

Russell's Anthology of Greek Prose

Text 40: The news of the fall of Elatea (Demosthenes)

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a) Source:

De corona 169-173.

b) Background (synopsis quoted from Russell's book):

"In his speech ... Demosthenes reviewed his own achievements throughout his career. Our first extract is a vivid description of the panic at Athens when news arrived (autumn 339 BC) that Philip had captured Elatea, which was only two days' march away. Demosthenes represents himself as the only person who knew what to do."

c) Language comment:

The only difficulty in this text can be found between lines 19 and 21, as there is some ellipsis of some elements that would have been common with the former sentence. Also in these lines the writer takes for granted that we know about some earlier events, which makes the language more difficult.

d) Content:

Demosthenes explains that, when the city was at a loss, he was the only one who knew what had to be done to avoid falling into Philip's hands. People are in the assembly and nobody knows what to say, only he seems to have a clear idea of the situation.

e) Distribution of content:

(numbers refer to the lines in the printed edition)

- 1-6: Events when the news arrives.
- 6-15: Nobody wants to speak.
- 16-22: Description of some good citizens.
- 22-28: Which kind of person was needed?

f) Notes for help:

- 1) γάρ as often to start narrative (cf. No.18.1); ἦκε emphatic initial position, also verb-subject word-order (cf. 10 ff. cf. e.g. No.18.26 ἦκον μὲν...).
- 1) ὡς + acc.: "to", only with personal objects (Goodwin 1220), cf. No.18.22.
- 1-2) observe the different use of two almost consecutive ὡς.
- 2) κατείληπται: perf. pass. καταλαμβάνω; ex. of vivid construction in indirect speech after verb in past.
- 2) οἱ μὲν: 'some', looking ahead to 4, οἱ δέ, 'others'
- 3) ἐξαναστάντες: (intrans. strong) aor. ppl. ἐξάνιστημι.
- 3) μεταξὺ δειπνοῦντες: adverb; Goodwin 1572: such adverbs often connected in position and sense with temporal participle, though grammatically they qualify the leading verb. Transl. "in the middle of dining".
- 3) τοὺς ἐκ τῶν σκενῶν: proleptic ἐκ, vivid (cf. vb. ἐξεῖργον), = τοὺς ἐν ταῖς σκεναῖς, 'the men in the tents/stalls'; repeated τῶν with prepositional phrase localizes them ('the ones in the agora')
- 4) note accumulation of imperfect tenses (also in 7-8): common tense in 'scenic' rather than 'summary' narrations. Why the burning of the wicker-frames?
- 4) τὰ γέρρα: of its several meanings, as he has spoken of "shops" in a market, I suppose it means the osier roofs.
- 6) θορύβου: genitive w. πλήρης, 'full of'; note word-order: why?
- 6) τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ: "on the next day", dat. of time at which; ex. of feminine adj. without noun (understand ἡμέρα).
- 7) ἐκάλουν: it's in the imperfect, perhaps to mean that, while the μὲν sentence was still happening, the δέ sentence, in aorist, had already taken place.
- 8) ἐκείνην means the βουλή.
- 8) ὑμεῖς: note equivalence assumed between this Athenian jury and the assembly

8-9) ex. of *πρίν* + (acc. and) inf., in positive sentences: *ἐκείνην* = the council; note normal function of *βουλή* to formulate proposals for discussion, *προβουλεύσαι*.

9) *ἄνω*: up on high, above - i.e. up on the Pnyx, hill west of Acropolis.

10) *τὸν ἤκοντα*: cf. *ἦκε ... τις* of 1 above.

10) *ὡς*: a third use here.

10) *ἡ βουλή*: of course, understand that it means its representants, not all of them.

10) *παρήγαγον*: aor. *παράγω*, vb. commonly used of bringing someone forward to speak; cf. *παρέρχομαι* (used in impf. 12, aor. infin. 16), used of coming forward to speak

11) "who wants to speak?", formula for opening the debate (as D. states in 15, cf. e.g. Aristoph. *Acharnians* 45). Note preservation of archaism *ἀγορεύειν* = *δημηγορεῖν* in formulaic expression.

12-14) run of 3 genitive absolutes: why?

13) personification of fatherland.

