

thereupon did not say what it occurred to me to say, for fear lest for a brief word my way might be closed instead of open to the departure to which I was looking forward.

The purpose, however, of all that I have said is this. Stop slandering me by saying that I prevented you from planting settlers in Greek cities that barbarians had destroyed, and from lightening the burdens of the Syracusans by transforming your government from tyranny to kingship. In the first place there is no lie less appropriate to me that you could tell to my discredit, and further, I could, in addition to what I have said, if there were anywhere to be seen a competent tribunal, furnish even clearer evidence than this that it was I who urged this course and you who were unwilling to act. At any rate it is not difficult to put it down in black and white that the accomplishment of these plans would have been the best thing for you, for the Syracusans, and for all the other Sicilian Greeks. Well, sir, if you deny saying what you said, I have my requital. If you admit it, you will thereupon conclude that Stesichorus was wise, imitate his recantation, and shift your position from the false to the true story.

LETTER VII

323e TO THE FRIENDS AND COMPANIONS OF DION, *Prosperity*

In your letter you urged me to believe that your political convictions are the same as Dion's were, and in this connection you exhorted me to lend your cause such aid as I can by action or by speech. My reply is that I will aid your cause if your views and your aims really are the same as Dion's; if they differ from his, I will take time to think about it. But what was Dion's policy, and what were his aims? To that question I think I could give an answer based not on conjecture but on sure knowledge. For when I first came to Syracuse—I was about forty years old—Dion's age was the same as that of Hipparinus now, and he at that time arrived at a conclusion that he never departed from. He believed in liberty for the Syracusans under the guidance of the best system of laws. Consequently no one need be surprised if Hipparinus too were to be divinely led to the same conclusion and to come to agree with Dion's political creed.

The origin of this creed is a tale that young and old may well hear, and I will try to tell you the story from the beginning, for the moment is opportune. Once upon a time in my youth I cherished like many another the hope of entering upon a political career as soon as I came of age. It fell out, moreover, that political events took the following course. There were many who heaped abuse on the form of government then prevailing, and a revolution occurred. In this revolution fifty-one men set themselves up as a government, eleven in the city,

ten in the Piraeus—both of these groups were to administer the market and the usual civic affairs—and thirty came into power as supreme rulers of the whole state. Some of these happened to be relatives and acquaintances of mine, who accordingly invited me forthwith to join them, assuming my fitness for the task. No wonder that, young as I was, I cherished the belief that they would lead the city from an unjust life, as it were, to habits of justice and 'manage it,' as they put it, so that I was intensely interested to see what would come of it.

Of course I saw in a short time that these men made the former government look in comparison like an age of gold. Among other things they sent an elderly man, Socrates, a friend of mine, who I should hardly be ashamed to say was the justest man of his time, in company with others, against one of the citizens to fetch him forcibly to be executed. Their purpose was to connect Socrates with their government, whether he wished or not. He refused and risked any consequences rather than become their partner in wicked deeds. When I observed all this—and some other similar matters of importance—I withdrew in disgust from the abuses of those days. Not long after came the fall of the Thirty and of their whole system of government.

Once more, less hastily this time, but surely, I was moved by the desire to take part in public life and in politics. To be sure, in those days too, full of disturbance as they were, there were many things occurring to cause offense, nor is it surprising that in time of revolution men in some cases took undue revenge on their enemies. Yet for all that the restored exiles displayed great moderation. As it chanced, however, some of those in control brought against this associate of mine, Socrates, whom I have mentioned, a most sacrilegious charge, which he least of all men deserved. They put him on trial for impiety and the people condemned and put to death the man who had refused to take part in the wicked arrest of one of their friends, whose exile had coincided with their own exile and misfortunes.

Now as I considered these matters, as well as the sort of men who were active in politics, and the laws and the customs, the more I examined them and the more I advanced in years, the harder it appeared to me to administer the government correctly. For one thing, nothing could be done without friends and loyal companions, and such men were not easy to find ready at hand, since our city was no longer administered according to the standards and practices of our fathers. Neither could such men be created afresh with any facility. Furthermore the written law and the customs were being corrupted at an astounding rate. The result was that I, who had at first been full of eagerness for a public career, as I gazed upon the whirlpool of public life and saw the incessant movement of shifting currents, at last felt dizzy, and, while I did not cease to consider means of improving this particular situation and indeed of reforming the whole constitution, yet, in regard to action, I kept waiting for favorable moments, and

finally saw clearly in regard to all states now existing that without exception their system of government is bad. Their constitutions are almost beyond redemption except through some miraculous plan accompanied by good luck. Hence I was forced to say in praise of the correct philosophy that it affords a vantage point from which we can discern in all cases what is just for communities and for individuals, and that accordingly the human race will not see better days until
 b either the stock of those who rightly and genuinely follow philosophy acquire political authority, or else the class who have political control be led by some dispensation of providence to become real philosophers.

This conviction I held when I reached Italy and Sicily on my first visit. Upon my arrival, moreover, I found myself utterly at odds with the sort of life that is there termed a happy one, a life taken up with Italian and Syracusan banquets, an existence that consists in filling oneself up twice a day, never sleeping alone at night, and indulging in all the practices attendant on that way of living. In such an environment no man under heaven, brought up in self-indulgence, could ever grow to be wise. So marvelous a temperament as that is not in nature. That a man should grow up sober-minded would also be quite out of the question, and one might make the same statement about the other qualities that go to make up excellence of character. Neither can a city be free from unrest under any laws, be those laws
 d what they may, while its citizens think fit to spend everything on excesses, meanwhile making it a rule, however, to avoid all industry except such as is devoted to banquets and drinking bouts and painstaking attention to the gratification of lust. It is inevitable that in such cities there should be an unending succession of governments—tyranny, oligarchy, democracy—one after another, while the very name of just and equal government is anathema to those in control.

Now holding this conviction in addition to the former, I traveled
 e on to Syracuse. Perhaps it was chance, but certainly it looks as if a higher power was at that time contriving to lay a foundation for the recent events in which Dion and the city of Syracuse were concerned, for more too, I fear, unless you now follow the advice I am giving you
 327 the second time. But what can I mean when I say that my visit to Syracuse at that time was the beginning of everything? In my intercourse at that time with the young Dion, as I set before him in theory my ideals for mankind and advised him to make them effective in practice, I seem to have been unaware that I was in a way contriving, all unknown to myself, a future downfall of tyranny. At any rate Dion, who was very quick of apprehension and especially so in regard to my instruction on this occasion, responded to it more keenly and more
 b enthusiastically than any other young man I ever met, and resolved to live for the remainder of his life differently from most of the Greeks in Italy and Sicily, holding virtue dearer than pleasure or than luxury.

On that account the life he led until the death of Dionysius vexed somewhat those who passed their time in accordance with tyrannical wont.

