A GRÆCO-ROMAN TRAGEDY?

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THE title of this lecture may seem to need some defence. A Græco-Roman tragedy sounds rather like a Scotch eisteddfod, or a Welsh haggis; or, at best, some dubious product like 'Californian champagne.' Most of us have some conception of what is meant by a Greek tragedy; for the lines of that form of poetic art were so perfected by the great Athenian poets that they stamped themselves on the world's imagination; and it is hardly too much to say that no dramatist since, through all the centuries, whether he knows it or not, has been able wholly to escape the effects of the Greek tradition. And its influence has been felt, not merely in drama, but in many other kinds of creative art; for example, in narrative poetry. And critics have pointed out that more than one historian, in tracing some series of events to their consummation, has shown a desire so to arrange and proportion the scenes of his story as to create the impression of a drama.

The fall of the Athenian power in Thucydides and the short reign of Galba in Tacitus are often quoted as examples of this instinct in the historian's mind. And my object to-night is to put before you a case of the same power of depicting events which actually happened in such a way as to leave the reader with a sense of having watched a tragedy. The separate scenes, though they are scattered over some thirty years and appear only at intervals in the text of the history, seem nevertheless, taken in their order, to show a feeling hardly less deep, and a selective power hardly less dramatic than we are accustomed to associate with the masters of Tragedy.

1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on the 13th January, 1926.
The Fourth Decade of Livy has been little read except by special students of a difficult period, and even by them rarely read as a whole; but to any one who reads the ten Books through, it must, I think, be clear, that the theme which fills the most striking scenes of Book XL and ends in the death of Philip V. of Macedon, was present to Livy's mind in all the earlier parts of the Decade which he devotes to Philip's career; though it is only in Book XL that the narrative takes the amplitude and dignity of tragedy.

The development of Philip's character is traced in the long struggle that he maintained, never with complete success, but always escaping complete defeat, against the adverse conditions that surrounded his throne in the first twenty years of his reign, i.e. the last twenty of the 3rd century B.C.

We need not dwell on the peculiar interest of the century that followed in the history of Europe. In a sentence, we may say that it was the time in which the noblest minds of Rome began to apply to the government of the world the conceptions which they had newly learned from the noblest minds of Hellas. In this great attempt they met few obstacles so baffling as the conduct of the backward or degenerate states among those which claimed the Greek name. The conception of free government for which Pericles and Demosthenes had pleaded, and which they had maintained over a space of nearly two centuries at Athens, appeared to Romans like Scipio and Flamininus a guiding star for all rulers of men; but of the Athenians themselves, after a century of political humiliation, nothing could be said but that they waged war on Philip with speeches and despatches—the only weapons which they knew how to use.'

The personality of Philip is complex enough to challenge the historian. At bottom he was a barbarian; but among barbarians he was distinguished not merely by touches of statesmanship and even of clemency, but by his keen comprehension of the motives which governed the conduct of nobler men. The tragedy of his life lay in the conflict between his barbarian instincts, worthy of any Turkish Sultan, and the force of liberal principles which the Romans were then applying with enthusiasm to the new provinces now at their feet. Had there been no Romans, Philip's career might have resembled that of his great

1 Livy, 31, 44, 9.
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predecessor, Alexander; and the Empire he would have established might have lasted longer; though it would probably have been marked by greater cruelty. But his life was wrecked on these new factors in the world, the power of Rome, and the faith in free government which animated the leading Romans of that day.

The enterprise and popularity of the young king, his alliance with Hannibal and his aggressions on other Greek states had given the Romans grave anxiety during most of the Second Punic War, i.e. from 215-205 B.C.; and his conduct had not only created a league against him between several communities outside Macedon, such as Athens and the Ætolians, but it had made everyone familiar with the licentious cruelty of which he was capable. This part of his career hardly marked him out from his immediate predecessors on the throne of Macedon, or from any other of the ring of half-civilised potentates with whom the free Greek States had been in contact for several centuries.

But greater qualities in Philip appeared in the Second Macedonian War which the Romans declared, after much hesitation, in 200 B.C. In the operations of that year we find him for the first time in sight of a Roman army and he at once appreciated the meaning of its discipline and tactical system. "These are no barbarians," he said, echoing the words of King Pyrrhus. Soon after we find his daring courage displayed in the battle of Octolophus, where he escaped death only by the devotion of one of his troopers, who gave the king his horse but was himself at once cut down. With no less courage he faced, single-handed, a war with the Romans, having failed to detach from their alliance either the Rhodians or King Attalus. At one conference, later on, where his opponents had shown him little respect, he is said to have retorted with a line of Theocritus, then not fifty years old (though it may have embodied an older saying): ἂδη γὰρ φράσεως πάνθε τὴν άμμο δεδύκεσ ("do you reckon that the sun has set on us for the last time?"). His sinister diplomacy appeared in an ingenious attempt to secure possession of Corinth and other strong places of Achæa under pretext of making war against the Spartan tyrant, Nabis,—an attempt frustrated by the

1 Livy, 31, 34, 8.  
2 Ibid., c. 37.  
3 39, 26, 9.  
4 31, 25.
courage of the magistrate presiding over the Achaean assembly, who ruled the king's application out of order, because it had not been circulated on the agenda. Philip proceeded to soothe his irritation by laying waste the territory round about Athens, issuing quite Hunnish orders to his troops not merely to demolish every temple and shrine but to smash into fragments every statue which they found in the whole area. After his first defeat by Flamininus on the river Aous he began negotiations for peace; but in the colloquy the chief magistrate of the Ætolians, called Phæneas, who happened to be very short-sighted, broke in upon Philip's speech, declaring roughly that the king must either accept the terms offered him or else win the war. 'Yes,' said Philip, 'it needs no eyes to see that.' This retort, adds the grave historian, was too pointed to be seemly for a king—but Philip was always like that.

