The History shows not only a thorough insight into the political ideas of Pericles, but also a sympathy with him, and an admiration for his character, which indicate per­sonal friendship. If, before 431, Thucydides had wished to take a prominent part in the public life of Athens, every­thing was in his favour. But there is no trace of his having done so ; and it is possible that his opportunities in this respect were modified by the necessity of frequent visits to Thrace, where the management of such an important property as the gold mines must have claimed the occasional presence of the proprietor. The manner in which he refers to his personal influence in that region is such as to suggest that he had sometimes resided there (iv. 105. 1). He was at Athens in the spring of 430, when the plague broke out. If his account of the symptoms has not enabled physicians to agree on a diagnosis of the malady, it is at least singularly full and vivid. He had himself been attacked by the plague ; and, as he briefly adds, “he had seen others suffer.” The tenor of his narrative would warrant the inference that he had been one of a few who were active in ministering to the sufferers —in that fearful time when religion and morality lost all control over the despairing population of Athens—when all the ordinary decencies of life were set at nought, and when even the nearest relatives failed in the duties of humanity towards the dying.

The turning-point in the life of Thucydides came in the winter of the year 424. He was then forty-seven (if his birth has been rightly placed in 471), and for the first time he is found holding an official position. He was one of two generals entrusted with the command of the regions towards Thrace (τά έπì Θ*ράκηϛ,* a phrase which denotes the whole Thracian seaboard from Macedonia east­ward to the vicinity of the Thracian Chersonese, though often used with more special reference to the Chalcidic peninsula. One reason why Thucydides had been chosen for the post was the local influence which he possessed among the people of the Thracian seaboard, through his family connexions and his ownership of the gold mines. His colleague in the command was Eucles. About the end of November 424 Eucles was in the city of Amphi­polis, on the river Strymon. That city was not merely more important to Athens than any other place in the region,—it was the stronghold of Athenian power in the north. To guard it with all possible vigilance was a matter of peculiar urgency at that moment. The ablest of Spartan leaders, Brasidas, was then in Thrace with a Peloponnesian army,—not, indeed, close to Amphipolis, but still within a distance which imposed special caution on Athenian officers. He was in the Chalcidic peninsula, where he had already gained rapid success ; and part of the population between that peninsula and Amphipolis was already known to be disaffected to Athens. Under circumstances so suggestive of possible danger, we might have expected that Thucydides, who had seven ships of war with him, would have been near his colleague Eucles, and ready to co-operate with him at a moment’s notice. It appears, however, that, with his ships, he was at the island of Thasos, several miles distant from the Thracian coast. Brasidas, making a forced march from the Chal­cidic peninsula, suddenly appeared before Amphipolis. Eudes sent in all haste for Thucydides, who arrived with his ships from Thasos just in time to beat off the enemy from Eion at the mouth of the Strymon, but not in time to save Amphipolis. Only a few hours before, it had capitulated to Brasidas, who had offered exceptionally favourable terms. The profound vexation and dismay felt at Athens found expression in the punishment of the commander who seemed primarily responsible for so grave a disaster. For the next twenty years—*i.e.,* till 404 —Thucydides was an exile from Athens. It is not im­probable that the charge brought against him was that of treason (*πρoδoσíα),* for which the penalty was death, and that he avoided this penalty by remaining in banish­ment. A special *psephism* is said to have been required before Thucydides could return in 404, which would have been regular if a capital sentence had been on record against him, but not so if he had been merely under sentence of exile. Cleon is said to have been the prime mover in his condemnation; and this is likely enough. Eucles was probably punished also. Grote was the first modern writer to state the reasons for thinking that Thucydides may have been really guilty of culpable negligence on this occasion, and that his punishment— which had usually been viewed as the vindictive act of a reckless democracy—may have been well deserved. Everything turns on the question why he was at Thasos just then, and not at Eion. No one disputes that, after the summons from Eucles, he did all that was possible. It is true that the facts of the situation, so far as we know them, strongly suggest that he ought to have been at Eion, and do not disclose any reason for his being at Thasos. But it is only fair to remember, in a case of this kind, that there may have been other facts which we do not know. There is some presumptive evidence of careless­ness ; but we can hardly say more than that. The absence of Thucydides from the neighbourhood of Amphipolis at that precise juncture may have had some better excuse than now appears.

From 423 to 404 the home of Thucydides was on his property in Thrace, but much of his time appears to have been spent in travel. He visited the countries of the Peloponnesian allies,—recommended to them by his quality as an exile from Athens; and he thus enjoyed the rare advantage of contemplating the great war from a point of view opposite to that at which he had previously been placed. He speaks of the increased leisure which his banishment secured to his study of events. He refers partly, doubtless, to detachment from Athenian politics, partly, also, we may suppose, to the opportunity of visit­ing places signalized by recent events, and of examining their topography in the light of such information as he could collect on the spot. The local knowledge which is often apparent in his Sicilian books may have been acquired at this period. The banishment of Thucydides was the most fortunate event that could have occurred for him and for us, when it enabled him, in this way, to look at his subject all round. If it is always hard for an historian to be impartial, it is especially so for the historian of a great war in which his own country has been one of the combatants. The mind of Thucydides was naturally judicial, and his impartiality—which seems almost super­human by contrast with Xenophon’s *Hellenica—*was in some degree a result of temperament. But it cannot be doubted that the evenness with which he holds the scales was greatly assisted by the experience which, during these years of exile, must have been familiar to him—that of hearing the views and aims of the Peloponnesians set forth by themselves, and of estimating their merits otherwise than would have been easy for an observer in a hostile camp.

His own words make it clear that he returned to Athens, at least for a time, in 404. Classen supposes that his return took place in the autumn of that year, about six months after Athens had surrendered to Lysander, and while the Thirty were still in power. Finding that the rule of the oligarchy was becoming more and more violent, Thucydides again left Athens, and retired to his property in Thrace, where he lived till his death, working at his History. The preponderance of testimony certainly goes