After that he felt in his heart that he would not always be alone in holding this belief, which he had arrived at under the guidance of right reasoning. In fact he saw it growing in others too, not many, but at any rate in some, and took note. He thought that Dionysius might perhaps become one of these through the co-operation of the gods. Moreover, if he were to become such a one, the result for him and for the rest of the Syracusans would be the attainment of a life beyond all calculation blessed. Furthermore he felt it to be absolutely necessary that I come to Syracuse as soon as possible to lend a hand in the work. He remembered how readily he had by the operation of our mutual intercourse arrived at a desire to live the noblest and best life. If, accordingly, he were now to succeed in his attempt to bring about the same result once again in the case of Dionysius, he had great hopes of creating, without bloodshed or slaughter or such misfortunes as have actually occurred, a happy and genuine way of living throughout the land.

Dion, when he had rightly come to this conclusion, persuaded Dionysius to send for me, and himself sent and entreated me by all means to come as soon as possible, before certain others fell in with
 e Dionysius and diverted him to a way of life other than the best. Here is Dion's message, even if it is rather long to repeat.

'What combination of circumstances,' said he, 'more promising than that which is at this moment offered us by a sort of miracle, are we to wait for?' Then he mentioned Italy and Sicily under one government, his own influential position in that government, Dionysius young and interested, emphasizing his situation in respect of philosophy and education. Furthermore his own nephews and kindred might readily be won over to the doctrine and the way of life that I always preach, and they would be just the persons to help win over Dionysius. 'Now, if ever, then,' said he, 'will be realized any hope there is that the world will ever see the same man both philosopher and ruler of a great city.'

Such arguments he used and a great many more like them. As for my own decision, on the one hand I feared the outcome in the case of the young men, for young men have sudden impulses and often quite contradictory ones. On the other hand I knew that Dion had naturally a solid character and that he had now reached middle age. Hence as I considered and debated whether I should hearken and go, or what I should do, the view nevertheless prevailed that I ought to go, and that if anyone were ever to attempt to realize my ideals in regard to laws and government, now was the time for the trial. If I were to convince
 c but one man, that in itself would ensure complete success.

Such were the considerations that inspired and emboldened me

to leave home on this journey. I was not guided by the motives that some men attributed to me, but chiefly by a concern for my own self-respect. I feared to see myself at last altogether nothing but words, so to speak—a man who would never willingly lay hand to any concrete task, for I should practically have been guilty of disloyalty—in the first place to the ties of hospitality and friendship that bound me to Dion. He was really exposed to considerable danger. Suppose something were to happen to him, or suppose he were expelled by Dionysius and his other enemies, and were to come to me an exile and to question me, saying, 'Plato, I have come to you an exile not for want of soldiers or of horsemen to defend myself against my foes, but for lack of the arguments and the eloquence that I knew you, more than others, could wield to turn the minds of young men to virtue and justice so as to establish in all cases mutual friendship and alliance. Because you failed to supply me with these, I have left Syracuse and here I am. Your treatment of me, however, is not the most disgraceful part of your conduct. Surely on this occasion you have, so far as in you lay, proved traitor, not to me only, but also to philosophy, whose praises you are always singing and of whom you say that the rest of mankind treat her ignobly. Moreover, if I had chanced to be living in Megara, you would certainly have come to support me in the cause to which I summoned you, or else you would think yourself the very meanest of men. As the situation is, do you suppose you will ever escape the charge of cowardice by pleading the distance to be traveled, the long voyage, and the great hardships? Not by a great deal.'

To these accusations what plausible reply could I make? None is possible.

So I went, thereby following reason and justice as closely as is humanly possible. For such reasons as I have described, I forsook my own pursuits, and they were not undistinguished, to come under a tyranny, a form of government seemingly inconsistent with my doctrines and my character. In doing so I cleared myself in the sight of Zeus Xenios and left no ground of complaint to the cause of philosophy, which would have suffered reproach if I had turned weakling and had by refusing to play a man's part brought disgrace upon myself. When I arrived, for I must be brief, I found the whole environment of Dionysius seething with cabals and with malicious reports to the government about Dion. I took his part as best I could, but I could do little, and in about the fourth month, on the ground that Dion was plotting against the government, Dionysius put him aboard a small boat and expelled him dishonorably. Thereupon all of us who were friends of Dion were in terror lest Dionysius should accuse and punish someone else for complicity in Dion's plot. As for me a rumor actually got abroad in Syracuse to the effect that I had been executed by Dionysius because I was responsible for the whole course of events.

When Dionysius saw that we were all in this state, he was afraid

that our fears might result in something worse, and set about winning us all over by a show of cordiality. Incidentally he was active in consoling me, bidding me feel no anxiety and begging me by all means to remain. There really was no honor for him in my taking flight from him, but rather in my remaining, which explains the great pretense he made of requesting it. The requests of tyrants we are aware have in them something of compulsion. So to gain his end he prevented my departure. He took me to the citadel and planted me in a place from which there was no longer any possibility of a shipmaster accepting me as a passenger, unless Dionysius not merely took no steps to prevent it, but unless he actually dispatched himself the messenger with orders to accept me. Otherwise neither merchant nor embarkation official would have permitted me to set forth alone, but would at once have arrested me and have taken me back to Dionysius, especially since the news had now at last been spread, just the opposite of the former report, that Dionysius was marvelously fond of Plato.

What was the situation, though? For the truth must be told. He did indeed grow more and more to like me as time passed and as he learned to know my life and character, but he wanted me to commend him more than Dion, to think him rather than Dion a special friend. In fact his ambition in this respect was surprising. He shunned, however, the best method of attaining his object, if it could be attained at all—that is, of course, by receiving instruction and hearing me discourse on philosophy, to become my intimate friend and disciple. The reports circulated by our enemies made him afraid he might somehow be entangled and so Dion have accomplished his design. I, however, waited patiently through it all and bore in mind the original purpose of my visit, namely, the hope that he might in some way become enamored of the philosophical life, but his resistance carried the day.

Now the time I devoted to my first visit to Sicily and to my stay there was the result of all these causes. Afterward I left home and visited Sicily once more at the urgent invitation of Dionysius. I must explain later why I went the second time and that all I did was reasonable and right, for the benefit of those who inquire what I hoped to gain by going. First, however, in order to avoid the mistake of dealing with secondary matters as if they were of primary importance, I must advise you as to your proper conduct in view of recent events. Here is my message.