The war continued until Flamininus' great victory at Cynoscephalae in 197 when Philip showed his prudence by offering humble terms of submission and gave many hostages—among them, his own son Demetrius, a boy of twelve, who was taken to Rome, and remained there for six years. Philip's submission involved the surrender of his strongholds in the mainland of Greece, outside Macedon itself, and this was publicly announced, to the almost incredulous delight of the Greeks assembled for the Isthmian Games at Corinth in 196 B.C. But all this did not break the king's spirit; for when Macedon itself was invaded by a neighbouring tribe, he raised an army by a new levy and drove them out for 'to lose any part of Macedon he counted a crueller fate than death.'

In the next six years (196-190 B.C.) we hear less of Philip but much of the wisdom of Flamininus in settling the affairs of Greece, a figure which Livy sets in vivid contrast to that of Philip. The conclusion of his farewell speech to the Greek assembly marks the central point in the story of this Decade. He counselled all the cities to judge their friends by deeds and not by words: and to use their own liberty in moderation.

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1 Livy, c. 26.  2 32, 34, 3.  3 33, 13.  4 The wider interest of this proclamation is discussed in New Studies of a Great Inheritance (1921).  5 33, 19, 3.  6 34, 49, 4 ff.
For liberty, if it be well tempered is wholesome for individuals and for states; but if it run to excess, it becomes not only insupportable to others but unruly and ruinous \( (practicem et effrenatam) \) to them that have it. Not only should the different leaders and classes in each city maintain concord \(^1\) among themselves; but also each city with all the rest; for so long as you will live in harmony together, no king nor tyrant will be strong enough to hurt you. But discord and sedition open an easy way to enemies that lie in wait. Keep and preserve by your own vigilance this your liberty purchased for you by foreign forces, and handed over to you by the good faith of strangers; so that the people of Rome may see, that they have given freedom to folk that deserve it and chosen well those on whom their benefaction should be bestowed.\(^2\)

In the years 194-190 B.C., when the proceedings of Antiochus, the king of Syria and host of the exiled Hannibal, almost fill the stage, Philip fulfilled his treaty obligations to Rome with remarkable good faith,\(^3\) sorely tempted to break them though he often was. But his feelings towards Antiochus were embittered by a curious proceeding on the part of that potentate. When Antiochus came into Europe in 191, he was bound, in order to visit his allies the Ætolians, to cross Thessaly and so to pass near the site of the battle of Cynoscephalæ, where the bones of those who had fallen in 197 still lay unburied. By way of presenting himself as a champion of Greek sentiment, Antiochus ordered his own troops to bury the skeletons and to proclaim the fact—an example, as Livy remarks,\(^4\) of royal vanity loving projects that make a show but serve no purpose. Antiochus only aroused Philip’s anger by reminding everyone of the rout which he had suffered on that spot.

\(^1\) A modern parallel to this wise advice may not be without interest. In the Manchester Guardian of 13 January, 1926, the day before this lecture was delivered, Mr. Lloyd George, who had just returned from a visit to Italy, was concerned to warn us against the dangers entailed by the intransigence of different political parties, which in several countries of Europe had led to a breakdown of Parliamentary government altogether. He pointed to what had happened in Russia and Italy and what was happening, or not happening, in France. “If the progressive parties in those countries had acted in unison, you would to-day have had a progressive Europe. . . . In Rome it was the failure of the Parliamentary system that brought in Mussolini, a very outstanding figure, a very remarkable man, whether you approve of his methods or not. . . . The Italian groups would not act together and Mussolini in the confusion that ensued from disunion . . . marched on the capital. For the moment, at least, there seems to be general acceptance of his regime.

\(^2\) 36, cc. 4, 13, 14.

\(^3\) 36, c. 8.
Later in the same year Philip sent legates to Rome offering congratulations on the defeat of Antiochus at Thermopylae and his envoys were allowed to make offerings to Jupiter on the Capitol, and to take back the chief hostage whom Philip had given, the young prince Demetrius, who had come to Rome a boy of twelve and was now a youth of eighteen. He had been treated well and received the best education that Rome could provide in a period when good Greek teachers were beginning to be numerous; and it is not surprising that his outlook on life, and especially on Macedonian politics, had "suffered a sea change."

In the next year (190 B.C.) the two Scipios went out to carry the war against Antiochus into Asia, and they found Philip thoroughly friendly, preparing all the roads and supplies needed for their armies. But after Antiochus had been finally worsted and the affairs of Greece had to be settled again, Philip was chagrined to find that the Roman policy remained exactly what it had been, and that he was now required to evacuate several Greek towns in Thrace which he had been allowed in the war to occupy. One of these was Maronea, which Philip held to be his by right of his own conquest, not in virtue of the Roman victory at all. On receiving his protest, the Roman commissioners temporised, reserving the question for the Senate's decision; but meanwhile made Philip withdraw his garrison so as to leave the matter open. The Senate in the end decided that the towns were to be left free; but before Philip had official information of this, he arranged with his commander in that part of Thrace, a man called Onomastus, to introduce secretly into the town a band of Thracians; and these barbarians at once massacred all those of the citizens who had been unlucky enough to show any disposition to resist Philip. The Romans protested, demanding the surrender of Onomastus and of the Maronean traitor (called Cassander) who had actually admitted the Thracians. Philip refused to surrender Onomastus though he promised to hand over Casander; but somehow or other Casander was found to have died, at a most convenient moment for the king.

