

## THE ORATION ON THE PEACE

### ARGUMENT

To understand as well the subject of this oration, as the motives of Demosthenes, who here recommends a course of action different from the vigorous measures counselled by him on other occasions, it is necessary to take a short review of the preceding events, and observe the position in which Athens stood at the time when the speech was delivered.

Philip, after taking Olynthus, turned his thoughts to new objects, of which the more immediate were, first, to get possession of the Greek towns on the Hellespont and the Chersonese; secondly, to get a footing in southern Greece. The first of these seemed comparatively easy since the reduction of Olynthus; the second was more difficult, and could only be accomplished by the aid or sufferance of certain Greek states. But the continuance of the Sacred war afforded Philip an opportunity of which he skilfully availed himself. Phalæcus, son of Onomarchus, had maintained his ground against the enemy, and both Thebans and Thessalians began to be desirous of Macedonian aid. But Athens was in alliance with Phocis, and Philip had seen some few years before, when the Athenians occupied the pass of Thermopylæ, that they were still capable of vigorous efforts, if under able direction or any strong excitement. It became therefore his policy to conciliate Athens for the present. He caused it to be announced by means of his agents and partisans, that he was desirous of peace, and reports of various acts of kindness done by him to Athenian citizens in Macedonia were studiously disseminated. This seems to have been the period at which Philip gained over to his interest, or even retained in his service, divers active members of the Athenian assembly. Among them was Philocrates, who first made a formal motion that Philip should have leave to open a negotiation. Soon after he carried a decree to send ambassadors to Philip, and ten were despatched, among them Philocrates himself, Æschines, and Demosthenes. They returned with a letter from Philip, and were soon followed by three Macedonian envoys of high distinction, Antipater, Parmenio, and Eurylochus. The Athenians met in assembly; peace was determined on, and the ambassadors were again ordered to sail to Macedonia to receive the oath of Philip. In the meantime Philip had marched into Thrace, where he defeated Cersobleptes, the king of that country, and took possession of a part of his dominions. From this expedition he had not returned when the Athenian ambassadors arrived at Pella, the Macedonian capital. Here they waited a month, and, on Philip's return, were induced by that monarch, who had secretly prepared for his invasion of Phocis, to accompany him as far as Pheræ in Thessaly. From Pheræ they departed for Athens, and Philip marched straight to Thermopylæ. The Athenians, deceived by his promises, were lulled into security; Phalæcus, seeing no hope of assistance, withdrew from Phocis, while Philip, strengthened by the forces of Thessaly and Thebes, overran the country, and took possession of Delphi. An Amphic-

tyonic council was conveyed to sit in judgment on the sacrilegious Phocians. Sentence was passed on them, which (besides other penalties) deprived them of their seat in the council of Amphictyons, and transferred their privileges to the king of Macedonia.

The first intelligence of these transactions was received at Athens with consternation. Measures were taken to put the city in a state of defence, as if an invasion were threatened. Philip sent a calm letter of remonstrance, which allayed the fears of the people, but did not abate their anger and ill-humour. A feeling of disappointment was mingled with shame for their own credulity, and alarm at the increase of Macedonian influence. They saw too, with deep vexation, that Philip, instead of conferring any benefit upon Athens, as they had fondly hoped he would, had excited himself to promote the advantage of Thebes, which, by his assistance, recovered her subject Bœotian towns, and even obtained some of the Phocian territory for herself. Nothing more strongly marked the state of public feeling at Athens than her refusal at this time to attend the Pythian games, at which Philip had been chosen to preside by the Amphictyonic decree. The Athenians by absenting themselves made a sort of protest against his election.

It was in this state of things that Macedonian ambassadors, accompanied by Thessalian and Bœotian, arrived at Athens, to demand from her a formal sanction of the decree by which Philip had become a member of the Amphictyonic council. An assembly was held to consider the question. The people were exceedingly clamorous, and applauded those orators who opposed the claim of Philip. Æschines, who supported it, could scarcely obtain a hearing. Demosthenes at length addressed the assembly, and, without advising any dishonourable submission, or even direct concession to what the envoys required, strongly dissuaded his countrymen from taking any course which might draw Athens into a war. It was not that Philip was less to be dreaded now than he was before; on the contrary, his power had greatly increased; but this was not the time to provoke his hostility, backed as he was by Thessaly and Thebes; and even if Athens could stand alone against such a combination, a mere Amphictyonic title was not a proper subject of quarrel.

It appears that the Athenians came to no formal vote on this matter, but their anger was so far calmed by the arguments of Demosthenes, that the envoys departed with full confidence that the peace would not be broken.