One who advises a sick man, living in a way to injure his health, must first effect a reform in his way of living, must he not? And if the patient consents to such a reform, then he may admonish him on other points? If, however, the patient refuses, in my opinion it would be the act of a real man and a good physician to keep clear of advising such a man—the act of a poltroon and a quack on the other hand to advise him further on those terms. The same thing holds in the case of a city,

whether it have one master or many. If a government that proceeds in orderly fashion along the right course, seeks advice about its advantage in some matter, it would be the act of an intelligent man to give advice to such a community. In the case, however, of those who are altogether astray from the path of right government, and will by no means consent to go on the track of it, who on the other hand give notice to their adviser to keep his hands off the constitution under penalty of death if he disobeys, and order him to cater to their wishes and desires by pointing out the easiest and quickest method of attaining them permanently, in that case I should think the adviser who consented to such conditions a poltroon—the one who refused, a real man.

This being my firm conviction, whenever anyone asks my advice about any of the most important concerns of his life, such as the acquisition of wealth, or the proper regime for body or soul, then, in case I think that his daily life is fairly well regulated, or that when I give him advice on the matter about which he consults me, he will consent to follow it, under these circumstances I do counsel him with all my heart and do not stop at a mere formal compliance. If, however, he either does not ask my advice at all, or shows plainly that there is not the least likelihood of his taking the advice I give him, to such a man I do not go self-invited with advice. Constraint I will not use, even though it be my own son. A slave I would advise and constrain too, if he refused to obey. Father or mother I think it sinful to constrain, unless they are suffering from mental derangement. As long as they are leading a consistent life that suits them, though it does not me, I would neither estrange them by useless admonitions, nor on the other hand would I play the subservient flatterer and provide them means to satisfy desires that I myself had rather die than be addicted to. The same policy should also be a rule of life for the wise man in dealing with his city. If he thinks that the constitution of his city is imperfect, he should say so, unless such action will either be useless or will lead to his own death, but he must not apply force to his fatherland by revolutionary methods. When it is impossible to make the constitution perfect except by sentencing men to exile and death, he must refrain from action and pray for the best for himself and for his city.

In this same fashion I will advise you, just as Dion and I used to advise Dionysius. We advised him, in the first place, to lead the sort of life day by day that would be most conducive to self-control and would enable him to win loyal friends and companions. Thus he would avoid the plight of his father, who, when he had come into possession of many large cities of Sicily that the barbarians had devastated, was unable to resettle them and to set up in each a trustworthy government composed of his friends. For such a service he could trust neither those unconnected with him, no matter what their origin, nor even the younger brothers whom he had brought up himself and had raised

from private life and poverty to the height of power and affluence. None of them was he able to develop by the influence of eloquence or instruction or benefactions or kinship, so that he could trust him as a partner in the government, and in this he was seven times inferior to Darius. For Darius trusted those who were not brothers and had not been brought up by him, who had only been his associates in the assault on the Mede and the eunuch, and distributed among them seven provinces, each larger than the whole of Sicily. In these men moreover he found faithful allies who neither attacked him nor each other, and in his career we see an ideal example of the character which the statesman and the good king must display, for the laws which he framed have been the preservation of the kingdom of Persia even up to now. Take again the Athenians, who, though they were not themselves the founders, took over many Greek cities that had been invaded by the barbarians but were still inhabited. Nevertheless they maintained their empire for seventy years, because they possessed in the various cities men who were their friends. Dionysius, however, who brought together all Sicily into one city because in his wisdom he trusted no one, all but met with disaster. He was in want of tried and true friends, and there is no surer sign of a man's moral character than this, whether he is or is not destitute of such friends.

So Dion and I gave Dionysius this advice. Since he had been treated by his father as he had, and so had had no experience of education or of suitable instruction, he must in the first place bestir himself to obtain them. After that, in the second place, he must win to friendship with himself and to moral harmony others from among his kinsmen and companions, but especially must he become such a one himself, for in this quality he had shown himself remarkably deficient. We did not put it so plainly—that was not safe—but we veiled our meaning and constantly argued that anyone who takes this course will be prosperous himself and will cause the people whom he rules to prosper, and that on the other hand any other course will have just the opposite result. When he had progressed in the way we mapped out, and had developed in himself an intelligent and constant character, he might recolonize the deserted cities of Sicily and so unite them by laws and institutions that they would be a resource to him and to each other for meeting the attacks of the barbarians. Thus he would not merely double the size of the empire he had inherited, but would really multiply it many times. For if this plan were realized, he might readily reduce the Carthaginians to greater subjection than that of Gelon's time, in contrast to his father, who had lately consented to pay tribute to the barbarians. Such were our words and our exhortations when we were supposedly plotting against Dionysius, according to the tales which flowed from many sources and which, prevailing with Dionysius, brought about Dion's expulsion and threw us into a state of terror.

b To complete the story of the great events that happened in a brief space, Dion returned from the Peloponnesus and from Athens and gave Dionysius a practical lesson. When, however, he had twice freed their city and restored it to them, the Syracusans then reacted toward Dion in exactly the same way as Dionysius had. For when Dion undertook to educate him and train him, that he might become a king worthy of his office, and planned on such terms to be his ally throughout life, Dionysius hearkened to the calumniators who declared that
c everything that Dion did at that time was part of a plot against the government. His plan, they said, was that Dionysius, when his intelligence had yielded to the spell of education, should lose interest in the government and should put it in Dion's hands. Dion would then usurp the throne, and expel him from his domain by fraud. Such reports carried the day then, and so they did again a second time, when circulated among the Syracusans, and most monstrous and disgraceful the victory was for those responsible.

d Now I must explain to those who urge me to take a hand in the present situation what it was that happened. I am myself an Athenian; I was Dion's friend and ally, and I went to the tyrant to effect a reconciliation between them. In my struggle with the calumniators I was defeated. When Dionysius, however, tried to persuade me with honors and gifts of money to lend him the support of my testimony and my friendship to give color to the expulsion of Dion, he failed completely. Now, after this, Dion on his return to his native land enlisted
e in his company two men who were brothers and like me came from Athens. His friendship with them, however, was not based on philosophy but on such social activities as are current among most of those who call themselves friends. Their comradeship is a product of mutual hospitality and of initiations into the different Mysteries, and so was that of these two friends who accompanied Dion on his return. Their friendship was founded on such relations as these and on their services to his expedition. Having arrived in Sicily, when they
334 saw that Dion was the victim of the calumnies that were circulated among the Sicilians, who had been liberated by him, to the effect that he was plotting to make himself tyrant, they not only proved false to the comrade to whom they were bound by ties of hospitality, but practically assassinated him with their own hands, inasmuch as they stood by with arms in their hands to lend aid to the murderers.

