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

Cimon, son of Miltiades, returning from the Egyptian expedition about 465 B.C. had tried to reverse the decree of Ephialtes. Then Pericles attacked Cimon and he was ostracized 458 B.C. Pericles also obtained the removal of several of the Areopagite judges.

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

2. Thuc. 4. 104. 3. 1255 c 27, l 14.
ingratitude by attempting to destroy the Archaegus 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. Grote says that 459 B.C., the Archaegus 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. Care was taken at all times however not to harm the rights eternally secured by the sanction of


2 Curtius, II 925.
religion, to the court as a religious body.

According to Bunsen's "Travels to the Emanzipation of Society," Ephialtes and Themistocles were ambitious and need; they knew that they were about to be prosecuted by the Areopagis, and therefore persuaded the city to destroy it just before the blockade of Athens, 403 B.C., the Areopagis was reestablished as a high court, and given extraordinary power to help save the city. The Thirity had removed all authority from the Areopagis, and unswittingly 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-amended laws.
After the fall of the Thirty
the council was again
designated as 'guardian of
the laws'.

After the close of the
Peloponnesian war, nothing
is heard of the Aréopagus
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 jurisdiction
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. Cæcina. 20. 60. 3. Dioc. III. 78.
quiet enjoyment of such institutions 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.

Its political power first, 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 languished (for a little) then disappeared.

Its influence can be traced in the laws of the colonies of Magna Graecia,
and who can say what Roman law owes to the Aesopagus? And all the world knows the debt of modern civilization to the code of the Cæsars.

"The disappearance of the court as an organized body was imperative, but the wisdom of its laws and the greatness of Athens and an enduring monument to the Senate of the Aesopagus, the greatest of ancient tribunals in the greatest of ancient states."

End.

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