I SEE, men of Athens, our affairs are in great perplexity and confusion, not only because many interests have been sacrificed, and it is useless to make fine speeches about them, but because, for preserving what remains, you cannot agree upon any single expedient, some holding one opinion, and some another. And besides, perplexing and difficult as deliberation of itself is, you, Athenians, have rendered it far more so. For other men usually hold counsel before action, you hold it after: the result of which during all the time of my remembrance has been, that the censurer of your errors gets repute

and credit as a good speaker, while your interests and objects of deliberation are lost. Yet, even under these circumstances, I believe, and I have risen with the persuasion, that if you will desist from wrangling and tumult, and listen as becomes men on a political consultation of such importance, I shall be able to suggest and advise measures by which our affairs may be improved and our losses retrieved.

Well as I know, Athenians, that to talk before you of oneself and one's own counsels is a successful artifice with unscrupulous men, I think it so vulgar and offensive that I shrink from it even in a case of necessity. However, I think you will better appreciate what I shall say now, by calling to mind a little that I said on former occasions. For example, Athenians, when they were advising you in the troubles of Eubœa to assist Plutarch,<sup>1</sup> and undertake a discreditable and expensive war, I, and I alone, stood forward to oppose it, and was nearly torn to pieces by the men who for petty lucre have seduced you into many grievous errors. A short time later, when you incurred disgrace, and suffered what no mortals ever did from parties whom they assisted, you all acknowledged the worthlessness of their counsels who misled you, and the soundness of mine. Again, Athenians, when I saw that Neoptolemus<sup>2</sup> the actor, privileged under colour of his profession, was doing serious mischief to the state, managing and directing things at Athens on Philip's behalf, I came and informed you, not from any private enmity or malice, as subsequent occurrences have shown. And herein I shall not blame the advocates of Neoptolemus (for there were none) but you yourselves; for had you been

<sup>1</sup> Callias, sovereign of Chalcis, had invited Philip into Eubœa, to assist him against Plutarch, sovereign of Eretria: Plutarch applied to Athens for assistance, and Phocion was sent with an army into Eubœa, where, by the carelessness or treachery of Plutarch, he was exposed in a defile at Tamynæ, and attacked by Callias with a superior force of Chalcidians and Macedonians. He gained the victory, but to punish Plutarch expelled him from Eretria.

<sup>2</sup> Neoptolemus on some professional engagement at Pella had probably been bribed by Philip. He was active in promoting the peace and afterwards abandoned his country for Macedonia.

seeing a tragedy in the temple of Bacchus, instead of it being a debate on the public weal and safety, you could not have heard him with more partiality, or me with more intolerance. But I suppose you all now understand that he made his journey to the enemy, in order (as he said) to get the debts there owing to him, and defray thereout his public charges at home; and, after urging this argument, that it was hard to reproach men who brought over their effects from abroad, as soon as he obtained security through the peace, he converted into money all the real estate which he possessed here, and has gone off with it to Philip. Thus two of my warnings, justly and rightfully pronounced in accordance with the truth, testify in my favour as a counsellor. A third, men of Athens, I will mention, this one only, and straight proceed to the subject of my address. When we ambassadors, after receiving the oath on the peace, had returned, and certain men were promising that Thespiæ and Plataea<sup>1</sup> would be repeopled; that Philip, if he got the mastery, would save the Phocians, and disperse the population of Thebes; that Oropus<sup>2</sup> would be yours, and Eubœa given as compensation for Amphipolis, with more of the like hopes and delusions, which led you on, against policy, equity, and honour, to abandon the Phocians; you will find, I neither aided in any of these deceits, nor held my tongue. I warned you, as you surely remember, that I knew not of these things nor expected them, and deemed it all idle gossip.

These instances, wherein I have shown greater foresight than others, I mention not by way of boast, nor ascribe, Athenians, to any sagacity of my own, nor will I pretend to discover or discern the future from any but two causes, which I will state: first, men of Athens, through good fortune, which I observe beats all the craft and cleverness of man;

<sup>1</sup> Thespiæ and Plataea were taken and rased to the ground by the Thebans under Epaminondas, B.C. 373.

<sup>2</sup> Oropus was a border town, for the possession of which Thebes and Athens had long contended. Themison of Eretria had taken it from Athens, and put it in the hands of the Thebans.

secondly, because I judge and estimate things disinterestedly, and no one can show that any lucre is attached to my politics or my speeches. Therefore, whatever be your true policy, as indicated by the circumstances, I have a correct view of it; but when you put money on one side as in a balance, it carries away and pulls down the judgment with it, and he that does so can no longer reason upon anything justly or soundly.

The first thing which I maintain to be necessary is this. Whether you seek to obtain allies, or contribution,<sup>1</sup> or aught else for the state, do it without disturbing the present peace; not that it is very glorious or worthy of you, but, whatever be its character, it had better suited our interests never to have made peace, than to break it ourselves: for we have thrown away many advantages, which would have rendered the war then safer and easier for us than it can be now. Secondly, Athenians, we must take care that these people assembled and calling themselves Amphictyons<sup>2</sup> are not by us necessitated, or furnished with a plea, to make a common war against us. I grant, if we renewed the war with Philip on account of Amphipolis, or any such private quarrel, in which Thessalians, Argives and Thebans are not concerned,

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, money contributed by allies. When the Athenians re-established their confederacy, which had been dissolved by the Peloponnesian war, the payments received from the allies received the name of *contributions* as less obnoxious than *tribute*.