Now I do not ignore their dishonor and their wickedness, nor do I comment on it, for there are now and will be hereafter many others
b who will make it their business to repeat that strain. I do, however, take exception, when it is said of Athens that such men are a blot on her honor. For I maintain that he is also an Athenian who refused to betray this same man, when by so doing he might have gained both wealth and numerous honors. His attachment to his friend had originated not in any lowbred friendship, but in mutual participation in

liberal training, in which alone a man endowed with intelligence must put confidence, rather than in kinship of soul or body. Hence the city does not deserve to suffer reproach because of the slayers of Dion, as if they had ever been men of any importance.

c All that I have been saying is intended as advice for the friends and relatives of Dion, but I have now a special communication to add, as I give the same counsel and the same discourse now the third time to you my third audience. Let not Sicily nor any city anywhere be subject to human masters—such is my doctrine—but to laws. Subjection is bad both for masters and for subjects, for themselves, for their children's children, and for all their posterity. The attempt to enslave others is altogether disastrous, and greed for such plunder is a trait of mean-souled and shortsighted characters—men who know nothing of what is good or what is just, here or hereafter, in God's sight or in man's. Of this truth I attempted first to convince Dion, secondly Dionysius, and now the third time you. Be then convinced of it for the sake of Zeus who saves the third time.

Be guided also by the example of Dionysius and Dion, for of those two the one who would not be convinced is now leading an ignoble
e life, while he that was convinced has met a noble death. For when a man makes the highest ideals his aim for himself and for his city and accepts the consequences, in his fate there is nothing amiss or ignoble. None of us is born immortal, nor would being so bring happiness, as most people think. Nothing good or evil worth considering befalls that which has no soul. Only to a soul either in the body or separated
335 from it can good or evil occur. We must at all times give our unfeigned assent to the ancient and holy doctrines which warn us that our souls are immortal, that they are judged, and that they suffer the severest punishments after our separation from the body. Hence we must also hold it a lesser evil to be victims of great wrongs and crimes than to be doers of them. The man who crams his moneybags while his soul
b starves does not listen to these doctrines, or, if he does, he laughs them to scorn, as he supposes, and on every side ruthlessly snatches like a beast whatever he hopes will provide him with food or drink or the satisfaction of that brutal and gross pleasure that has no right to be called by a name derived from the goddess Aphrodite. He is blind and does not see that consequences attend the abominable wickedness of his acts of violence, for each wrongdoing adds its weight to a burden which the sinner must drag with him, not only while he lives his life on earth, but after he has returned to the underworld whence he
c came—a journey unhonored and miserable altogether and always.

Now I convinced Dion when I explained to him these doctrines and others of the sort, so that I have every reason to be angry with his slayers in a certain way exactly as with Dionysius. In both cases I and all the rest of mankind, you may say, received the greatest injury. For the slayers of Dion made away with the man who intended to

make justice effective, while Dionysius would not consent to put justice into practice throughout his empire. He possessed great power, and if in his empire philosophy and political power had really been united in the same man, its glory would have shone forth among all men, Greek and barbarian, and would in itself have brought home to them the true belief, namely, that neither city nor individual can attain happiness except through a life wisely conducted under the rule of justice, whether a man be guided by his own sense of justice or be brought up and trained in righteous habits under the control of holy men. In preventing this Dionysius inflicted an injury in comparison with which I count the others slight indeed.

The slayer of Dion does not know that his action has had the same result as that of Dionysius. I am certain, as far as a man can express himself confidently in the case of a man, that if Dion had come into power, he would never have adopted any other form of government than the following. In the first place, after he had made Syracuse, his native city, clean and fair, on putting an end to her slavery, and had set her up arrayed as one free, thereupon he would by all means have brought the citizens under discipline by instituting an appropriate and ideal system of laws. After that he would have been eager to carry out the settlement of all Sicily and its liberation from the barbarians, driving out some of them and subduing the rest more easily than Hieron did. Moreover, if these results had been brought about by a man who was just, courageous, sober, and a student of philosophy, the public would have adopted the same opinion about virtue as, in case Dionysius had been won over, would among practically all mankind have brought deliverance by its spread.

As it was, though, some divinity or some evil spirit broke loose with lawlessness, with ungodliness, and, worst of all, with the boldness of folly—the soil in which all manner of evil to all men takes root and flourishes and later produces a fruit most bitter for those who sowed it. So folly a second time brought complete failure and disaster. Let me now, however, say nothing to bring ill luck on the third attempt.

Nevertheless I advise you, the friends of Dion, to imitate both his loyalty to his country and the temperate rule of living that he followed. Try, however, to carry out his plans under better auspices. What his plans were I have told you plainly. In case anyone cannot live in the Doric fashion that was the tradition of your fathers, but seeks instead to live like the slayers of Dion, in Sicilian fashion, do not call upon him to aid you, and do not suppose that he can ever act loyally and righteously. Call upon the rest, however, to aid in the colonization of all Sicily and in bringing about equality under the law, both from Sicily itself and from the whole Peloponnesus. Have no fear of Athens either, for there exist there too men who surpass all mankind in virtue and who loathe the crimes of treacherous assassins.

If, however, these measures must be left till later, and you are

forced to hasten because of the manifold and varied quarrels that are springing up every day among the factions, I suppose every man who has been granted by fortune even a small measure of correct opinion must be aware that those who have engaged in civil war can never rest from their troubles until those who are victorious cease to keep feuds alive by contention and by sentencing men to exile or death, and cease to execute vengeance on the opposing party. Rather, exercising self-control and drawing up equitable laws, that are designed to favor them no more than the defeated party, they must make their opponents observe the laws by bringing to bear two motives, shame and fear. They will inspire fear because they show that they have the stronger forces, shame because they are evidently stronger in resisting their inclinations and in their willingness and ability to be subject to the laws. There is no other possible means of putting an end to the misfortunes of a city torn by faction. When cities are in that condition, of themselves they are wont to breed faction, enmity, hatred, mistrust.

Those then who are on any occasion victorious must, if ever they come to desire peace and security, of and by themselves select any men among the Greeks who, according to their information, are pre-eminent, men who are in the first place advanced in years, who possess wives and children at home and can reckon the most and the best and the most famous ancestors, and who own all of them sufficient property. As to their numbers, fifty such men would be enough for a city of ten thousand population. These men they should summon from their homes with entreaties and offers of the greatest possible honors. When they have got them, they should entreat and command them to draw up laws after taking an oath to give no advantage to conquerors or to conquered, but equal rights to the whole city alike.

After the laws have been drawn up, everything hinges on this. If the conquerors make themselves more completely subject to the laws than the conquered, there will be everywhere an atmosphere of security and happiness and deliverance from every trouble. If this is not done, do not call on me or on anyone else to join the man who refuses to obey my present injunctions, which indeed are akin to the measures that Dion and I attempted jointly to carry through for the good of Syracuse. These measures, however, came second. Those measures were first which we attempted to carry out with the help of Dionysius himself for the common good of all. Some fate too strong for man made havoc of our plans. This time you must try to put them into effect more happily through the kindness of fate and the favor of providence.