Philip, however, felt himself not yet strong enough for open war; and in 183 B.C. sent his son Demetrius (then 25 years old) back to

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1 Livy, c. 35.
2 37, c. 8.
3 39, c. 28 (185 B.C.).
4 39, c. 34.
5 39, c. 35, 47, 53.
Rome to plead for him; and to Demetrius the Senate showed the utmost courtesy, though he found it difficult to make out his father's case and only succeeded in producing the notes which his father had given him and which had been discreetly composed in general terms. On some points Demetrius offered excuses; and on others he made promises for the future. The Senate thereupon resolved to thank Philip for having sent his son Demetrius and to inform him that they accepted the pledges which Demetrius offered because of their confidence in the young prince himself, whom they knew to be a friend of the Roman people so far as his loyalty to his father would permit; and Philip was to understand that he owed their continued friendship largely to their esteem for Demetrius. This message, sent to do honour to Demetrius, had some effects which the Senate did not foresee; and the fulness with which Livy narrates the incident is due to his sense of the tragic irony which it involved.

On his return to Macedon Demetrius was received with great favour by the multitude, who looked on him both as the author of the peace, and through the favour of Rome, as the most likely successor of his father; especially because his elder brother Perseus was not a legitimate son of Philip and had none of the personal likeness to the king which was conspicuous in Demetrius. Perseus naturally regarded the position of affairs with other eyes; and so did Philip, who had long been cherishing resentment against Rome. Nevertheless he submitted to the terms which Demetrius brought, and the stage was set for the final acts of the tragedy.

The theme round which the tragedy centres, is the inherent weakness of autocracy, what Tacitus calls inopia veri, that the autocrat can never be sure of knowing the truth. This theme is characteristically Greek. But we know that the shadow of the same inexorable law was beginning to be felt even under the generally benevolent rule of Augustus in Rome, within a very few years of the time when Livy began to write history. Like conditions produce like effects: the courts of the Claudian emperors were infested by secret intrigues for deceiving the emperor, of which Tacitus has drawn a grim picture. In Livy's Fourth Decade there are some traces of a change of tone in the

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1 For instance in the case of Gallus (26 B.C.) whose folly must have been gravely exaggerated in the reports which reached Augustus (see Great Inheritance).
narrative; and one naturally asks whether the weariness which he now more than once confesses, may not be connected with the consciousness that when he is contrasting the best Roman spirit breathed by men like Flamininus with the policy and aims of Philip, he is also contrasting it, inevitably, with the fundamental character of the government under which Rome was living in his day. At all events, by keeping such a question in mind, as we read the story, we shall certainly be erring on the right side; that is to say we shall be watching the drama in a temper akin to that which Livy avowed in the Preface to his whole work, when he described his own time as one in which Rome had grown so great that she ‘could endure neither the corruptions of her government nor their remedies,’ i.e. the imperial system.

Livy has made it clear that the whole story turns on the conflict between the ambitions of Philip and the ideals of Rome. It was not a struggle for dominion in the ordinary sense. Philip was left in safe possession of his own kingdom; and could he only have brought his proud spirit to live without trespassing on the freedom of his neighbours, he might have died at least a comparatively happy man. The conflict was essentially ethical and psychological, fought out in Philip’s soul. Merely by having his own way, he doomed himself to years of remorse, ended only by his death; and his subjects to the rule of a tyrant, ended only by their complete disappearance as a nation. Stages of this inward conflict are traced by Livy in a series of scenes based on a few facts briefly noted by Polybius, but put into a form which, I venture to think, is not unworthy of a poet.

We have followed in outline the course of Philip’s reign to the point which Livy reaches in Book XXXIX. As a kind of keynote to the culmination of the tragedy in the fortieth Book, he sets a grim story of Philip’s cruelty towards some of his own subjects. Philip openly avowed that he was acting on a saying ascribed to an ancient Epic poet, and often quoted, that only fools would kill a father and leave his sons alive. Philip had put to death a leading citizen of Thessaly and his two sons; the widow of one of the sons died;—the other widow, in charge of her own and her sister’s children, killed

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1 40, 3, 7.
2 Stasinus; the saying is ascribed to Cyrus in Herodot., 1, 155, and to Menelaus by Euripides (Androm., 520).
them all, and her second husband, and herself, to escape from Philip's order of arrest which she knew meant death for the elders and nameless slavery for the children.

Livy then resumes the narrative where it had been left on the return of Demetrius from Rome (in 183 B.C.). Perseus, seeing his brother's great popularity, took the course that seemed natural to his own barbarian instincts, and began to plot for his destruction. Let us follow Livy's narrative:—

'Now at the first some of Philip's counsellors would not consent to hear of any such thing, because they had better hope of Demetrius. But afterwards, as the hatred of Philip against the Romans, which Perseus still fostered, grew daily greater,—whereas Demetrius with all his might laboured against it,—foreseeing in their minds the unhappy end of Demetrius, who was not heedful enough to guard himself against his brother, they sided with Perseus; choosing this policy, to set forward that which in the end would take effect, namely to advance the hope of the mightier son. . . . For the present, the best course they thought upon was this, to incense the king all that ever possibly they could against the Romans; to induce him still to think of nothing but war, whereto of his own accord he was well enough inclined. And withal (to the end that Demetrius might be from day to day more and more suspected) they entered of purpose into speech touching the concerns of the Romans: whereat some of them would seem to pour scorn upon their manners and laws, others would belittle their deeds, some scoffing at the very form and making of the city of Rome, how it was not embellished with any stately buildings, public or private: others deriding the chief personages of the city one by one. On this the inconsiderate young prince Demetrius, came away both with an affection to the Romans, and with rivalry to his brother, would answer to all these points in defence of the Romans: by which means he brought himself into more jealousy with his father. . . . So his father acquainted him no more with any counsel touching Roman affairs, but wholly relied upon Perseus. . . .

