

THE FIRST OLYNTHIAC ORATION

by Demosthenes

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Notes and Introduction by Thomas Leland, D.D.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

To the First Olynthiac Oration

THE former oration (The First Philippic) does not appear to have had any considerable effect. Philip had his creatures in the Athenian assembly, who probably recommended less vigorous measures, and were but too favorably heard. In the meantime, this prince pursued his ambitious designs. When he found himself shut out of Greece, he turned his arms to such remote parts as he might reduce without alarming the states of Greece: and, at the same time, he revenged himself on the Athenians, by making himself master of some places which they laid claim to. At length his success emboldened him to declare those intentions which he had long entertained secretly against the Olynthians.

Olynthus (a city of Thrace, possessed by Greeks originally from Chalcis, a town of Euboea, and colony of Athens) commanded a large tract called the Chalcidian region, in which there were thirty-two cities. It has risen by degrees to such a pitch of grandeur, as to have frequent and remarkable contests both with Athens and Lacedaemon. Nor did the Olynthians show great regard to the friendship of Philip when he first came to the throne, and was taking all measures to secure the possession of it; for they did not scruple to receive two of his brothers by another marriage, who had fled to avoid the effects of his jealousy; and endeavored to conclude an alliance with Athens against him, which he, by secret practices, found means to defeat. But as he was yet scarcely secure on his throne, instead of expressing his resentment, he courted, or rather purchased, the alliance of the Olynthians, by the cession of Anthemus, a city which the kings of Macedon had long disputed with them, and afterward by that of Pydna and Potidaea, which their joint forces had besieged and taken from the Athenians. But the Olynthians could not be influenced by gratitude towards such a benefactor. The rapid progress of his arms and his glaring acts of perfidy alarmed them exceedingly. He had already made some inroads on their territories, and now began to act against them with less reserve. They therefore despatched ambassadors to Athens, to propose an alliance, and request assistance against a power which they were equally concerned to oppose.

Philip affected the highest resentment at this step; alleged their mutual engagements to adhere to each other in war and peace; inveighed against their harboring his brothers, whom he called the conspirators; and, under pretence of punishing their infractions, pursued his hostilities with double vigor, made himself master of some of their cities, and threatened the capital with a siege.

In the mean time, the Olynthians pressed the Athenians for immediate succors. Their ambassadors opened their commission in an assembly of the people, who had the right either to agree to or to reject their demand. As the importance of the occasion increased the number of speakers, the elder orators had debated the affair before Demosthenes arose. In the following oration, therefore, he speaks as to a people already informed; urges the necessity of joining with the Olynthians, and confirms his opinion by powerful arguments; lays open the designs and practices of Philip, and labors to remove their dreadful apprehensions of his power. He concludes with recommending to them to reform abuses, to restore ancient discipline, and to put an end to all domestic dissensions.

FIRST_OLYNTHIAC_ORATION

THE FIRST OLYNTHIAC ORATION

Pronounced four years after the First Philippic, in the Archonship of Callimachus, the fourth year of the Hundred and Seventh Olympiad, and the twelfth of Philip's Reign.

IN many instances, Athenians, have the gods, in my opinion, manifestly declared their favor to this state; nor is it least observable in this present juncture. For that an enemy should rise against Philip on the very confines of his kingdom, of no inconsiderable power, and, what is of most importance, so determined on the war that they considered any accommodation with him, first, as insidious; next, as the downfall of their country: this seems no less than the gracious interposition of heaven itself. It must therefore be our care, Athenians, that we ourselves may not frustrate this goodness; for it must reflect disgrace, nay, the foulest infamy on us, if we appear to have thrown away, not those states and territories only which we once commanded, but those alliances and favorable incidents which fortune hath provided for us.

To begin on this occasion with a display of Philip's power, or to press you to exert your vigor by motives drawn from hence, is, in my opinion, quite improper. And why? Because whatever may be offered on such a subject sets him in an honorable view, but seems to me as a reproach to our conduct; for the higher his exploits have arisen above his former estimation, the more must the world admire him; while your disgrace hath been the greater, the more your conduct hath proved unworthy of your state. These things, therefore, I shall pass over. He, indeed, who examines justly must find the source of all his greatness here, not in himself. But the services he hath here received from those whose public administration hath been devoted to his interest- those services which you must punish- I do not think it seasonable to display. There are other points of more moment for you all to hear, and which must excite the greatest abhorrence of him in every reasonable mind. These I shall lay before you.

