

## THE ORATION ON THE LETTER

### ARGUMENT

THE Athenians had been persuaded by the advice of Demosthenes to solicit the aid of Persia. This was accorded, and events had happened on the Propontine coast which made it peculiarly needful. Towards the close of the year B.C. 342 Philip commenced the siege of Selymbria, and early in the following year, that city having been taken, laid siege to Perinthus. But here he met with an obstinate resistance: Perinthus was strong by nature and well fortified. The satraps of Western Asia had supplied it with a stock of provisions and ammunition, and a large body of Greek mercenaries. Byzantium also had sent assistance. Philip, after making great efforts to take Perinthus by storm turned the siege into a blockade, and marched northward against Byzantium. Here he was no more successful than he had been at Perinthus. The Byzantines had well prepared themselves to resist his attack, and received powerful aid not only from their old allies of Cos, Chios, and Rhodes, but also from other parts of Greece, and especially from Athens. In order to reconcile the Byzantines to his countrymen, with whom they had been at variance ever since the Social war, Demosthenes himself undertook a voyage to the Bosphorus. By his exertions an alliance was concluded, and an Athenian fleet was sent under the command of Chares; but Chares being feared and disliked by the Byzantines, they refused to admit him into the town; and afterwards Phocion was despatched with a hundred and twenty ships and a considerable body of troops. The result of these effective measures was, that Philip was baffled in his attempts on both cities, and compelled to raise the siege.

In the meantime important operations had taken place elsewhere. An expedition had been sent under the command of Phocion to Eubœa, of which we have no detailed account, but the result was, that the Macedonian party was overpowered, and Citarchus and Philistides, the partisans of Philip, were expelled from the island. A fleet was then sent by the Athenians into the Pagasæan bay, which took some Thessalian towns, and seized Macedonian merchant-men on the coast. The island of Halonnesus was recovered from Philip by a sudden incursion of the Peparethians. This was revenged by Philip, who ravaged Peparethus, and compelled the islanders to restore their conquest.

Philip saw that peace with Athens could no longer be preserved even in name. Under this conviction, and not, as Mitford says, in alarm at the fourth Philippic, he wrote a letter to the Athenians (the letter which precedes this Oration), in which he reproaches them with the various acts of hostility which they had committed, and concludes with a virtual declaration of war. An assembly was held, at which this letter was read, and Demosthenes is supposed to have delivered the following speech in reply to it. The exact time when the letter was received is uncertain; but it would appear from the internal evidence to have been after the siege of Perinthus had commenced, and before that of Byzantium. The arguments of Philip produced no effect; things had gone too far for reconciliation; and it was not difficult for Demosthenes to obtain a decree for the vigorous prosecution of the war.

It will be seen on a perusal of the letter and answer, that the orator does not attempt to meet the specific charges and complaints of Philip. We have nothing but the old arguments, showing the necessity of succouring Perinthus and Byzantium, as formerly of succouring Olynthus; the real weakness of Philip's empire, and the good chance that by vigorous measures it might be overturned. Mitford considers that it was impossible to confute the reasoning of Philip, and therefore that bold invective was the only thing that remained for the orator. And even Leland says, it would have been difficult to answer the letter particularly, because, though Athens had the better cause, she had committed many irregularities. I cannot agree with this view of the question. If Philip had been the good-natured easy person that Mitford represents, who was raised to the surface of Greek affairs by the merest accidents, and rather had greatness thrust upon him by the opposition of the Athenians, than either sought or desired it himself, then indeed the acts of hostility which Philip complains of might justly be regarded as breaches of good faith, and violations by Athens of the law of nations. But I read the history of the times very differently. Philip had been for many years pursuing his career of conquest steadily and successfully. The Chersonese, Eubœa, all the possessions of the Athenians, their commerce and their corn-trade, were at this time in imminent danger. War between Athens and Macedonia, if not open, was understood: argument was out of the question.

But why should Philip address a letter of complaint to a people so bent on hostilities? Why did the wolf complain of the lamb? An aggressive power has never lacked a pretext for making war in either ancient times or modern. It was a part of Philip's system, not only in his dealings with Athens, but with other states, to make friendly overtures and pacific professions, when he meditated some decisive blow. By this means he gained credit for moderation with neutral states, and he created a party for himself within the state which he had designs upon. He put colourable arguments into the mouths of his adherents, distracted the efforts of the people, and at all events gained time for the prosecution of his schemes. It is argued with much force and justice in the exordium of the Oration on Halonnesus, that the tendency of such correspondence was to deter the adversaries of Philip from expressing their opinions freely.

But for motives of this kind, Philip would hardly have adopted the strain of remonstrance which we read in the Letter. He could never seriously believe that the Athenians would resign their claims on Amphipolis, because it belonged to Macedonia in very early times, or would give up the Persian alliance because it was a disgraceful connection. It should be observed, however, that the Athenians afforded him a handle for using such arguments, by declaiming in the same style themselves when it suited them; and Philip perhaps was pleased at the idea of beating them with their own weapons. The language of the epistle is simple and dignified, and may be regarded as a good specimen of a diplomatic paper. The pith lies in the last clause, which contains a threat of war.