Now the Macedonians had a custom of celebrating their festivals by a sham fight, the manner of which was, after sacrifice, for the whole army to be divided into two battalions, and for the one to charge the other, representing a real conflict. And on one such occasion who should be the leaders in this pastime, but the king's two sons? But believe me, they jested never a whit, nor made a vain show, but went to it roundly in good earnest, as if they would determine now who should be king another day. Foul work they made with their wooden swords; many were wounded, and nothing wanted there of a very bloody battle but sharp iron. . . . On that day Perseus' battalion was completely beaten and driven off the field. . . .

[Each returned home with his own friends, Perseus having refused an invitation from his brother.] But Perseus had sent a spy to listen what talk.

1 39, c. 47.
2 40, 5, 4. The renderings are based on Philemon Holland's.
3 40, 6, 5.
there was at his brother Demetrius' table. This spy demeaning himself not so circumspectly as he should, was encountered by certain youths that chanced to come forth of the parlour where they sat at supper, and was well beaten for his pains.

Demetrius heard nothing of this, but chanced to say at table, "Why go we not and banquet with my brother? And if there remain any anger and displeasure behind after our jousting in jest, let us appease it by frankness and mirth?" They all agreed with one voice, save only those that feared to be detected and punished for misusing the aforesaid spy. Demetrius however would needs have them also with him: whereupon they took weapons hidden under their apparel, for fear of the worst, that they might defend themselves, if any violence were offered. But what can be kept secret, where there is intestine discord in one family? Both houses were full of spies and false knaves.

So there ran before them a tale-carrier unto Perseus, and declared unto him that there were coming with Demetrius four young men with privy daggers by their sides. And albeit Perseus wist well enough what was the cause thereof (for he had heard that one of his own men had been by them beaten) yet to aggravate the matter and make it more odious, he commanded his doors to be fast locked; and from the upper rooms, out of the windows, he warned off those that came to be merry with him from approaching the door, as if their coming was for no other purpose but to murder him.

Demetrius after he had for a time called out in the street against being shut out, with some noise, as a man would after drinking wine, departed and returned again to his own house, all the while knowing nothing of what the matter really was.

The next morning Perseus with some of his friends laid before the king a solemn charge against his brother of having come to his house with armed men in order to murder him. Philip sent for Demetrius and some of his own most trusted counsellors and en addressed them thus:

"Here sit I, a most wretched father, to be a judge between my two sons, the one plaintiff, the other defendant in a charge of attempted murder; and to find, on my own house and blood, the stain of that crime, either falsely alleged, or in deed essayed. . . . During my natural life, while breath is still in my body, both of you, seduced by inordinate desire, are ready to take possession of my kingdom over my head. And so long only would you have me to live, until by surviving the one of you, I might then, by my death, leave the other my sole heir. Sick ye are, I see well, of father and brother; ye can abide neither the one nor the other. . . . An unsatiable desire to be king hath possessed your hearts. Come on therefore now, if you must, and grieve and wound your father's ears with your reciprocal accusations, you that full soon, I know, will be for deciding it by dint of sword. Spare not; speak out all that either you can allege truly, or list to invent falsely. Mine ears are

1 40, 8, 7, and 16 ff.
now open, but hereafter they shall be close shut against all secret slanders
that you may report one against the other."

When he had breathed out these words with great indignation, those
who stood by felt the tears in their eyes, and for a good time there was not
a word spoken; until at length Perseus began:

"I ought belike to have opened my door in the night and received into
my house armed guests, yea and held out my throat for them to cut; since
nothing is believed, until the deed be done: since unto me whose life hath
been sought words are said which were more beseeming to speak unto a
robber by the highway side. It is not for nought, I see well, that these here
give out abroad that you have no more sons than Demetrius, and call me a
bastard, and only a supposed son of yours, as not begotten of a lawful wife.
For if you indeed vouchsafed me the place and love of a son, you would
never storm against me so as you do, for discovering the ambush set for me,
and complaining thereof; but against him rather that laid in wait to surprise
me: neither would you make so small account of my life, as not to be moved
either for the danger wherein I was, nor at the peril to come, if such cut-
throats may escape unpunished. Now, if there be no remedy, if I must die
and say nothing, then let me hold my tongue, only praying the gods that this
mischief begun in me, may also end with me; and that it be not you, who
is in truth to be wounded through my body. . . . But in case it be lawful
for me to cry out, when I see the sword drawn upon me, . . . then I beseech
you for the love of your good self, and the name of a father (and which of
us twain have held that name in more honour you full well know long since),
give me audience, and hear me, as if you had been awakened at my
uy last

night, and came to me when I was forced to call, 'Help, Help; '

and as if
you had taken Demetrius in the act, in the very entry of my door at dead of
night with a retinue of armed men. . . ."

A little later on the young orator turns directly upon his
brother:

"In the solemn review of the army, when we were jousting in a mock
skirmish, you missed little of making it a bloody battle; and nothing else saved
me from death but this, that I suffered myself and my men to be over-
come." . . .

