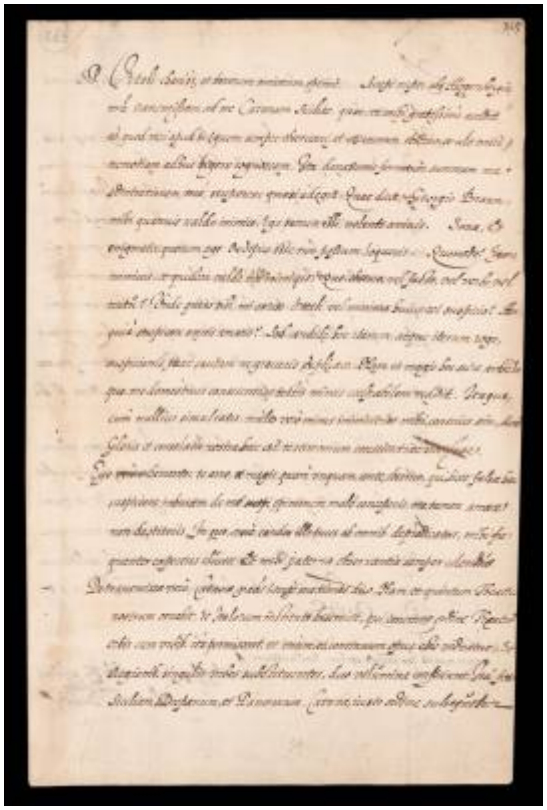


Single leaf, folding to make four pages, manuscript letter in ink on two, integral address leaf; mounted onto a guard, paper strengthened at outer margin.

TO ABRAHAM ORTELIUS, “THE MOST BRILLIANT AND BEST OF GOOD FRIENDS”

[Autograph letter to Ortelius].

Author
BRAUN, G[eorg]

Publication date
22 January 1595.

Publisher

Publication place
Cologne,

Physical description
Single leaf, folding to make four pages, manuscript letter in ink on two, integral address leaf; mounted onto a guard, paper strengthened at outer margin.

Dimensions
318 by 215mm. (12.5 by 8.5 inches).

Notes
Autograph letter written in Latin and signed, “G. Braun” to “the most brilliant and best of good friends”, Abraham Ortelius, discussing their friendship, Braun’s ‘Civitates orbis terrarum’ and Ortelius’s ‘Theatrum’.

Braun begins the letter by explaining that he “recently got the map of Catania, Sicily, sent from our Hogenberg. It is most pleasing to me and I value it uniquely, because I always used to admire it at your’s, and still now admire it, and know that the memory is still strong”. He goes on to express concern, however, about the dedication on the map:

“Thus the map attained my greatest admiration, and yet it almost stunned me that it said: To Georg Braun, although he is very much an enemy to me, although I am a friend to him against his will. Shocking and mysterious words, which I can’t imagine you saying. How am I an enemy, and indeed ‘very much an enemy’, to you? By what deed or word or command, then? Thus I ask you, my dear one, Ortelius, should I think nothing of this? Or is it because the lover suspects everything? But again I ask this most sincerely, what the cause of your mistrust is, lest you are reluctant to explain. For I very much [want] to know how the inner thoughts of your conscience might render me less guilty. And so, since I am aware of no hostility, much less any hostility on my part, tell me. The proof of our collaboration is a glory and comfort to me. I really and truly love you, and…I see that, although you held a bad opinion about me, filled with false suspicion, however you have not stopped loving me. Truly, your brilliance has been praised by all, and it often expertly outshines me. And I will always defend it, with my brotherly respect”.

After such ardent declarations of affection, Braun once again lavishes praise on the map of Catania, and says that “it will ornament my fifth Theatrum, and work on the principle of the Italians, who combine the Theatrum orbis and the cities in one neat series, so that they appear to be one continuous work. And placing the cities with the individual regions, they produce two volumes. Thus after Sicily, Trepani and Palermo, Catania will follow in the correct order. See, what attempt at imperfection will separate those things which the world and its undertakings have joined together?”. He continues with some advice about one of Ortelius’ maps in particular: “You are not unaware that the city of Antwerp, on the fifth map, a most majestic map, must undoubtedly be seen shown over two pages. I also wish to add an accurate explanation, worthy of such a city. And so, with your approval, I now determine that, as a first description, its origins and name should be explained, since it follows the way of uniting the separate parts, you see”. After another bout of flattery, Braun signs of his letter: “And so and so, farewell my brilliant Abraham, and if, through foolishness, I have been the cause of any offence, about which I know nothing, I appeal to your kindness, forgive me. And don’t you stop your Braun, you who has always so far been yours, from continuing to be…With love and respect and loyalty in every office, G. Braun”. The letter does not end, however, without a casual reminder that “if any genius fails you regarding Antwerp, turned this great material over to me, and I will add my style and put it back in order”.

Bibliography

Provenance

Provenance
1. Left by Ortelius’s nephew, Jacob Cole, to the Dutch Church in London.
2. Sotheby’s, ‘The highly important correspondence of Abraham Ortelius’, 14 February 1955, lot 41
3. Sotheby’s, 18 June 1968, lot 350.

Price: £30000

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