Nile, but since then it has been joined to the mainland by a causeway. When he saw what wonderful natural advantages the place possessed - for it was a strip of land resembling a broad isthmus, which stretched between the sea and a great lagoon, with a spacious harbour at the end of it - he declared that Homer, besides his other admirable qualities, was also a very far-seeing architect, and he ordered the plan of the city to be designed so that it would conform to this site. There was no chalk to mark the ground plan, so they took barley meal, sprinkled it on the dark earth and marked out a semi-circle, which was divided into equal segments by lines radiating from the inner arc to the circumference: the shape was similar to that of the chlamys or military cloak, so that the lines proceeded, as it were, from the skirt, and narrowed the breadth of the area uniformly. While the king was enjoying the symmetry of the design, suddenly huge flocks of birds appeared from the river and the lagoon, descended upon the site and devoured every grain of the barley. Alexander was greatly disturbed by this omen, but the diviners urged him to take heart and interpreted the occurrence as a sign that the city would not only have abundant resources of its own but would be the nurse of men of innumerable nations, and so he ordered those in charge of the work to proceed while he himself set out to visit the temple of Ammon.

This was a long and arduous journey, which was beset by two especial dangers. The first was the lack of water, of which there was none to be found along the route for many days' march. The second arises if a strong south wind should overtake the traveller as he is crossing the vast expanse of deep, soft sand, as is said to have happened to the army of Cambyses long ago: the wind raised great billows of sand and blew them across the plain so that fifty thousand men were swallowed up and perished. These dangers were present in the minds of almost all of Alexander's companions, but it was difficult to dissuade him from any course once he had set his heart on it. Fortune, by giving way to his insistence on every occasion had made his resolve unshakeable, and the proud spirit which he carried into all his undertakings had created in him a passion for surmounting obstacles, so that in the end he was able to overcome not only his enemies but even places and seasons of the year.

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1. Later the site of the famous octagonal lighthouse.
2. In the winter of 332 B.C.
barbarian origin as ‘O, pai Dios’ (O, son of Zeus), and that Alexander was delighted at this slip of pronunciation, and hence the legend grew up that the god had addressed him as ‘O, son of Zeus’. We are also told that while he was in Egypt he listened to the lectures of Ptolemy the philosopher, and especially approved his saying to the effect that all men are ruled by God, because in every case that element which imposes itself and achieves the mastery is divine. Even more philosophical was Alexander’s own opinion and pronouncement on this subject, namely that while God is the father of all mankind, it is the noblest and best whom he makes especially his own.

28. In general Alexander adopted a haughty and majestic bearing towards the barbarians, as a man who was fully convinced of his divine birth and parentage, but towards the Greeks he was more restrained, and it was only on rare occasions that he assumed the manner of divinity. He made an exception when he wrote to the Athenians on the subject of Samos and said, ‘I would never have given you that free and glorious city; it was from your master at that time that you received it and now hold it – my so-called father.’ By this he was referring to Philip. But some years later, when he had been wounded by an arrow and was in great pain, he remarked, ‘What you see flowing, my friends, is blood, and not that Ichor which flows in the veins of the blessed immortals in heaven.’

On another occasion too, when there was a loud crash of thunder, and all those in his company were frightened by it, Anaxarchus the sophist asked him, ‘Since you are the son of Zeus, could you make a noise like that?’ Alexander laughed and replied, ‘I have no wish to terrify my friends as you would have me do. It is you who apparently despise my table, because, so you say, what you see on it is merely fish, and not a row of satraps’ heads!’ For there is a story that this remark had been made by Anaxarchus when he saw a present of small fish that the king had sent to Hephaestion: he seemed to be disparaging and belittling those who undertake immense enterprises and run great risks in pursuit of their ambitions, which in the end leave them no happier or better able to enjoy themselves than other men. At any rate it is evident from what I have said that Alexander did not allow himself to become vain or foolishly conceited because of his belief in his divinity, but rather used it to assert his authority over others.