Thus far my advice and injunctions and the story of my first visit to Dionysius. Next he who is interested may hear how reasonably and appropriately my second journey and voyage came about. You will remember that my account of the period of my former stay in Sicily

338 was completed, as I have pointed out, before I set forth my advice to the friends and companions of Dion.

After that accordingly I employed every means in my power to persuade Dionysius to let me go, and we finally came to an agreement that he should do so. When peace, however, was made—there was at that time war in Sicily—it was part of the agreement that Dionysius should send for Dion and me again, when he had made his position as ruler more secure. Meanwhile he begged Dion to believe that he had not been driven into exile, but had merely been sent abroad for a time. I for my part agreed to return on these conditions.

So when peace had been made, he did send for me, but asked Dion to wait another year and begged me by all means to come. Now Dion at this urged and entreated me to set sail, for reports did indeed frequently reach us from Sicily to the effect that Dionysius had changed and was now marvelously devoted to philosophy—which explains why Dion so insistently entreated me not to turn a deaf ear to the summons. As for me, I knew to be sure that young men are often so affected in connection with philosophy; nevertheless I thought it safer for the moment at least to leave both Dion and Dionysius entirely to their own devices, and I incurred the ill will of both by replying that I was an old man and that furthermore the present arrangement did not agree with the terms of our previous compact.

Next apparently Archytas paid a visit to Dionysius. I had before my departure brought about relations of hospitality and friendship between Archytas and the Tarentines and Dionysius. There were some others too in Syracuse who had had some instruction from Dion, besides still others who were crammed with certain scraps of secondhand philosophy. My opinion is that these men had been trying to hold with Dionysius on these matters the sort of conversation that would imply a thorough acquaintance with my beliefs on his part. Now Dionysius, among other natural qualifications that would make him a capable student, is extremely ambitious to excel. He was accordingly very likely pleased to be so approached and withal ashamed to have it become obvious that he had had no instruction when I was in the city. This would lead him to wish for a more explicit course of instruction, and this wish would be accompanied by the spur of rivalry. The reasons for his receiving no instruction during my former visit I have recounted previously in this present letter. At any rate when I had got safely home and had declined his second invitation, as I have just explained, Dionysius, I think, made it absolutely a point of honor that no one should ever suppose that I had a poor opinion of his natural gifts and of his present capability and that, having also had some experience of his way of living, I was now in my disgust no longer willing to visit his court.

Now it is my duty to tell the truth and put up with the possibility that someone may, when he hears what happened, be contemptuous of

my philosophy and give credit for intelligence to the tyrant. For Dionysius the third time actually sent a trireme for me in order to make the journey easy for me. He also sent along one of the disciples of Archytas, Archedemus, whom he thought I valued most among the Sicilians—with others among my acquaintances in Sicily. All of these gave me the same account, namely, that Dionysius had made marvelous progress in philosophy. He also sent me a very long letter, because he knew how I was situated with respect to Dion and how eager Dion on his side was for me to set sail and go to Syracuse. He had in fact provided his letter with an introduction designed to fit the whole situation. It was expressed pretty much as follows: 'Dionysius to Plato.' Then after the conventional salutation without any preliminary he went on at once to say, 'If you consent and come now to Sicily, in the first place you will have the privilege of making any arrangement that suits you about Dion and his affairs. I am sure that what suits you will be fair, and I shall agree to it. If you do not come, you will find nothing that affects Dion either personally or otherwise arranging itself to your liking.' These were his words; the rest would be long to repeat and not to the point. Letters also kept coming from Archytas and the Tarentines to sing the praises of Dionysius' devotion to philosophy and to inform me that, if I did not come now, it would mean a complete breach of the friendly relations that I had been instrumental in creating between them and Dionysius, and those relations were not lacking in political importance.

Now when I was thus urgently sent for—when my friends in Sicily and Italy were pulling me, while those at Athens were, you might say, by their entreaties actually shoving me out of Athens—once more came the same message, that I ought not to betray either Dion or my friends and companions in Tarentum. Besides, I knew anyway without being told that no one need be surprised if a young man on hearing a really great enterprise suggested, quick to grasp the idea, had yielded to the spell of the ideal life. It seemed accordingly my duty to make the experiment so as to arrive at a definite conclusion one way or the other, for I must not be guilty of betraying that very ideal and of exposing my beliefs to the reproach they would deserve if there were any truth in the reports I had received.

So I did set out under cover of these arguments, full of fears, as you might expect, and foreboding no very good result. At any rate in going I found that here at least it was really a case of the third to the savior, for I was fortunately brought safely home again. For this I have to thank Dionysius next to God, because, when many wished to put me out of the way, he interfered and gave some place to conscience in his dealings with me.

When I had arrived, I thought I ought first to put it to the proof whether Dionysius was really all on fire with philosophy or whether the frequent reports that had come to Athens to that effect amounted to

nothing. Now there is an experimental method for determining the truth in such cases that, far from being vulgar, is truly appropriate to despots, especially those stuffed with secondhand opinions, which I perceived, as soon as I arrived, was very much the case with Dionysius. One must point out to such men that the whole plan is possible and explain what preliminary steps and how much hard work it will require, for the hearer, if he is genuinely devoted to philosophy and is a man of God with a natural affinity and fitness for the work, sees in the course marked out a path of enchantment; which he must at once strain every nerve to follow, or die in the attempt. Thereupon he braces himself and his guide to the task and does not relax his efforts until he either crowns them with final accomplishment or acquires the faculty of tracing his own way no longer accompanied by the pathfinder. When this conviction has taken possession of him, such a man passes his life in whatever occupations he may engage in, but through it all never ceases to practice philosophy and such habits of daily life as will be most effective in making him an intelligent and retentive student, able to reason soberly by himself. Other practices than these he shuns to the end.

As for those, however, who are not genuine converts to philosophy, but have only a superficial tinge of doctrine—like the coat of tan that people get in the sun—as soon as they see how many subjects there are to study, how much hard work they involve, and how indispensable it is for the project to adopt a well-ordered scheme of living, they decide that the plan is difficult if not impossible for them, and so they really do not prove capable of practicing philosophy. Some of them too persuade themselves that they are well enough informed already on the whole subject and have no need of further application. This test then proves to be the surest and safest in dealing with those who are self-indulgent and incapable of continued hard work, since they throw the blame not on their guide but on their own inability to follow out in detail the course of training subsidiary to the project.

The instruction that I gave to Dionysius was accordingly given with this object in view. I certainly did not set forth to him all my doctrines, nor did Dionysius ask me to, for he pretended to know many of the most important points already and to be adequately grounded in them by means of the secondhand interpretations he had got from the others.

