

It could interfere in any court or assembly at any time¹. This power, undefined and practically boundless, exercised in autocratic fashion, antagonized the younger, radical element in the state, and the downfall of the Areopagus was made certain.

Cimon, son of Miltiades, returning from the Egyptian expedition about 465 B.C. had tried to reverse the decree of Ephialtes². Then Pericles attacked Cimon and he was ostracised 458 B.C. Pericles also obtained the removal of several of the Areopagitic judges³.

Cicero says that although Themistocles was praised and accounted even greater than Solon, he showed

1. Cicero II 420-7, Mich.; Att. Const. ch. 25, 27, 56.
 2. Mich.; Att. Const., ch. 23, 63. 3. Mich.; Att. Const., ch. 27, 114.

ingratitude by attempting to destroy the Areopagus which had helped him about 466 B.C.

By such acts the ancient prerogatives of the court were diminished and it became a court of homicide of definite limits.² Grote says that, 459 B.C., the Areopagus had become an organ of oligarchy which Cimon used as a tool. Pericles finished by depriving it of the censorial power, and all its judicial competence except in regard to homicide. His opponents cited the religious associations of the court, but without avail.³ Care was taken at all times however not to harm the rights eternally secured, by the sanction of

1. Cicero, De Officiis, I. 22. 2. Grote V 216. 3. Curtius, II 425.

religion, to the court as a religious body:

According to Benseles's *ἱστορία* to his edition of Isocrates, Ephialtes and Themistocles were ambitious and need; they knew that they were about to be prosecuted by the Areopagus, and therefore persuaded the city to destroy it.

Just before the blockade of Athens, 402 B.C., the Areopagus was reestablished as a high court, and given extraordinary power to help save the city. The Thirty had removed all authority from the Areopagus, and unwittingly made it popular again. With added dignity it took charge of the new government

in order to secure the accurate observance and preservation of the newly-arranged laws. After the fall of the Thirty the court was again designated as 'guardian of the laws'.²

After the close of the Peloponnesian war, nothing is heard of the Areopagus in political history. It continued its jurisdiction over homicide however in the time of Demosthenes. Having become a court of definite narrow limits, it had no ceased to have influence in the state. Presumably cases of homicide remained under its jurisdiction during the rule of Macedon and Rome. For Rome, as we know, left conquered nations in

¹ Cicero, IV 72.

³ Ulpian, III 75.

² Heuser p 390.

quiet enjoyment of such institutions as did not interfere with the general conduct of their civil affairs.

The court doubtless had a quiet existence, honored by some, hated by others, yet possessing a certain influence over the subjects of the Caesars at Athens. The latest reference to the Areopagus is in the New Testament, where there is recorded the speech of Paul in defense of his faith about 54 A. D.

What became of the court of the Areopagus is a matter of mere conjecture, not history. It disappeared, how or when is impossible to say.

Conclusion.

IV

Its political power lost, the form of government under which it had flourished destroyed, with no legal way to fill the seats made vacant by death, the court itself perished when the last feeble survivor had passed away. For perhaps four hundred ^{years} more than two hundred surely, the highest authority in all matters of life for a great people, the Areopagus fell to the position a court where murderers were tried, and, when the nation died, it lingered (for a little), then disappeared.

Its influence can be traced in the laws of the colonies of Magna Grecia,

and who can say what Roman law owes to the Areopagus? And all the world knows the debt of modern civilization to the code of the Caesars.

The disappearance of the court as an organized body was imperative, but the wisdom of its laws and the greatness of Athens are an enduring monument to the (senate of the) Areopagus, the greatest of ancient tribunals in the greatest of ancient states.

End.

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