, had certainly for the setting of his bejewelled thoughts the fine gold of the most beautiful, the most rich, the most faultless tongue ever used by man. This Greek language that Homer and Plato and Æschylus and Sophocles and Thucydides have made undying, though called dead, was, in the master-grasp of Demosthenes, a thunderbolt that carried ruin and desolation to his foes, and, in the havoc which it wrought, shone with a lurid splendour, lighting up whole landscapes of intrigue, shining down into the depths of every baseness, bringing into startling relief every single line and feature which hypocrisy had masked with friendly darkness. That I do not in the least exaggerate is proven by the panegyrics which the learned in all ages and of every clime have lavished on this marvellous Southern tongue, so well fitted to express the inner life of a people which, more than all others, worshipped the Beautiful in Nature.

Coleridge, with rare felicity, calls Greek "the shrine of the genius of the old world" and further describes it as being "universal as our race; individual as ourselves; of infinite flexibility, of indefatiga-