And now, should I call him perjured and perfidious, and not point out the instances of this his guilt, it might be deemed the mere virulence of malice; and with justice. Nor will it engage too much of your attention to hear him fully and clearly convicted, from a full

and clear detail of all his actions. And this I think useful on two accounts: first, that he may appear as he really is, treacherous and false; and then, that they who are struck with terror, as if Philip was something more than human, may see that he hath exhausted all those artifices to which he owes his present elevation, and that his affairs are now ready to decline. For I myself, Athenians, should think Philip really to be dreaded and admired if I saw him raised by honorable means. But I find, on reflection, that at the time when certain persons drove out the Olynthians from this assembly, when desirous of conferring with you, he began with abusing our simplicity by his promise of surrendering Amphipolis, and executing the secret article *(1) of his treaty then so much spoken of; that after this he courted the friendship of the Olynthians by seizing Potidaea where we were rightful sovereigns, despoiling us his former allies, and giving them possession, that but just now he gained the Thessalians, by promising to give up Magnesia; *(2) and, for their ease, to take the whole conduct of the Phocian War on himself. In a word, there are no people who ever made the least use of him but have suffered by his subtlety, his present greatness being wholly owing to his deceiving those who were unacquainted with him, and making them the instruments of his success. As these states, therefore, raised him, while each imagined he was promoting some interest of theirs, these states must also reduce him to his former meanness, as it now appears that his own private interest was the end of all his actions.

Thus, then, Athenians, is Philip circumstanced. If not, let the man stand forth who can prove to me I should have said to this assembly that I have asserted these things falsely; or that they whom he hath deceived in former instances will confide in him for the future; or that the Thessalians, who have been so basely, so undeservedly enslaved, *(3) would not gladly embrace their freedom. If there be anyone among you who acknowledges all this, yet thinks that Philip will support his power, as he hath secured places of strength, convenient ports, and other like advantages, he is deceived. For when forces *(4) join in harmony and affection, and one common interest unites the confederating powers, then they share the toils with alacrity, they endure the distresses, they persevere. But when extravagant ambition and lawless power (as in his case) have aggrandized a single person, the first pretence, the slightest accident overthrows him, and all his greatness is dashed at once to the ground; for it is not- no, Athenians,- it is not possible to found a lasting power on injustice, perjury, and treachery. These may, perhaps, succeed for once, and borrow for a while from hope a gay and flourishing appearance; but time betrays their weakness, and they fall into ruin of themselves. For as in structures of every kind the lower parts should have the greatest firmness, so the grounds and principles of actions should be just and true. But these advantages are not found in the actions of Philip.

I say, then, that you should despatch succors to the Olynthians (and

the more honorably and expeditiously this is proposed to be done, the more agreeably to my sentiments), and send an embassy to the Thessalians to inform some, and to enliven that spirit already raised in others (for it hath actually been resolved to demand the restitution of Pagasae, *(5) and to assert their claim to Magnesia); and let it be your care, Athenians, that our ambassadors may not depend only on words, but give them some action to display, by taking the field in a manner worthy of the state, and engaging in the war with vigor; for words, if not accompanied by actions, must ever appear vain and contemptible, and particularly when they come from us, whose prompt abilities and well-known eminence in speaking make us to be always heard with the greater suspicion.

Would you indeed regain attention and confidence, your measures must be greatly changed, your conduct totally reformed; your fortunes, your persons must appear devoted to the common cause; your utmost efforts must be exerted. If you will act thus, as your honor and your interest require, then, Athenians, you will not only discover the weakness and insincerity of the confederates of Philip, but the ruinous condition of his own kingdom will also be laid open. The power and sovereignty of Macedon may have some weight, indeed, when joined with others. Thus, when you marched against the Olynthians under the conduct of Timotheus, it proved a useful ally; when united with the Olynthians against Potidaea, it added something to their force; just now, when the Thessalians were in the midst of disorder, sedition, and confusion, it aided them against the family of their tyrants; and in every case, any, even a small accession of strength, is my opinion of considerable effect. But of itself, unsupported, it is infirm; it is totally distempered; for by all those glaring exploits which have given him this apparent greatness, his wars, his expeditions, he hath rendered it yet weaker than it was naturally; for you are not to imagine that the inclinations of his subjects are the same with those of Philip. He thirsts for glory: this is his object, this he eagerly pursues through toils and dangers of every kind, despising safety and life when compared with the honor of achieving such actions as no other prince of Macedon could ever boast of. But his subjects have no part in this ambition. Harassed by those various excursions he is ever making, they groan under perpetual calamity; torn from their business and their families, and without opportunity to dispose of that pittance which their toils have earned; as all commerce is shut out from the coast of Macedon by the war.