29. On his return from Egypt to Phoenicia he honoured the gods with sacrifices and solemn processions and arranged contests of dirhymabic choruses and tragedies: these were remarkable not only for the splendour of their presentation but also for the rivalry between those who organized them. Just as at Athens those who present these spectacles are the choregi, rich citizens chosen by lot from the tribes, so on this occasion the sponsors were the kings of Cyprus, each of whom vied to outdo his competitors in the most spectacular fashion. The keenest contest of all took place between Nicocreon of Salamis and Pasicrates of Soli, who had been given by lot the services of two of the most celebrated actors of the day: Athenodorus was assigned to Pasicrates and Thessalus, in whom Alexander was particularly interested, to Nicocreon. Alexander did not reveal his preference until Athenodorus had been proclaimed the victor by a majority of the judges’ votes. Then, as he was leaving the theatre, it seems, he remarked that he approved of the verdict of the judges, but would gladly have sacrificed a part of his kingdom rather than see Thessalus defeated. However when Athenodorus, who had been fined by the Athenians for breaking his undertaking to appear at their Dionysiac festival, appealed to the king to write a letter on his behalf, Alexander, although he refused to do this, settled the fine at his own expense. Again when Lycon of Scarphia, who was giving a successful performance before Alexander, introduced into the comedy he was playing a line asking for a present of ten talents, Alexander laughed and gave him the money.

Darius wrote Alexander a letter and sent it by the hand of some of his friends. He appealed to Alexander to accept ten thousand talents as a ransom for his Persian prisoners: he further offered him all the territory west of the Euphrates and the hand of one of his daughters in marriage, and on these terms proposed that they should become friends and allies. Alexander told his companions of this offer, whereupon Parmenio said, ‘I would accept those terms if I were Alexander.’

1. i.e. he was disowning Philip as his father.
2. Iliad v, 340.
So would I, by Zeus, retorted Alexander, 'if I were Parmenio!' In reply he wrote that if Darius would come and give himself up, he would receive every courtesy; if not, Alexander would immediately march against him.

30. However not long after, when Darius’ wife died in childbirth, Alexander felt remorse for having written in these terms. It is clear that he was distressed at having lost the chance to show his magnanimity, and he spared no expense to give the queen a magnificent funeral. One of her attendants, a eunuch named Teireos who had been captured with her, escaped from the camp, made his way to Darius on horseback and brought the news of the queen’s death. When Darius heard it, he beat his head, broke into lamentations and cried aloud: ‘Alas for the evil genius of the Persians! Was it not enough that the king’s consort and sister should have become a prisoner while she lived, but she must also be deprived of a royal funeral at her death?’ ‘As for her burial, sire,’ the eunuch replied, ‘and all the honours that were due to her state, you have no cause to accuse the evil genius of the Persians. To my knowledge neither your queen Stateira while she lived, nor your mother nor your children lacked any of their former blessings, except for the light of your countenance, which the Lord Oromazdes will surely cause to shine again in its former glory. Neither was she deprived of any funeral ornament when she died, but was even honoured with the tears of her enemies. Alexander is as gentle after victory as he is terrible in battle.’

When Darius heard this, his agitation and misery were so great that he was quite carried away and began to entertain the most extravagant suspicions. He took the eunuch aside into a more secluded part of his tent and said: ‘If you have not deserted me like the good fortune of Persia and gone over to the Macedonians, and if I, Darius, am still your lord and master, tell me, I charge you as you revere the great light of Mithras and the right hand of the king, was not her death which I am now lamenting the least of Stateira’s misfortunes? Did I not suffer an even crueler blow of fate while she was still alive? Would not my unhappy destiny at least have been more honourable if I had met a harsher and more inhuman enemy? For how can a young man’s treatment of his enemy’s wife be virtuous, if it expresses itself in such tributes?’

While the king was still speaking, Teireos threw himself at his feet and implored him to hold his peace. He should not do Alexander so much injustice, he told him, nor shame his dead queen and sister. Nor should he deprive himself of the greatest consolation left him in his adversity, the belief that he had been conquered by a man whose powers raised him above the mortal state: indeed he should admire Alexander for having shown a restraint towards Persian women which even surpassed the valour he had shown against their husbands. While the eunuch reassured the king, he swore the most solemn oaths to attest the truth of his words, and he described the magnanimity and self-restraint which Alexander had shown on other occasions. Then Darius went out to his companions and lifting up his hands to heaven uttered this prayer: ‘You gods of my race and my kingdom, grant me above all that the fortunes of Persia may be restored to the prosperity in which I found them. I ask this so that I may be able to requite Alexander for the favours I received from him, when I lost everything that is dearest to me. But if the fated time is at hand when the rule of the Persians must cease, and if our downfall is a debt we must pay to the envy of the gods and the laws of change, grant that no other man but Alexander shall sit upon the throne of Cyrus.’ Most historians agree with this account of what was said and done on that occasion.

