

Many boyhood he  
had a weak voice



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Many men, when a difficult task is put before them, sit down with their arms folded and despair of accomplishing it. Yet the very task,

which through weakness of will they shrink from attempting, is successfully performed by other men, who are not at all superior to them in intellectual or physical power, but are endowed with superior resolution. Hundreds of instances may be brought forward to illustrate the immense power of the will in overcoming obstacles. The biography of almost every eminent man shows that a strong will is as important as a powerful intellect for the achievement of success in life. Out of the large number of instances that suggest themselves, one of the most striking is Demosthenes, the Athenian. In his boyhood he had a weak voice and stammered. These physical defects to an ordinary man would have seemed to be insuperable obstacles in the way of oratorical success. But Demosthenes determined to be a great public speaker, and found a way to overcome the disadvantages under which he laboured.

He cured himself of stammering by speaking with pebbles in his mouth. He strengthened his weak voice by reciting aloud as he ran up steep hills, and by declaiming on the sea-shore, so that the struggle with the roar of the waves might train him to make his voice audible in the tumultuous popular assemblies of Athens. Thus by dint of sturdy determination he found a way to conquer the obstacles that nature had placed in the way of his oratorical career, and the weak-voiced boy became the greatest of Greek orators, perhaps the greatest orator that the world has ever heard. Yet his career, while it exemplifies the power of the human will in overcoming difficulties, at the same time shows that there are limits to its power. Demosthenes also

willed to save the liberties of Athens and Greece, that were threatened by Philip of Macedon.

He devoted to this patriotic work his great genius, and strove with all the strength of his will to accomplish it. But in this he failed, for his untiring energy, political foresight, and eloquence were not equal to the task of rousing his countrymen to a full sense of their perilous position.