Hence, one may perceive how his subjects in general are affected to Philip. But then his auxiliaries and the soldiers of his phalanx *(6) have the character of wonderful forces trained completely to war. And yet I can affirm, on the credit of a person from the country incapable of falsehood, that they have no such superiority; for, as he assures me, if any man of experience in military affairs should be found among them, he dismisses all such, from an ambition of having every great action ascribed wholly to himself (for, besides his other passions, the man hath this ambition in the highest degree). And

if any person, from a sense of decency or other virtuous principle, betrays a dislike of his daily intemperance, and riotings, and obscenities, *(7) he loses all favor and regard; so that none are left about him but wretches who subsist on rapine and flattery, and who, when heated with wine, do not scruple to descend to such instances of revelry as it would shock you to repeat. Nor can the truth of this be doubted; for they whom we all conspired to drive from hence as infamous and abandoned- Callias, the public servant, *(8) and others of the same stamp, buffoons, composers of lewd songs, in which they ridicule their companions- these are the persons whom he entertains and caresses. And these things, Athenians, trifling as they may appear to some, are to men of just discernment great indications of the weakness both of his mind and fortune. At present, his successes cast a shade over them; for prosperity hath great power to veil such baseness from observation. But let his arms meet with the least disgrace, and all his actions will be exposed. This is a truth of which he himself, Athenians, will in my opinion soon convince you, if the gods favor us, and you exert your vigor; for as in our bodies, while a man is in health, he feels no effect of any inward weakness, but when disease attacks him everything becomes sensible, in the vessels, in the joints, or in whatever other part his frame may be disordered- so in states and monarchies, while they carry on a war abroad their defects escape the general eye; but when once it approaches their own territory, then they are all detected.

If there be anyone among you who, from Philip's good fortune, concludes that he must prove a formidable enemy, such reasoning is not unworthy a man of prudence. Fortune hath great influence, nay, the whole influence, in all human affairs; but then, were I to choose, I should prefer the fortune of Athens (if you yourselves will assert your own cause with the last degree of vigor) to this man's fortune; for we have many better reasons to depend on the favor of Heaven than this man. But our present state is, in my opinion, a state of total inactivity; and he who will not exert his own strength cannot apply for aid either to his friends or to the gods. It is not then surprising, that he who is himself ever amid the dangers and labors of the field, who is everywhere, whom no opportunity escapes, to whom no season is unfavorable, should be superior to you who are wholly engaged in contriving delays, and framing decrees, and inquiring after news. I am not surprised at this; for the contrary must have been surprising, if we, who never act in any single instance as becomes a state engaged in war, should conquer him who in every instance acts with an indefatigable vigilance. This, indeed, surprises me- that you who fought the cause of Greece against Lacedaemon, and generously declined all the many favorable opportunities of aggrandizing yourselves; who, to secure their property to others, parted with your own by your contributions, and bravely exposed yourselves in battle, should now decline the service of the field and delay the necessary supplies when called to the defence of your own rights; that you, in whom Greece in general and each particular

state hath often found protection, should sit down quiet spectators of your own private wrongs. This, I say, surprises me; and one thing more, that not a man among you can reflect how long a time we have been at war with Philip, and in what measures this time hath all been wasted. You are not to be informed, that in delaying, in hoping that others would assert our cause, in accusing each other, in impeaching, then again entertaining hopes, in such measures as are now pursued, that time hath been entirely wasted. And are you so devoid of apprehension as to imagine, when our state hath been reduced from greatness to wretchedness, that the very same conduct will raise us from wretchedness to greatness? No: this is not reasonable; it is not natural; for it is much easier to defend than to acquire dominions. But now, the war hath left us nothing to defend: we must acquire. And to this work you yourselves alone are equal.

This, then, is my opinion: you should raise supplies; you should take the field with alacrity. Prosecutions should be all suspended until you have recovered your affairs; let each man's sentence be determined by his actions; honor those who have deserved applause; let the iniquitous meet their punishment; let there be no pretences, no deficiencies on your part; for you cannot bring the actions of others to a severe scrutiny unless you have first been careful of your own duty. What, indeed, can be the reason, think ye, that every man whom ye have sent out at the head of an army hath deserted your service, and sought out some private expedition, if we must speak ingeniously of these our generals also? The reason is this: when engaged in the service of the state, the prize for which they fight is yours. Thus, should Amphipolis be now taken, you instantly possess yourselves of it: the commanders have all the danger, the rewards they do not share. But in their private enterprises the dangers are less; the acquisitions are all shared by the generals and soldiers, as were Lampsacus, Sigaeum, *(9) and those vessels which they plundered. Thus are they all determined by their private interest. And when you turn your eyes to the wretched state of your affairs, you bring your generals to a trial, you grant them leave to speak, you hear the necessities they plead, and then acquit them. Nothing then remains for us but to be distracted with endless contests and divisions (some urging these, some those measures), and to feel the public calamity; for in former times, Athenians, you divided into classes *(10) to raise supplies. Now the business of these classes is to govern; each hath an orator at its head, and a general who is his creature. The Three Hundred are assistants to these; and the rest of you divide, some to this, some to that party. You must rectify these disorders; you must appear yourselves; you must leave the power of speaking, of advising, and of acting open to every citizen. But if you suffer some persons to issue out their mandates as with royal *(11) authority- if one set of men be forced to fit out ships, to raise supplies, to take up arms, while others are only to make decrees against them, without any charge, any employment besides, it is not possible that anything can be affected seasonably and

successfully; for the injured party ever will desert you, and then your sole resource will be to make them feel your resentment instead of your enemies.