I hear too that he has since written on the subjects in which I instructed him at that time, as if he were composing a handbook of his own which differed entirely from the instruction he received. Of this I know nothing. I do know, however, that some others have written on these same subjects, but who they are they know not themselves. One statement at any rate I can make in regard to all who have written or who may write with a claim to knowledge of the subjects to which I devote myself—no matter how they pretend to have acquired it,

whether from my instruction or from others or by their own discovery. Such writers can in my opinion have no real acquaintance with the subject. I certainly have composed no work in regard to it, nor shall I ever do so in future, for there is no way of putting it in words like other studies. Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance on instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining.

Besides, this at any rate I know, that if there were to be a treatise or a lecture on this subject, I could do it best. I am also sure for that matter that I should be very sorry to see such a treatise poorly written. If I thought it possible to deal adequately with the subject in a treatise or a lecture for the general public, what finer achievement would there have been in my life than to write a work of great benefit to mankind and to bring the nature of things to light for all men? I do not, however, think the attempt to tell mankind of these matters a good thing, except in the case of some few who are capable of discovering the truth for themselves with a little guidance. In the case of the rest to do so would excite in some an unjustified contempt in a thoroughly offensive fashion, in others certain lofty and vain hopes, as if they had acquired some awesome lore.

It has occurred to me to speak on the subject at greater length, for possibly the matter I am discussing would be clearer if I were to do so. There is a true doctrine, which I have often stated before, that stands in the way of the man who would dare to write even the least thing on such matters, and which it seems I am now called upon to repeat.

For everything that exists there are three classes of objects through which knowledge about it must come; the knowledge itself is a fourth, and we must put as a fifth entity the actual object of knowledge which is the true reality. We have then, first, a name, second, a description, third, an image, and fourth, a knowledge of the object. Take a particular case if you want to understand the meaning of what I have just said; then apply the theory to every object in the same way. There is something for instance called a circle, the name of which is the very word I just now uttered. In the second place there is a description of it which is composed of nouns and verbal expressions. For example the description of that which is named round and circumference and circle would run as follows: the thing which has everywhere equal distances between its extremities and its center. In the third place there is the class of object which is drawn and erased and turned on the lathe and destroyed—processes which do not affect the real circle to which these other circles are all related, because it is different from them. In the fourth place there are knowledge and understanding and correct opinion concerning them, all of which we must set down as one thing more that is found not in sounds nor in

shapes of bodies, but in minds, whereby it evidently differs in its nature from the real circle and from the aforementioned three. Of all these four, understanding approaches nearest in affinity and likeness to the fifth entity, while the others are more remote from it.

The same doctrine holds good in regard to shapes and surfaces, both straight and curved, in regard to the good and the beautiful and the just, in regard to all bodies artificial and natural, in regard to fire and water and the like, and in regard to every animal, and in regard to every quality of character, and in respect to all states active and passive. For if in the case of any of these a man does not somehow or other get hold of the first four, he will never gain a complete understanding of the fifth. Furthermore these four [names, descriptions, bodily forms, concepts] do as much to illustrate the particular quality of any object as they do to illustrate its essential reality because of the inadequacy of language. Hence no intelligent man will ever be so bold as to put into language those things which his reason has contemplated, especially not into a form that is unalterable—which must be the case with what is expressed in written symbols.

Again, however, the meaning of what has just been said must be explained. Every circle that is drawn or turned on a lathe in actual operations abounds in the opposite of the fifth entity, for it everywhere touches the straight, while the real circle, I maintain, contains in itself neither much nor little of the opposite character. Names, I maintain, are in no case stable. Nothing prevents the things that are now called round from being called straight and the straight round, and those who have transposed the names and use them in the opposite way will find them no less stable than they are now. The same thing for that matter is true of a description, since it consists of nouns and of verbal expressions, so that in a description there is nowhere any sure ground that is sure enough. One might, however, speak forever about the inaccurate character of each of the four! The important thing is that, as I said a little earlier, there are two things, the essential reality and the particular quality, and when the mind is in quest of knowledge not of the particular but of the essential, each of the four confronts the mind with the unsought particular, whether in verbal or in bodily form. Each of the four makes the reality that is expressed in words or illustrated in objects liable to easy refutation by the evidence of the senses. The result of this is to make practically every man a prey to complete perplexity and uncertainty.

Now in cases where as a result of bad training we are not even accustomed to look for the real essence of anything but are satisfied to accept what confronts us in the phenomenal presentations, we are not rendered ridiculous by each other—the examined by the examiners, who have the ability to handle the four with dexterity and to subject them to examination. In those cases, however, where we demand answers and proofs in regard to the fifth entity, anyone who pleases

among those who have skill in confutation gains the victory and makes most of the audience think that the man who was first to speak or write or answer has no acquaintance with the matters of which he attempts to write or speak. Sometimes they are unaware that it is not the mind of the writer or speaker that fails in the test, but rather the character of the four—since that is naturally defective. Consideration of all of the four in turn—moving up and down from one to another—barely begets knowledge of a naturally flawless object in a naturally flawless man. If a man is naturally defective—and this is the natural state of most people's minds with regard to intelligence and to what are called morals—while the objects he inspects are tainted with imperfection, not even Lynceus could make such a one see.

To sum it all up in one word, natural intelligence and a good memory are equally powerless to aid the man who has not an inborn affinity with the subject. Without such endowments there is of course not the slightest possibility. Hence all who have no natural aptitude for and affinity with justice and all the other noble ideals, though in the study of other matters they may be both intelligent and retentive—all those too who have affinity but are stupid and unretentive—such will never any of them attain to an understanding of the most complete truth in regard to moral concepts. The study of virtue and vice must be accompanied by an inquiry into what is false and true of existence in general and must be carried on by constant practice throughout a long period, as I said in the beginning. Hardly after practicing detailed comparisons of names and definitions and visual and other sense perceptions, after scrutinizing them in benevolent disputation by the use of question and answer without jealousy, at last in a flash understanding of each blazes up, and the mind, as it exerts all its powers to the limit of human capacity, is flooded with light.

For this reason no serious man will ever think of writing about serious realities for the general public so as to make them a prey to envy and perplexity. In a word, it is an inevitable conclusion from this that when anyone sees anywhere the written work of anyone, whether that of a lawgiver in his laws or whatever it may be in some other form, the subject treated cannot have been his most serious concern—that is, if he is himself a serious man. His most serious interests have their abode somewhere in the noblest region of the field of his activity. If, however, he really was seriously concerned with these matters and put them in writing, 'then surely' not the gods, but mortals have utterly blasted his wits.¹

One who has followed my account of the reality and of the deviations from it will be assured of the fact that, whether Dionysius has written anything on the first and highest principles of nature, or

¹ *Iliad* 7.360, 12.234.

that case will anyone consent to take me as a passenger, setting forth, as I must, from the house of Dionysius?

Besides my other difficulties, I was living in the garden belonging to the palace, so that even the porter would refuse to let me out unless an order were sent him from Dionysius.