Then he turns\(^1\) to his father again:

"To what place shall I look for refuge? Nothing do I rely upon, father,
but the gods and your own self. As for the Romans, I stand in no terms of
favour with them: nay, they all wish me put out of the way because I take to
heart the wrongs done you by them; because I show myself touched with the
indignity that so many cities and tribes are plucked from you; and that of
late they have despoiled you of all the maritime parts of Thrace: and because
so long as either you or I live, they never look to enjoy Macedonia them-

selves. . . Whereeto think ye tend those letters of Quinctius Flamininus
sent lately unto you, wherein he writeth, that you did passing well for your

\(^1\) 40, 10, 5.\)
own estate, in sending Demetrius to Rome? This T. Quinctius (if you will know the reason) is the man who now directeth Demetrius in all things: he is his counsellor and schoolmaster. And Demetrius hath rejected and cast you off, his own father, and hath put Flamininus in your stead. . . . But what imagineth Demetrius, suppose ye? 'Mine elder brother (thinks he) stands in my way; to him appertains the kingdom by right and by my father's will: let us rid him out of the world. As for my father, he is aged, and desolate; he will have more care to look to his own person, than to revenge the death of his son. The Romans, they will rejoice, they will approve and justify my action.' . . .

You will do well to preserve me from danger, now whiles I am alive, by punishing those who take weapon in hand to kill me. 'For let their enterprise speed once and take effect, you will never have the power to pursue them and revenge my death.'

When Perseus had made an end of his speech, they that were present cast their eyes upon Demetrius, expecting that he would make answer immediately, and so all were silent a long time; for they perceived that Demetrius could not for weeping open his lips: but in the end they prevailed on him to speak.

Of the reply of Demetrius,¹ a straightforward and pathetic speech, I wish it were possible to quote more than a fraction, for the means by which Livy indicates the honesty and simplicity of the young prince, in contrast with the crafty rhetoric of his brother, are well worth study. Demetrius begins by pointing out the peculiar hardship of the prejudice raised against him by the suggestion that his interest in Rome itself implies disloyalty to his father; and shows his complete innocence of the charge of making any attempt on his brother's safety.

"In good faith, Perseus, if I had been a traitor to the king my father and to our country, if I had complotted with the Romans and my father's enemies, methinks you should not have waited for this night's devised fable, but you ought long ago to have accused me of treason. . . . Why, if I had minded to assail your house, and to murder you its master, would I not, think you, have foreborne for my part for one day to quaffe wine, and likewise kept my soldiers from drinking so freely? But for fear I should plead my simplicity and ignorance and make my excuse thereby, this my good brother also mocks my plea in advance by declaring, 'I know nothing, I charge nobody, neither wot I what to say else, but that they came armed to banquet with me.' If I might be so bold as to ask how you came to that knowledge, you must confess that either my house was full of your spies, or that those armed men in my train bore their weapons so openly, that everyone saw them. And because he would have you believe, father, that neither himself made any enquiry before, nor at this time is pursuing the matter with any accusing spirit, he bade you to demand of them whom he named, whether they had not their swords about

¹ 40, cc. 12-15.
them? To the end that after you had sought into it, as if it were a matter
doubtful, and found them to confess it, they might thereby be held convicted.

But why rather do you not ask . . . whether they took their swords with
them to kill you or no? And whether they did so by my orders or with my
knowledge? For this is it that you would make the world believe, not that
which my men confess. But the case is plain and nothing else will be found,
than that they were armed in their own defence. Whether it were well or
ill done, they are of age to render a reason of their own doings. . . . But rather
make it plain, whether we meant to assail you openly or secretly? If openly,
why were we not all armed? Why was there none of us besides those
persons that had beaten your spy? If secretly, what was our design? After
the banquet ended, and I retired, were those four to have stayed behind and
fallen upon you when you were asleep? How could they have carried it
so close as not to be spied, strangers as they were, and my men besides, and
above all most suspected, since a little before they had been seen in a brawl?
And say, they had killed you; by what means could they escape and save
themselves? Was it possible that your house should be forced and kept
with four swords? . . .

This is not the first day that my brother hath accused me; but this is
the first day that he had accused me openly, . . . From my feasting, my
mirth and good cheer, he has hailed me hither half awake, to answer a charge
of fratricide: and forced me to plead mine own cause without any to give
me counsel or help. . . . What hope should I have now, if I had not my
father for my judge? At whose hands (albeit I am not so well beloved as
mine elder brother is), yet . . . I ought at least to find compassion. For I be-
seech you, father, to save me, for my own sake and for yours. . . . What will
he do against me, think you, after you have made over the crown to him,
when now already he thinks it meet to dispose of my life at his pleasure?"

In uttering these words, the tears gushed forth so abundantly, that they
stopped his utterance and he could hardly draw his breath.

Then Philip, after he had communed a while with his friends, declared
that he would not decide their cause upon these words of theirs, nor upon
one hour’s debating, but by enquiry into both their lives, and by observing
their behaviour in great matters and in small. Hereby they all saw well
enough that the accusation touching the preceding night was sufficiently
refuted; and that the only thing in Demetrius to be suspected was the great
favour that the Romans bare toward him.

Perseus had no doubt expected this result and was by no means
discouraged, but continued his intrigues with Philip’s courtiers, being
all the while admitted to his father’s counsels, from which Demetrius
was always excluded. After a difficult expedition,1 half mountaineer-
ing and half political, in which Philip undertook to climb one of the
central peaks of the Balkan range, Demetrius, who had accompanied
him part of the journey, was sent away, escorted by a general named
Didas (then governor of Paeonia) who was in league with Perseus.