To sum up all, my sentiments are these: That every man should contribute in proportion to his fortune; that all should take the field in their turns, until all have served; that whoever appears in this place should be allowed to speak; and that when you give your voices, your true interest only should determine you, not the authority of this or the other speaker. Pursue this course, and then your applause will not be lavished on some orator the moment he concludes: you yourselves will share it hereafter when you find how greatly you have advanced the interests of your state.

NOTES

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*(1) When Philip had declared Amphipolis a free city, the Athenians, who were desirous of recovering it, sent ambassadors to Philip to solicit his assistance for that purpose, and on this condition promised to make him master of Pydna; but lest the people of Pydna, who were averse to Philip's government, should take the alarm, the whole negotiation was transacted secretly in the Senate, without being referred as usual to the assembly of the people. This account Ulpian and Suidas cite from Theopompus.

*(2) He had made himself master of this city when he marched into Thessaly against the tyrants. The Thessalians remonstrated against this proceeding, but suffered themselves to be amused by his assurances that he would give it up, while he really determined to keep possession of it.

*(3) When Philip had dispossessed the tyrants of Thessaly, he began to set himself up in their place, but not by open force. He was so complete a master of dissimulation, appeared so gentle, so affable, so humane, so amiable, even to the conquered, that the Thessalians gave themselves up to him with an entire confidence, which he knew how to take advantage of.

*(4) I need not take notice to the learned reader how highly this passage is ornamented in the original by the beauty of the metaphors, the grandeur of the composition, and the fineness of the sentiment. The word *anechaitise* by which he expresses the downfall of Philip, I apprehend, is not to be rendered into our, or perhaps any other, language. It gives us the idea of a generous steed tossing his mane, impatient of the bit, and casting his rider to the ground; which at once expresses the subjection of the states conquered by Philip, their impatience of his government, their bold effort to regain their liberty, and the downfall of their master. The change of tenses (*anechaitise kai dielusen*) adds greatly to the force and beauty. It seems as if the destruction of Philip was too quick for words.

*(5) A city of Thessaly which he had made himself master of five years before.

*(6) In the original pezetairoi, fellow-soldiers, a term invented for the encouragement of this body, and to reconcile them to all the severities of their duty. Such kind of familiarities cost but little, and are often of considerable service to a prince.

*(7) In the original chordakismous. Certain lascivious dances, so called from the name of a satyr said to have invented them. Theophrastus mentions it as a part of the character of a man utterly abandoned, that, when inflamed by wine, he is even capable of dancing the chordax. In this description of the dissolute manners of Philip and his court, one would imagine that the orator had aggravated a little; yet we have the whole description still more heightened in history. The learned reader will find it in Athenaeus, book vi.

*(8) One of those public slaves who attended the Athenian generals in the field. They chose slaves for this business, that if there was occasion for their evidence on any public inquiry into the conduct of the war, they might be put to the torture, from which free citizens were exempted.

*(9) Chares received these two cities of Asia Minor from the satrap Artabazus, in return for his service. The general, instead of employing the fleet he had been entrusted with for the recovery of Amphipolis, according to his instructions, joined with some pirates, and committed considerable outrages in the Aegean Sea. He was accused of this at his return, but escaped by flying from public justice until his faction grew powerful enough to reinstate him in his former command.

*(10) Eummoriai. Each of the ten tribes elected one hundred and twenty of the richer citizens out of their own body, who were obliged to perform the public duties, and to raise supplies for the exigencies of the state out of their private fortunes. The twelve hundred persons thus chosen were divided into two parts, and each of these into ten classes, called summorai. These were again subdivided into two parts, according to the estates of those who composed them. And thus, out of the ten first classes were appointed the Three Hundred, that is, such a number of the wealthy citizens, who were on all occasions to supply the commonwealth with money, and with the rest of the twelve hundred to perform all extraordinary duties in their turns. It seems, however, that in the time of Demosthenes these classes sought pretences to avoid their duty, and contended for the power of throwing the whole weight of public business on each other.

*(11) Eubulus, Aristophon, Hyperides, and Lycurgus governed everything with an absolute power in the assemblies. The conduct of military affairs was entirely engrossed by Diopithes, Menestheus, Leosthenes, and Chares. Thus the administration of affairs was shared among a few men, as it were, by lot; so that the popular government degenerated into an oligarchy.

THE END OF THE FIRST OLYNTHIAC ORATION