If, though, I wait over the year, I shall be able to write to Dion and let him know my situation and the state of my plans. If, on the other hand, Dionysius does carry out any of his promises, my achievements will not be altogether ridiculous, for probably Dion's property amounts to at least one hundred talents, if rightly estimated. On the other hand if the elements of discord now apparent develop as they probably will, I am at a loss what to do with myself, but in spite of that I suppose I must hold out at least another year and try to expose Dionysius' schemes by actual test.

Having come to this conclusion, I told Dionysius on the next day that I had decided to remain. 'However,' said I, 'I beg you not to suppose that I have authority over Dion, but to join me in dispatching letters to him to explain the decision that we have just come to and to ask him whether he is satisfied with it. If he is not, but wishes to make some other proposal, let him write at once. You meanwhile must take no further action about his affairs.' Such were our words, such was our agreement, pretty much as I have just stated it.

So the ships now set sail, and it was no longer possible for me to travel, when Dionysius suggested to me that half the property should be Dion's and half his son's. He promised to sell it and to give me half the sum realized to take to Dion, and to retain the other half in Sicily for the boy, since this was really the fairest arrangement. I was amazed at the proposal and thought it most absurd to dispute further. Nevertheless I said that we ought to wait for the letter from Dion and then send these proposals back to him. He, however, immediately afterward in a very headstrong way sold all of Dion's property, choosing his own place and arrangements and buyers, and never uttered a sound to me about it at all. I for my part likewise had no further conversation with him about Dion's affairs, since I thought there was nothing to be gained.

Up to this point I had in this way taken the part of philosophy and of my friends, but from then on Dionysius and I lived, I looking out like a bird that wants to fly away, he engaged in devising a way of frightening me off without paying me any of Dion's money. Just the same we called ourselves friends before all Sicily.

Now Dionysius attempted to decrease the pay of the more elderly of the mercenaries, contrary to his father's practice, and the soldiers, infuriated by this, gathered in a throng and said they would not allow it. Dionysius then attempted to force them to yield by closing the gates of the acropolis, but they at once burst into a sort of barbaric war song and rushed at the walls. Dionysius, terror-stricken

at this, granted everything and more besides to the peltasts then collected there.

Now a report quickly spread that Heraclides was to blame for all this, and he, getting wind of the report, took himself off and disappeared. Dionysius then sought to capture him. Being at a loss, however, he summoned Theodotes to the garden, where I happened to be c strolling at the time. The rest of their conversation I have no knowledge of and did not hear, but what Theodotes said to Dionysius in my presence I know and remember.

'Plato,' he said, 'I am trying to persuade Dionysius here, in case I am able to bring Heraclides to this place to talk with us about the charges that are now being made, to accept my proposal that, if it seems undesirable for Heraclides to live in Sicily, he be allowed to take his wife and son and emigrate to the Peloponnesus and live there, not d harming Dionysius and receiving the income from his property. I have for that matter already sent for him and I will send for him now again. He may appear in answer to my former summons or in answer to the present one. In any case I beg and beseech Dionysius, if anyone finds Heraclides, whether in the country or here in the city, to let no harm befall him except to leave the country until Dionysius decides otherwise. Do you agree to this?' said he, speaking to Dionysius. e

'I do,' said he, 'and if he appears at your house he will suffer no harm beyond what you have just mentioned.'

Now on the afternoon of the next day Eurybius and Theodotes hastily approached me in a state of the greatest alarm and Theodotes asked me, 'Plato, were you present yesterday when Dionysius made the agreement with you and me about Heraclides?'

'Of course,' said I.

'At this moment though,' said he, 'there are peltasts scouring the country in quest of Heraclides, and he must be somewhere about. Do by all means,' said he, 'go with us to Dionysius.'

So we set out and entered the presence of Dionysius. The other two then stood silently weeping, while I spoke. 'These men,' said I, 'are afraid you may take some step in regard to Heraclides that is contrary to the agreement you made yesterday. I think he has been seen making his way in this direction.'

When he heard this he blazed up and turned every kind of color that an angry man would.

Theodotes fell at his feet and, seizing him by the hand, burst into tears and besought him to do no such thing. I broke in and comforted him with the words, 'Courage, Theodotes, for Dionysius will never go so far as to break the agreement of yesterday by doing otherwise.'

And Dionysius gave me a very tyrannical look and said, 'With you I made no agreement either great or small.'

'By the gods,' said I, 'you did, not to do the very thing that this

man is now begging you not to do.' And when I had said this, I turned my back and went out.

Thereupon he kept his men on the trail of Heraclides, but Theodotes sent word to him by messengers to make his escape. Dionysius then dispatched Tisias with peltasts and orders to pursue him. Heraclides, however, it was said, gained the Carthaginian domain a small part of a day ahead of them and so escaped.

After this Dionysius concluded that the old plot afforded a plausible ground for quarreling with me so as not to pay over Dion's money. First he dismissed me from the acropolis, having found a pretext that the women had to celebrate some ten-day festival in the garden where I was living. So he ordered me to stay during this period outside in the house of Archedemus. While I was there Theodotes sent for me and expressed a good deal of resentment and criticism of Dionysius for his recent behavior. When Dionysius heard that I had visited Theodotes, he found here again a new pretext, akin to the former, for quarreling with me, and sent someone to ask me whether I really had a meeting with Theodotes when he sent for me.

'Certainly,' said I.

'In that case,' said the messenger, 'he bade me tell you that you by no means do well always to prefer Dion and Dion's friends to him.'

After these words he never again sent for me to come to his house, since it was now plain that I was a friend of Theodotes and Heraclides and an enemy to him. He thought too that I was disaffected because Dion's property was being altogether dissipated.

350 So after this I lived outside the acropolis among the mercenaries. Here there came to me among others those serving in the crews who were from Athens, and so fellow citizens of mine, and reported that I was unpopular among the peltasts, and that some of them threatened to make an end of me, if ever they caught me. I somehow, however, contrived the following way of escape. I sent to Archytas and to my other friends at Tarentum, telling them the situation in which I found myself. They discovered some pretext for an embassy from the city and sent Lamiscus, who was one of their number, with a thirty-oared vessel. When he arrived, he entreated Dionysius on my behalf, saying that I wanted to depart and urging him not to refuse. Dionysius granted his request and sent me off with an allowance of money for my traveling expenses. As for Dion's property, neither was there any further demand for it on my part nor was it restored.

When I arrived at Olympia in the Peloponnesus, I found Dion in attendance at the festival and reported what had happened. He, having called Zeus to witness, at once issued a summons to me and my friends and companions to make preparations for taking vengeance on Dionysius. From us vengeance was due for the crime of deluding a guest, so Dion said and believed, from him for unjust expulsion and exile.