1 40, 21-24.
This Didas abused the simplicity of the young prince. . . . He complained to Didas (and good cause he had) of those that were nearest unto him by kin; and Didas, by flattering, by soothing him up, and seeming withal to be griefed for his own part at the hard usage which the prince suffered, laid snares and set traps for him; and in the end by his pretended sympathy . . . fetched out of him his purpose to fly to Rome. And to effect this, he was persuaded, that . . . the gods had sent to him this Didas to be his helper; for through his province of Paeonia he conceived some hope to pass and escape. This intent of his was immediately disclosed to his brother Perseus, and by him to his father. . . .

In the anguish of these cares, when the king had continued some months, in the end those ambassadors came home from Rome, who before ever they set foot out of Macedonia, had devised beforehand what report they would make from Rome. To make up the full measure of their wickedness, they delivered unto the king's hand a forged letter, sealed with a counterfeit seal of T. Quinctius Flamininus, to this effect, that Quinctius should say, that albeit young Demetrius had slipped a little in his inordinate desire to be king, and written to him about some such matter, yet would he, Quinctius, do nothing to injure King Philip, neither would he be found a man to give any evil counsel. This forged letter struck it dead sure, and made the king believe that all the former imputations fastened on Demetrius were true and now proved past all doubt. . . .

Perseus thereon accused Demetrius again before his father, of intending to take his flight through Paeonia. . . . That which was most of all against him, was that same forged letter. Howbeit there was no grievous sentence pronounced openly against him, to the end that rather by some covert practice he might come to his death: and this not for any fear that Philip had of the young prince, but lest any open punishment, executed upon him, might reveal Philip's secret design of making war upon the Romans. . . .

Now it is reported, that . . . the king gave Didas in charge to kill his son Demetrius. . . . Didas then invited Demetrius to the celebration of a solemn festival, whereupon he came to Heraclea. And (as men say) at this supper he met with a cup of poison. He had no sooner drunk it, but immediately he felt that he was sped; for within a short while it began to work, and for very pain he was forced to rise from the table and retire into his chamber; where he piteously complained of the cruelty of his father, of the murderous mind of his brother, and of the villainy of Didas; and all this while endured deadly torment.

But afterwards there were sent into the chamber one Thyrsis, a Stuberean, and Alexander of Berea, who enwrapped his head and throat with the bedclothes, and tapestry, and held them so hard, that they stopped his breath. Thus was this innocent prince piteously made away.

But, as the historian observes, 'truth is wont to give many signs and tokens of herself'; and in 179 B.C., two years afterwards, Philip, thanks to his brave and faithful counsellor, Antigonus, learnt the innocence of Demetrius and the guilt of his elder brother.
And in this wise he spake ¹ to Antigonus:

"Since my unhappy fortune is such, Oh Antigonus, that I ought to wish myself childless, I purpose to make over unto you my kingdom... No man I have but you, whom I can esteem worthy to wear the crown: and if I knew of none at all, yet I rather that both it and the realm perished and were extinct for ever, than Perseus should enjoy it as the guerdon of his devilish act... I shall imagine yet that my Demetrius is risen from death to life, if I may leave you in his place, you, the only man of all, that wept for the death of that innocent lad and for my fatal delusion."... 

Soon after this, Philip was taken with a grievous malady. Howbeit it was very apparent, that he was more sick in mind than body, and that ever and anon the remembrance and apparition of his innocent son, whom he had caused to be done to death, followed and haunted him so continually with remorse that he was out of all sleep: yea, it drove him into raving, with cursing and execrating Perseus his other son; and so he ended his days.

Such is the story, dire enough to rank with those of Oedipus or Hippolytus, a real tragedy, as indeed Polybius observed.²

"But what does it profit us," perhaps the reader will ask, "to consider it now?" Well, that depends, no doubt, on what we expect to see happen in Europe in the present generation,—whether we think that despotism will emerge as a form of government, seriously contemplated for a permanence, in one or more of the European states. But let us put the question in another shape: What motives induced Livy to give the story so much room? in particular why did he depict at such length the trial scene before Philip? In the Teubner edition five pages are needed for Demetrius, more than three for Perseus and about one and a half for Philip's introductory address and the verdict—ten pages in all; as compared with little more than five for the great speech of Camillus against the proposed desertion of Rome in 390 B.C.; or, to take another example, with three and a half for Cato's speech against women's rights (in Book XXXIV.), and not quite four for the answer to it by Valerius. In this Macedonian scene, therefore, we have the longest display of oratory that Livy anywhere inserted in the Books which have come down to us.

Now everyone knows that the difference in length is not due to any similar difference in the length of the records which Livy had before him, for of course no such records existed. The speeches which ancient historians were expected to compose are like the leading articles

¹ 40, 54-56.
² Polyb. xxiii. 10. 16, τῆς τύχης ὧσπερ ἐπτίθησε ἀναβιβασθοῦσις ἐπὶ σκηνήν ἐν ἑνὶ καιρῷ τὰς τοῦτων συμφοράς. See also xxiii. 11.
of a modern daily paper; they draw out the points of a situation elsewhere described in order to give us the writer's considered judgment of what that situation was. Whether any given incident was worth this kind of illustration was a question not decided in the historian's mind merely by considering the incident in itself, but by regarding it as an event in history, with consequences flowing down through later generations. In other words, the speeches in ancient history are meant to serve the same purpose as the paragraphs in which a modern historian will set himself to demonstrate the peculiar importance of some event which he has just narrated. There is only one point in which the modern method is clearly better than the ancient, namely, that where the historian is wrong, as he often is, it is easier for his readers and critics to identify and correct his mistaken judgments when he publishes them over his own signature than when he embodies them in a dramatic scene.