For these reasons it could scarcely have been worth while for the orator to answer every particular charge contained in the Letter. Nor can such omission be deemed an argument against the genuineness of the Oration. This, however, has been doubted by many critics; and it may be allowed that a good part of the speech is not very suitable to the occasion upon which it purports to have been spoken.

*THE LETTER OF PHILIP*

PHILIP to the senate and people of Athens greeting:—

Whereas I have frequently sent ambassadors, that we may abide by our oaths and agreements, and you paid them no regard, I thought proper to write to you concerning the matters in which I consider myself aggrieved. Marvel not at the length of this epistle; for, there being many articles of complaint, it is necessary to explain myself clearly upon all.

First then; after Nicias the herald was snatched from my dominions, you chastised not the culprits, but imprisoned the injured party for ten months; and my letters, of which he was the bearer, you read on the hustings.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, when the Thasians were receiving in their port the Byzantine galleys and all pirates that chose to enter, you took no notice, although the treaty expressly declares that whoever act thus shall be enemies.

Again, about the same time Diopithes made an irruption into my territory, carried off the inhabitants of Crobyle and Tiristasis<sup>2</sup> for slaves, and ravaged the adjacent parts of Thrace; proceeding to such lawless extremities that he seized Amphilochous who came to negotiate about the prisoners, and, after putting on him the hardest durance, took from him a ransom of nine talents. And this he did with the approbation of the people. Howbeit, to offer violence to a herald and ambassadors is considered impious by all nations, and especially by you. Certain it is, when the

<sup>1</sup> It is mentioned by Plutarch that a letter from Philip to his Queen Olympias, which fell into the hands of the Athenians, was returned unopened. But whether it was on this or another occasion, does not appear.

<sup>2</sup> Crobyle must have been in Thrace. Tiristasis is mentioned by Pliny as a place in the Chersonese. Probably then it was near Cardia, not far from the isthmus.

Megarians killed Anthemocritus,<sup>1</sup> your people went so far as to exclude them from the mysteries, and erect a statue before their gates for a monument of the crime. Then is it not shameful that you are seen committing the same offence, for which, when you were the sufferers, you so detested the authors?

Further, Callias<sup>2</sup> your general took all the towns situate in the Pagasæan bay, towns under treaty with you and in alliance with me; and sold all people bound for Macedonia, adjudging them enemies; and on this account you praised him in your decrees. So that I am puzzled to think what worse could happen if you were confessedly at war with me: for when we were in open hostility, you used to send out privateers and sell people sailing to our coast, you assisted my enemies, infested my country.

Yet more; you have carried your animosity and violence so far that you have even sent ambassadors to the Persian, to persuade him to make war against me: a thing which is most surprising: for before he gained Egypt and Phœnicia, you resolved,<sup>3</sup> in case of any aggression on his part, to invite me as well as the other Greeks to oppose him; but now you have such an overflow of malice against me, as to negotiate with him for an offensive alliance. Anciently, as I am informed, your ancestors condemned the Pisistratids for bringing the Persian to invade Greece: yet you are not

<sup>1</sup> The Athenians, having charged the people of Megara with profaning a piece of consecrated ground, sent Anthemocritus to admonish them to desist from the sacrilege. The Megarians put him to death, and drew upon themselves the wrath of their powerful neighbours, who passed the decree of excommunication here referred to. The monument which recorded their impiety was to be seen in the time of Pausanias on the sacred road leading from Athens to Eleusis.

<sup>2</sup> This is the same Callias, ruler of Chalcis, whom we have seen opposing the Athenians at the time when Phocion was sent to assist Plutarch of Eretria.

<sup>3</sup> The time referred to is B.C. 354, when there was a rumour of a Persian invasion, and a proposal at Athens to declare war against Artaxerxes, upon which Demosthenes made the speech *de Symmoriis*. Phœnicia and Egypt were recovered some years after that. The argument of Philip is, that since the recovery of those provinces Persia was more dangerous than before, and therefore it was more disgraceful for a Greek state to be connected with that monarchy.

ashamed of doing the same thing, for which you continue to reproach the tyrants.

In addition to other matters, you write in your decrees, commanding me to let Teres<sup>1</sup> and Cersobleptes rule in Thrace, because they are Athenians. I know nothing of them as being included in the treaty of peace with you, or as inscribed on the pillars, or as being Athenians; I know however that Teres took arms with me against you, and that Cersobleptes was anxious to take the oaths separately to my ambassadors, but was prevented by your generals pronouncing him an enemy of Athens. How can it be equitable or just, when it suits your purpose, to call him an enemy of the state, and when you desire to calumniate me, to declare the same person your citizen—and on the death of Sitalces,<sup>2</sup> to whom you imparted the freedom of your city, to make friendship immediately with his murderer, but on behalf of Cersobleptes to espouse a war with me?—knowing too as you must, that, of the persons who receive such gifts, none have the least regard for your laws or decrees? However—to omit all else and be concise—you bestowed citizenship on Evagoras of Cyprus,<sup>3</sup> and Dionysius of Syracuse,<sup>4</sup> and their descendants. If you can persuade the people who expelled each of those

<sup>1</sup> Of Teres nothing is known but from this passage: he must have been a prince in the interior of Thrace.