In reply I bade him invite my friends, if they were willing, 'but as for myself,' said I, 'you and the others practically forced me to become a guest at the table and at the hearth of Dionysius and a partaker in sacred rites with him. He very likely thought because of the false reports that many were circulating that I was leagued with you in a plot against him and his government, and yet he scrupled to put me to death. For one thing, then, I am now scarcely of an age to help anyone in making war, and for another you have in me a common friend, in case you ever feel a desire to be friends with each other and want to accomplish some good. As long as you are bent on evil, invite others.' This I said in detestation of my wanderings and misfortunes in Sicily.

By declining instead of accepting my offers of mediation they brought upon themselves all the misfortunes that have now come upon them. None of these, in all human probability, would ever have occurred if Dionysius had paid the money to Dion or had become completely reconciled to him, for I would and I could easily have restrained Dion. As it is, their attacks on each other have everywhere brought a flood of misfortune.

Yet Dion's policy was the same, I should say, as my own or 351 any other decent man's ought to be, in regard to the exercise of power by himself and his friends in his own city, namely, by conferring benefits on the city to acquire for himself the greatest power and the highest honors.

By this I do not mean the man who makes himself and his companions and his city rich by forming a plot and collecting conspirators—some man who is poor and unable to rule himself, a weakling enslaved to his desires—who next puts to death all those who own property—such he terms foes—then plunders their possessions and exhorts his accomplices and companions never to lay it at his door, if they say they are poor. Nor do I mean the man who is honored because of such a service to his city as distributing to the people by decrees the property of the few, nor the man who is head of a great city that has dominion over many smaller ones, and distributes unjustly to his own city the property of the others. On such terms neither Dion nor anyone else will ever, so far as he acts voluntarily, aim at a power baleful to himself and to his race forever and ever. He will aim at a republic and at instituting the best and justest laws without resorting in the least to executions and bloodshed.

Now while Dion was in the act of achieving this, having chosen to be the victim of crimes rather than commit them—though he took precautions against such attempts—then, in spite of all, he stumbled at the very summit of his mastery over his enemies. Nor is it strange that he did, for while a good man dealing with wicked men, a man sober and sane of mind, would in general never be completely deceived in estimating the souls of such men, yet it would not be surprising if he were caught napping like a good helmsman, who might

not altogether overlook the approach of a storm, but might overlook the extraordinary and unexpected magnitude of the tempest and so be overwhelmed by its violence. This is the mistake that Dion made, for assuredly he was aware that those who proved his undoing were bad men. The depth, however, of their folly and their villainy and their bloodthirstiness he did overlook, and so undone, he lies among the fallen, visiting Sicily with woe untold.

The advice I have to give after this narrative has mostly been given and so no more. I went back to the subject of my second visit to Sicily because the necessity of dealing with it seemed forced upon me by the surprising and paradoxical nature of the events. If anyone after this account finds the events less paradoxical and if anyone concludes that there was sufficient justification for what happened, then what I have said is fairly and adequately put.

LETTER VIII

b To THE FRIENDS AND COMPANIONS OF DION, *Prosperity*

I will try to describe to you as well as I can the policy that you must adopt if genuine prosperity is to be yours. It is my hope that the counsel I give will be advantageous not only to you, though of course to you especially, but also in the second place to all at Syracuse, and in the third place to your enemies and foes, with the exception of any who have perpetrated impious crimes. Such deeds are past redeeming; such stains no one can ever cleanse. Consider now what I have to say.

Now that the despotic power has been overthrown throughout all Sicily, you are at odds only on one issue. On one side are those who desire to restore the empire once more, on the other those who wish to set the final seal on their escape from tyranny. Now the general opinion about such a situation is that the right policy to adopt on any occasion is that one which will do the most damage to the enemy and the most good to your own side. It is, however, by no means easy to do a great deal of damage to the other side without also receiving a good deal yourselves in return. You need not travel to any distant land to see glaring instances of that sort of thing. You have on the spot in Sicily an object lesson in the recent course of events. You have seen how the two parties tried respectively to inflict injuries and to avenge them, and you need only tell the tale to others to give on each occasion adequate instruction on that point. You need hardly be at a loss for examples of that sort. Examples, however, of measures conducive to the advantage of all, friend and foe alike, or of measures involving the least possible damage to both sides, it is neither easy to discover nor, when one has discovered them, to put them into effect.

One might as well resort to prayer as advise anything of the sort, or attempt to speak of it. Well, let us actually resort to a sort of prayer, for we should always appeal to the gods when we set about speaking or reflecting—a prayer, though, that I hope will find fulfillment.

Here is the message that our prayer indicates to us. There is one family that has for the most part ever since the war began supplied commanders to you and to your enemies. That family was at one time put in command by your fathers, when they were reduced to utter helplessness—at that moment, I mean, when Greek Sicily was in the greatest danger of being laid waste by the Carthaginians and so reverting altogether to barbarism. Under those circumstances two men were elected—Dionysius, who was young and warlike, to superintend the military activity for which he was fitted, and Hipparinus to be an older adviser. They were given the title of supreme commanders in defense of Sicily, in other words, tyrants. Now you may attribute the deliverance of Sicily to a special providence, that is, to God, or to the superior qualities of the rulers, or to the combined operation of these two causes assisted by the action of the citizens of those days; be it as you choose to suppose. At any rate that was the way in which deliverance was brought to the men of that time. Now after such achievements it was perhaps just that all should be grateful to their saviors. If, however, the despotic power has since that time wrongly misused the city's gift, for this the penalty is partly paid, partly still to pay. Yes, but what just penalty is there that can be enforced in their present situation? If it were possible for you to escape from them easily with no great danger or hardship, or for them to seize the government again without difficulty, in that case it would also be impossible for me to give you the advice that I am going to give.

The actual state of affairs being what it is, you must bear in mind on both sides and keep recalling how many times, first in one camp then in the other, you have had great expectations and have supposed again and again that now only some little thing stood between you and complete success. Above all be mindful that in each case that little thing turns out to be a source of woes unnumbered; no goal is ever reached, but to the supposed end of the old is linked again and again the budding of a fresh beginning—a vicious circle that threatens to involve both parties, that of the tyrant and that of the people, in total destruction. You are face to face with the probability—may God avert it—that the Greek tongue will be all but silenced throughout the whole of Sicily, for that island will have come under the domination and have passed into the hands of Phoenicians or Opici. Hence it behooves every Greek to throw himself into the task of preventing this catastrophe. If anyone else has a more suitable and a better remedy than the one I am going to suggest, he need only bring it forward to deserve richly the title, Friend of Hellas. My own view at the moment I will try to make clear with all frankness on a basis of impartial

THE
COLLECTED DIALOGUES OF
PLATO

INCLUDING THE LETTERS

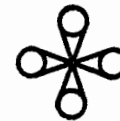
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