This interpretation of past events is a point at which the function of the historian comes close to that of the poet. In one of the examples just mentioned, we know now that Livy's motive for dwelling so long on the protest of Camillus against the desertion of Rome was a real danger which threatened the city at the time when he was writing the Fifth Book (somewhere between 31 and 29 B.C.); and the same danger, as we know, called forth a poetic oration put into the mouth of Juno in the Third Ode of Horace's Third Book, and also a briefer but far better placed appeal put into the mouth of the same goddess by Vergil in the Twelfth Book of the Æneid, at the crisis of the story. We must not stay now to ask whether any social or political motives attracted Livy to emphasise in this way the controversy about the privileges of women in 195 B.C., beyond the chivalrous and enlightened interest in women's life which is a marked feature of all his writings,—though I think the question is worth putting, especially if further study can bring us nearer to knowing the date of the composition of different parts of Livy's history. But we are concerned now to ask whether there were reasons in the events that Livy saw coming to pass in his own day that suggested the prominence which he has given to this story of Demetrius and Philip. The scenes must have possessed some special significance in his mind, especially if we remember that, properly speaking, they lay outside the straight path of his work as a historian of Rome; indeed it is one of
the incidents from which one might have expected him to turn aside, as he does, for example, from discussing the results of the resistance offered to Antiochus by the Rhodians which he says it is not worth while to trace in detail, "since my powers are hardly equal to relating the events which properly belong to the war with Rome."

Of course we may answer that the scene was one of peculiar pathos. No doubt, but surely not more so than other scenes which he depicts with lively and delicate feeling, but in much shorter space; such, for example, as the story of Verginia’s death at her father’s hand to escape the brutality of Appius Clausius, the whole of which takes less than five pages. Again it may be said, and I believe truly, that we have probably here the type of representation familiar in the schools of the time where pupils were taught to compose orations on two opposite sides of a case. Of this we have examples left us in the works of Marcus Seneca, the rhetorician of Livy’s own day. But even if it be so, we still ask why this particular scene should be chosen for such amplification. Professor W. B. Anderson has demonstrated that the picturesque digression in Book IX. on the probable outcome of a conflict between Alexander the Great and Rome, if it had arisen, was just an old school essay which Livy thought worth a place in his History. But if he had this habit of keeping his youthful essays, he must have had plenty to choose from; and the question remains, why did he choose this particular theme to be one of only two or three so honoured?

We must look for an answer, so at least it seems to me, in the circumstances of Livy’s day. The tragedy of Demetrius is typical of what has happened again and again when an autocrat wishes to establish a dynasty in his family, or when he is merely in doubt about a competent successor. In such cases, directly the despot is established on his throne, there begins, it would seem, almost at once, the question of the succession: who may hope to be chosen? Remember the tragic history of the house of Tiberius which happened not long after Livy’s death; for Livy survived Augustus by 3 years;—how Tiberius’ son Drusus was poisoned (A.D. 23) through the machinations of Tiberius’ trusted counsellor Sejanus; and how Tiberius was persuaded by the same traitor to imprison and ultimately

\(^1\) 33, 20, 13; cf. 35, 40, 1.
to destroy his nephew's (Germanicus) son (the younger Drusus) and his nephew's wife Agrippina (who committed suicide in exile), only to discover first the treachery of Sejanus, and then, after his death, the whole truth. Both in its essence and in some of its details the tragedy bears a striking resemblance to that which we have just seen at the Court of Macedon.

But was the stifling quality of the atmosphere at Court felt in Rome for the first time at the accession of Tiberius? Who can think so, who follows the sad story of the different plans which Augustus made for the succession? All but the last of them had one and the same purpose—to keep the Empire out of the hands of his gloomy stepson Tiberius,—who, nevertheless, lived to succeed him.

First his nephew Marcellus, a youth of 18, who was married to Julia (aet. 14) in 25 B.C. Next his great general and admiral Agrippa to whom Augustus in his own grave illness in 23 B.C. handed his signet ring: but on his recovery, Agrippa was sent away to the East and Marcellus again treated as the heir; but Marcellus survived his choice only a few months. Fourthly Agrippa again, now (22 B.C.) compelled, in order to marry Julia, the Emperor's daughter and widow of Marcellus, to divorce his second wife (Marcella, sister of Marcellus) whom years before he had married at the Emperor's command at the expense of divorcing his first! Fifthly, when grandsons of Augustus were born from this union—Caecus and Lucius Caesar, Augustus adopted them. Then when Agrippa died in 12 B.C., since they were still young children, Augustus insisted on marrying Julia, for the second time a widow, though only 27 years old, to his stepson Tiberius, so that Tiberius might be the legal guardian of the two young Caesars. For this purpose Tiberius was forced to divorce his wife Vipsania, the daughter of Agrippa by his first wife, and had thus to put away Agrippa's daughter in order to marry her stepmother Agrippa's widow! Tiberius went to Rhodes in 6 B.C., and Julia was banished in 2 B.C. But the hopes of Augustus were to be again defeated by the deaths of his two grandsons in A.D. 2 and A.D. 4 respectively. Their younger brother Agrippa Postumus, born after his father's death, would have been a possible heir but for (what we are told was) his froward disposition. In A.D. 4 (sixthly) Augustus

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1 See Suet., Aug. 25; Tac., Ann., 1, 6, 3.
adopted Tiberius (who had returned from Rhodes in A.D. 2); but simultaneously with him, this young Agrippa (then 16 years old). He also required Tiberius to adopt his nephew Germanicus, the son of Tiberius' brother Drusus, the younger son of Livia, a youth to whom Augustus had been warmly attached, whether or not he was actually his father.