<sup>2</sup> The Amphictyonic league, at the head of which Philip was now placed, was a federal union of Hellenic (or Greek) tribes, having for its object the maintenance of a common religion and nationality. The various deputies met twice a year, in the spring at Delphi, in the autumn at Anthela near Thermopylæ. They met, not only to celebrate games and festivals, but to transact the business of the league, to determine questions of international law and religion. The oracular sanctity of Delphi gave a dignity to these meetings, but the rivalry and jealousies of the more powerful Greek states did not permit them (in general) to be controlled by Amphictyonic decrees. The three Sacred wars are instances in which their decrees were enforced by combination; but in the two last, for which Philip's aid was invited, there was but little enthusiasm in the cause from any motive of religion or patriotism. The meeting at which Philip had been chosen president was so tumultuous and irregular, that the Athenians would not allow it to be a legal convocation of the Amphictyonic body. Philip greatly resented this, because his election was considered to establish the title of his countrymen to rank among the Greek nations.

none of them would join in it, and least of all—hear me before you cry out—the Thebans: not that they are kindly disposed to us, or would not gratify Philip, but they see clearly, stupid as one may think them,<sup>1</sup> that, if they had a war with you, the hardships would all be theirs, while another sat waiting for the advantages. Therefore they would not throw themselves into it, unless the ground and origin of the war were common. So if we again went to war with the Thebans for Oropus or any private cause, I should fear no disaster, because our respective auxiliaries would assist us or them, if either country were invaded, but would join with neither in aggression. Such is the spirit of alliances that are worth regard, and so the thing naturally is. People are not friendly either to us or the Thebans, to the extent of equally desiring our safety and our predominance. Safe they would all have us for their own sakes; dominant, so as to become their masters, they would not have either of us. What then, say I, is the danger? what to be guarded against? Lest in the coming war there be found a common plea, a common grievance for all. If Argives, and Messenians, and Megalopolitans, and some of the other Peloponnesians, who are in league with them, are hostile to us on account of our negotiating with the Lacedæmonians and seeming to take up some of their enterprises; if the Thebans are (as they say) our enemies, and will be more so, because we harbour their exiles and in every way manifest our aversion to them; Thessalians again, because we harbour the Phocian exiles, and Philip, because we oppose his admission to the Amphictyonic body; I fear that, each incensed on a private quarrel, they will combine to bring war upon you, setting up the decrees of the Amphictyons, and be drawn on (beyond what their single interests require) to battle it with us, as they did with the Phocians. For you are surely aware that now the Thebans and Philip and the Thessalians have co-operated, without having each exactly the same views. For example,

<sup>1</sup> Bœotian stupidity was proverbial.

the Thebans could not hinder Philip from advancing and occupying the passes, nor yet from coming last and having the credit of their labours. True, in respect of territorial acquisition, something has been done for them; but in regard to honour and reputation, they have fared wretchedly; since, had Philip not stepped in, they would (it seems) have got nothing. This was not agreeable to them, but having the wish without the power to obtain Orchomenos and Coronea, they submitted to it all. Of Philip, you know, some persons venture to say, that he would not have given Orchomenos and Coronea to the Thebans, but was compelled to do so. I wish them joy of their opinion, but thus far I believe that he cared not so much about that business, as he desired to occupy the passes, and have the glory of the war, as being determined by his agency, and the direction of the Pythian games. Such were the objects of his ambition. The Thes-salians wished not either Philip or Thebes to be aggrandised, since in both they saw danger to themselves; but sought to obtain these two advantages, the synod at Thermopylæ, and the privileges at Delphi;<sup>1</sup> for which objects they aided the confederacy. Thus you will find that each party has been led into many acts unwillingly: and against this danger, being such as I describe, you must take precautions.

Must we then do as we are bidden, for fear of the consequences? and do you recommend this? Far from it. I advise you so to act, as not to compromise your dignity, to avoid war, to prove yourselves right-thinking, just-speaking

<sup>1</sup> The Thessalians were peculiarly aggrieved by their exclusion (during the Sacred war) from the national synod, and from the oracle and festivities of Delphi. Their country had been the cradle of the Hellenic race, their deputies were the most numerous in the council, and their vicinity to the places of meeting gave them a greater interest in the proceedings. Hence they most eagerly pressed for punishment of the Phocians. The tribes of Mount Ceta proposed that the male population of Phocis should be precipitated from the Delphian rock; which cruelty was not permitted by Philip. To gratify the Thessalians, Philip put them in possession of Nicæa, one of the towns near the pass of Thermopylæ, but even there he kept a Macedonian garrison. The Thebans had expected to have that town themselves, and were disappointed.

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