13-14) *τὸν ἐροῦντα*: fut. pple. (present form *εἶρω* not used in Attic); = *ὁς ἐρεῖ*, the man to speak.

14) *ὑπέρ* with genitive, 'on behalf of'; *κατά* with accus., 'in accordance with'.

15) "it is right to regard the voice which the herald gives forth as that common to the whole country": note *φωνήν* inside the relative clause; it should be at the front, and in nominative, its case has been attracted by the relative.

15) *ἀφίησι*: 3rd sing. *ἀφίημι*, 'send forth'; *κοινήν* predicative, + gen. *τῆς πατρίδος; δίκαιον*: understand *ἐστί*.

16-18) *ἄν ... ἐβαδίζετε*: ex. of *ἄν* in second position in its clause. Note type of conditional: *εἰ* + impf.indic, with *ἄν* + impf.indic. in main clause: of present unreal condition or as here of continued or habitual past action, of course the meaning is in past (we should have found aorist in both sides), a curious use of "historic present" in a conditional period: "if it were the duty ..., you would all... have been coming up to the (speaker's) platform" (the bema where the speaker addressed the assembly).

17) contrast 8: here distinction of 'you and the other Athenians': some editors delete *καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι Ἀθηναῖοι*.

17) *ἀναστάντες*: intrans. strong aor. pple. *ἀνίστημι*.

18) *οἶδ' ὅτι*: parenthetical, "assuredly"; WS 2585: cf. *εὖ ἴσθι ὅτι, δῆλον ὅτι* (= obviously). *ὅτι* becomes part of a formula, requiring no verb and losing all conjunctive force, e.g. Dem.6.29, *οὐτ' ἄν ὑμεῖς (οἶδ' ὅτι) ἐπαύσασθε* "nor (I know) would you

have stopped".

19) *τοὺς πλουσιωτάτους*: in accusative because it still depends on *ἔδει*; the same will happen in the next sentence.

19-20) *ἀμφοτέρα ταῦτα*: "in both respects", acc. of respect.

19-22) understand verbs from 17-18, *παρελθεῖν ἔδει* and *ἐβαδίζετε ἄν* (but now shift to 3rd person).

20) *εὖνους* acc. pl. (not nom.sing.), w. dat., 'well-disposed to'.

21) *ἐπιδόντες*: aor. pple. *ἐπιδίδωμι*, 'contribute (for public benefit)' (aor. pple. of *ἐφοράω* has same form!), w. cognate accus.

22) *ἐποίησαν*: the subject is *οἱ...ἐπιδόντες*.

22) note expanded personification - strong effect at solemn moment. For *καιρός* as personified subject, see Denniston, *Greek Prose Style*, p. 32.

23) *ἐκάλει*: the subjects are *ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἡ ἡμέρα*.

24) *παρηκολουθηκότα*: perf. pple. *παρακολουθέω*, 'follow closely'; remember that *παρακολουθέω* uses a dative.

24) *συλλελογισμένον*: perf. pple. *συλλογίζομαι*, 'conclude' (from premises).

25) *τίνος εἵνεκα*: ind.qu., in vivid sequence (indicative retained) after past verb; vivid sequence also in 27, *χρή*.

25) *καὶ τί βουλόμενος*: second ind. qu. parallel to *τίνος εἵνεκα*.

25) observe how these two ind. interrogative pronouns don't use the *ὅ* in front of it...

26) *μή ... μήδ'*: generic. *πόρρωθεν*: here of time, not place: "from far back, for a long time".

26) *εἰδώς*: pple. *οἶδα*.

26) *ἐξετακώς*: perf. pple. *ἐξετάζω*, 'examine'.

26-27) these two *οὔτ' εἰ* have adversative meaning, "even if".

27) ...and now observe how this one has the *ὅ* in front of it, maybe it should be taken in the sense of relative indefinite ("whatever"); remember that the relative indefinite and the indirect interrogative (when it has the *ὅ* in front) are equal.

27) *οὐδὲν μᾶλλον*: none the more.

27-8) ex. of *μέλλω* + fut. infs., 'was going to'.

28) *εἴσεσθαι*: fut. infin. *οἶδα*.

28) *ἔξειν*: fut. infin. *ἔχειν*, w. infin., in sense 'be able to'.

28) συμβουλεύειν: w. dat., 'advise'.