But in A.D. 7 Agrippa Postumus (æt. 19) was banished, in consequence of a letter shown to Augustus which was written by a friend of Agrippa's called Novatus, reproaching Augustus for having accepted the fortune of Agrippa's father and given Agrippa no share. A year or two after, a plot was formed to set free this Agrippa and his mother Julia from the imprisonment and exile to which they had by then been condemned, in order to present them to the legions and so to supersede Augustus. The plot was detected before the conspirators had taken any overt steps, and Agrippa and Julia remained in banishment. In spite of all this, in A.D. 13, Augustus himself, at the age of 76, made a voyage to the little island of Planasia, half way to Corsica, in order to see his exiled grandson; and had not his own death followed so quickly, there seems little doubt that Agrippa would have been restored to Rome and the hopes of Tiberius would again have been put in jeopardy. How serious the danger to these hopes had been Tiberius showed on his accession by summarily commanding the execution of the unhappy Prince; so that the visit of his grandfather had served only to mark him out for immediate destruction.

Now is it possible to suppose that while all this was going on men breathed any more freely in the Court of Augustus than they had done in the Court of Macedon? And knowing as we do that Livy enjoyed the friendship of Augustus himself, is it possible to doubt that the picture he has drawn of the plot of Perseus against his young half-brother Demetrius must have seemed to Livy to present a lively analogue to miseries which he knew nearer home? And with this gradual realisation of what the Imperial Government meant to those who were near its centre, may we not connect with this the marked change of tone that readers of the Fourth Decade must observe if

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1 See e.g. Book IV., 20.
2 In the Fourth Decade for the first time Livy betrays tokens of a certain weariness of his task. See the Exordium to Book XXXI. (c. 1 §§ 1-5) and the passages already cited (33, 20, 13; 35, 40-41).
they remember the buoyant hopefulness which pervades every book of
the Third.

There is a striking parallel in the work of Livy's contemporary
and fellow-Venetian, Vergil. From the happiness and hopefulness
of the greater part of the Georgics, especially marked in the conclusion
of Book II., the opening of Book III. and the whole of Book IV. (so
far as its original content is preserved, that is, in what relates to Bees)
we pass to the grave tone of the Aeneid with death as the subject of
its greatest Book, the death of the Emperor's heir as the climax of
that Book, and the death of Turnus (that is to say, of Antony and his
like) as the end of the whole poem. And if we ask what event brought
home to Vergil how deep a shadow dogged the great imperial hope,
the answer is clear: it was the tragedy of his friend Gallus ¹ in 26 B.C.,
who, having by his boastfulness offended the Emperor, felt himself
doomed to seek death. That tragedy blotted out the end of what
was probably the most perfect poem that Vergil ever wrote,—the
Fourth Book of the Georgics; and we can hardly doubt that that
tragedy, and others like it, drove deep into Livy's mind a conscious-
ness of what despotism really meant.

Now to say that the trial and speech of Demetrius were intended
directly to plead for mercy towards the young prince Agrippa would
make it almost necessary to assume that the scene was inserted in
Book XL. at a date later than the first writing of the Book;—it could
indeed be easily detached at the cost of re-wording a single sentence.
This would, however, be to outrun any definite evidence to which I
can yet point; but the four-fold parallel of Philip, Perseus, Antigonus,
and Demetrius, to Augustus, Tiberius, Agrippa, and Agrippa's
youngest son, not to think of the other natural heirs of Augustus, is a
matter, so far as it holds, of history, not of the historian's treatment.
We may guess that Livy shared Augustus' own dislike of Tiberius,
since Livy retired from Rome to Padua after Tiberius came to the
throne; and such a mind as Livy's must have felt keenly the pathos
of the exile of young Agrippa and of his mother Julia; and the hardly
less pathetic alternations of affection and suspicion by which the aged
Augustus was torn.

In any case his painting of the tragedy of Demetrius was an

¹ See Great Inheritance, c. v.
eloquent, though not quite explicit, protest against the dangers of the
dynastic system. Livy's attitude had a certain effect, as we know, on
the history of the next fifty years, by inspiring some of the would-be
republican opposition like that of Cremutius Cordus; and we are
bound also to connect with it the happier days of the post-Flavian
Emperors, that is, roughly speaking, of the second century A.D., when
great rulers like Trajan were chosen and chose their successors, not in
their family but from the best of their lieutenants. For us, at all
events, Livy's treatment of the story is a clear record of his loyalty to
the principles of just and merciful government of which the great
Romans, whose portraits he drew—Publicola, Scipio, Papirius, Cato,
Flamininus—have been for all ages the living presentment; and in the
gentle pity with which he relates the vain appeal of Demetrius to his
father's affection, and the remorse with which that father discovered
too late the treachery of which he, too readily, had been the victim,—
in this gentleness and compassion for the tragedies of human lot we
feel a breath of that newer and finer spirit which we know so well in
Vergil, and which was preparing the way at the very heart of the
Empire for the dawn of a gospel of Good Will.

1 Tac., Ann., 4, 34.