31. Meanwhile Alexander, after subduing the whole region which lay on his line of march between the Tigris and the Euphrates, resumed his advance against Darius, who was on his way to meet him with a million men. On this march one of his companions mentioned to Alexander to amuse him that the camp followers had divided themselves for sport into two armies, and he had appointed a general and commander for each, one of whom they had named Alexander and the other Darius. At first they had only pelted one another with cloths of earth, then they had come to blows with their fists, and finally, inflamed with the heat of battle, they had fought in earnest with stones and clubs. More and more men had joined in, until at last it had become hard to separate them. When Alexander heard of this, he ordered the leaders to be matched so as to fight in single combat: he

1. The late summer of 331 B.C.
2. A propagandist figure. Modern estimates put the Persian strength at a maximum of 100,000 infantry and 34,000 cavalry. On this occasion Darius put his faith in his superiority in cavalry, in which he outnumbered the Greeks by five to one.
himself gave weapons and armour to his namesake, and Philotas gave them to the so-called Darius. The whole army watched this contest and saw in it something of an omen for their own campaign. After a strenuous fight, 'Alexander' finally prevailed, and received as a prize twelve villages and the right to wear the Persian dress. This at least is the story we have from Eratosthenes.

The great battle that was fought against Darius did not take place at Arbela, as the majority of writers say, but at Gaugamela. The word signifies 'the house of the camel': one of the ancient kings of this country escaped the pursuit of his enemies on a swift camel and gave the animal a home there, setting aside various revenues and the produce of several villages to maintain it. It happened that in the month of Boedromion, about the same time as the beginning of the festival of the mysteries at Athens, there was an eclipse of the moon. On the eleventh night after this, by which time the two armies were in sight of one another, Darius kept his troops under arms and held a review of them by torchlight. Alexander allowed his Macedonians to sleep, but himself spent the night in front of his tent in the company of his diviner Aristander, with whom he performed certain mysterious and sacred ceremonies and offered sacrifice to the god Fear. Meanwhile some of the older of his companions and Parmenio in particular looked out over the plain between the river Niphates and the Gordyean mountains and saw the entire plain agleam with the watch-fires of the barbarians, while from their camp there arose the confused and indistinguishable murmur of myriads of voices, like the distant roar of a vast ocean. They were filled with amazement at the sight and remarked to one another that it would be an overwhelmingly difficult task to defeat an enemy of such strength by engaging him by day. They therefore went to the king as soon as he had performed his sacrifice and tried to persuade him to attack by night, so as to conceal from his men the most terrifying element in the coming struggle, that is the odds against them. It was then that Alexander gave them his celebrated answer, 'I will not steal my victory.' Some of his companions thought this an immature and empty boast on the part of a young man who was merely joking in the presence of danger. But others interpreted it as meaning that he had confidence in his present situation and that he had correctly judged the future. In other words he was determined that if Darius were defeated, he should have no

1. 20 September 331 B.C.

cause to summon up courage for another attempt: he was not to be allowed to blame darkness and night for his failure on this occasion, as at Issus he had blamed the narrow mountain passes and the sea. Certainly Darius would never abandon the war for lack of arms or of troops, when he could draw upon such a vast territory and such immense reserves of man-power. He would only do so when he had lost courage and become convinced of his inferiority in consequence of an unmistakable defeat suffered in broad daylight.

32. When his friends had gone, Alexander lay down in his tent and is said to have passed the rest of the night in a deeper sleep than usual. At any rate when his officers came to him in the early morning, they were astonished to find him not yet awake, and on their own responsibility gave out orders for the soldiers to take breakfast before anything else was done. Then, as time was pressing, Parmenio entered Alexander's tent, stood by his couch and called him two or three times by name: when he had roused him, he asked how he could possibly sleep as if he were already victorious, instead of being about to fight the greatest battle of his life. Alexander smiled and said, 'Why not? Do you not see that we have already won the battle, now that we are delivered from roving around these endless devastated plains, and chasing this Darius, who will never stand and fight?' And indeed not only beforehand, but at the very height of the battle Alexander displayed the supremacy and steadfastness of a man who is confident of the soundness of his judgement.