<sup>2</sup> It is impossible that this can refer to the Sitalces, King of the Odrysæ, and ally of the Athenians, whose wars and death are related by Thucydides. He fell in a battle with the Triballi, and was succeeded by his nephew Seuthes. It was his son Sadocus, and not he, that was made a citizen of Athens.

<sup>3</sup> Evagoras, the friend of Conon, who assisted the Athenians in the re-establishment of their independence, was made a citizen of Athens, and statues of him and of Conon were placed side by side in the Ceramicus. He aimed at becoming absolute master of Cyprus, and was engaged in a long war against the Persian king, in which he was ultimately overpowered, but, on submission to Artaxerxes, was permitted to rule in Salamis. On his death, B.C. 374, he was succeeded by his son Nicocles, who was father of the Evagoras here referred to.

<sup>4</sup> This refers to the younger Dionysius, twice expelled from Syracuse, first by Dion, B.C. 356, afterwards by Timoleon, B.C. 343. He was in alliance with Sparta, and sent troops to her assistance against Epaminondas. His connection with Athens began after she had made common cause with Sparta; from that time many Athenians resorted to his court, and (among others) Plato is said to have visited him.

princes to reinstate them in their government, then recover Thrace from me, all that Teres and Cersobleptes reigned over. But if against the parties, who mastered Evagoras and Dionysius, you will not utter a word of complaint, and yet continue to annoy me, how can I be wrong in resisting you?

On this head I have many arguments yet remaining, which I purposely omit. But as to the Cardians, I avow myself their auxiliary; for I was allied to them before the peace, and you refused to come to an arbitration, although I made many offers, and they not a few. Surely I should be the basest of men, if, deserting my allies, I paid more regard to you, who have harassed me all along, than to those who have always been my steadfast friends.

Another thing I must not leave unnoticed. You have arrived at such a pitch of arrogance, that, while formerly you did but remonstrate with me on the matters aforesaid, in the recent case, where the Peparethians complained of harsh treatment, you ordered your general to obtain satisfaction from me on their account.<sup>1</sup> Yet I punished them less severely than they deserved. For they in time of peace seized Halonnesus, and would restore neither the place nor the garrison, though I sent many times about them. You objected not to the injury which the Peparethians had done me, but only to their punishment, well knowing that I took the island neither from them nor from you, but from the pirate Sostratus. If now you declare that you gave it up to Sostratus, you acknowledge to having commissioned pirates; but if he got possession against your will, what hardship have you suffered by my taking it and rendering the coast safe for navigators? I had such regard for your state that I offered you the island; yet your orators would not let you accept it, but counselled you to obtain restitution, in order that, if I submitted to your command, I might confess my occupation

<sup>1</sup> Peparethus is in the same group of islands with Halonnesus. Philip's ravaging of Peparethus is spoken of in the Oration for the Crown.

to be unlawful, if I refused to abandon the place, your commonalty might suspect me. Perceiving which, I challenged you to a reference of the question, so that, if it were decided to be mine, the place should be given by me to you, if it were adjudged yours, then I should restore it to the people. This I frequently urged; you would not listen; and the Peparethians seized the island. What then became it me to do? Not to punish the violators of their oaths? not to avenge myself on the perpetrators of these gross outrages? If the island belonged to the Peparethians, what business had Athenians to demand it? If it was yours, why resent you not their unlawful seizure?

To such a degree of enmity have we advanced, that, wishing to pass with my ships into the Hellespont, I was compelled to escort them along the coast through the Chersonese with my army, as your colonists according to the resolution of Polycrates were making war against me, and you were sanctioning it by your decrees, and your general was inviting the Byzantines to join him, and proclaiming everywhere that he had your instructions to commence war on the first opportunity. Notwithstanding these injuries, I refrained from attacking either your fleet or your territory, though I was in a condition to take the greater part, if not all; and I have persisted in offering to submit our mutual complaints to arbitration. Consider now, whether it is fairer to decide by arms or by argument, to pronounce the award yourselves or persuade others to do so: reflect also, how unreasonable it is that Athens should compel Thasians and Maronites to a judicial settlement of their claims to Stryme,<sup>1</sup> yet refuse to determine her disputes with me in the same manner, especially when you know that, if beaten, you will lose nothing, if successful, you will get what is in my possession.

The most unaccountable thing of all, in my opinion, is this

<sup>1</sup> Maronea and Stryme were neighbouring towns, on the coast of Thrace, north-east of the island of Thasos. Stryme was founded by the Thasians, whom the Maronites endeavoured to deprive of their colony.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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