As the action developed, the left wing under Parmenio was driven back and found itself hard pressed, first by a violent charge from the Bactrian cavalry, and later by an outflanking movement when Mazaicus sent a detachment of horsemen to ride round the line and attack the troops who were guarding the Macedonian baggage. Parmenio, who was disconcerted by both these manoeuvres, sent messengers to warn Alexander that his camp and his baggage train were lost, unless he could immediately move strong reinforcements from the front to protect his rear. It so happened that at that moment Alexander was about to give the signal to the right wing, which he commanded, to attack: when he received this message, he exclaimed that Parmenio must have lost his wits and forgotten in his agitation that the victors will always take possession of their enemy's baggage in any event, and that the losers must not concern themselves with
their property or their slaves, but only with how to fight bravely and
die with honour.

After he had sent this message to Parmenio, he put on his helmet.
He was already wearing the rest of his armour when he left his tent, a
suit made in Sicily which was belted around his waist and over this
a thickly quilted linen corslet, which had been among the spoils
captured at Issus. His helmet, the work of Theophilus, was made of
steel which gleamed like polished silver, and to this was fitted a steel
gorget set with precious stones. His sword, which was a gift from
the king of Citium, was a marvel of lightness and tempering, and he had
trained himself to use this as his principal weapon in hand-to-hand
fighting. He also wore a cloak which was more ornate than the rest of
his armour. It had been made by Helicon, an artist of earlier times, and
presented to Alexander as a mark of honour by the city of Rhodes,
and this too he was in the habit of wearing in battle. While he was
drawing up the phalanx in formation, reviewing the troops, or giving
out orders, he rode another horse to spare Bucephalus, who was by
now past his prime, but when he was about to go into action Buce-
phalus would be led up, and he would mount him and at once begin
the attack.

33. On this occasion Alexander gave a long address to the Thessalians
and the rest of the Greeks. They acclaimed by shouting for him to
lead them against the barbarians, and at this he shifted his lance into
his left hand, so Callisthenes tells us, and raising his right he called
upon the gods and prayed that if he were really the son of Zeus they
should protect and encourage the Greeks. Then Aristander the divin-
cer, who was wearing a white robe and a crown of gold, rode along the
ranks and pointed out to the men an eagle which hovered for a while
over Alexander’s head and then flew straight towards the enemy. The
sight acted as an immediate inspiration to the watching troops, and
with shouts of encouragement to one another the cavalry charged the
enemy at full speed and the phalanx rolled forward like a flood. Be-
fore the leading ranks could engage, the barbarians began to fall back,
bolted pursued by Alexander, who drove the retreating enemy to-
wards the centre, where Darius was stationed.

Alexander had sighted his adversary through the ranks of the royal
squadron of cavalry, as they waited drawn up in deep formation in
front of him. Darius was a tall and handsome man and he towered
conspicuously above this large and superbly equipped body of horse-
men, who were closely massed to guard the lofty chariot in which he
stood. But the horseguards were seized with panic at the terrible sight
of Alexander bearing down upon them and driving the fugitives be-
fore him against those who still held their ground, and the greater
number of them broke and scattered. The bravest and most highly
born, however, stood fast and were slaughtered in front of their king:
they fell upon one another in heaps, and in their dying struggles they
clung to the legs of horses and riders, entwining themselves about
them so as to hinder the pursuit. As for Darius, all the horrors of the
battle were now before his eyes. The forces which had been stationed
in the centre for his protection had now been driven back upon him:
it had become difficult to turn his chariot round and drive it away,
since the wheels were encumbered and entangled with heaps of bod-
ies, and the horses which were surrounded and almost covered by the
dead began to rear and plunge so that the charioteer could not con-
trol them. In this extremity the king abandoned his chariot and his
armour, mounted a mare which, so the story goes, had recently foaled,
and rode away. It is believed that he would not have escaped at that
moment, had not Parmenio sent another party of horsemen begging
Alexander to come to his rescue, because he was engaged with a
strong enemy force which still held together and would not give way.
In this battle Parmenio is generally accused of having been sluggish
and lacking in spirit, either because old age had dulled his courage, or
because he had become envious of the authority and pomp, to use
Callisthenes’ words, which Alexander now displayed. Alexander was
vexed by this appeal for help, but at the time he did not reveal to his
men the fact that it had been made. Instead he ordered the recall to be
sounded on the ground that it was growing dark and that he wished to
bring the slaughter to an end. Then as he rode back to the part of the
field where Parmenio’s troops were supposedly threatened, he learned
on his way that the enemy had been utterly defeated and put to flight.

34. After the battle had ended in this way, the authority of the Persian
empire was regarded as having been completely overthrown. Alex-
ander was proclaimed king of Asia and after offering splendid sacri-
fices to the gods, he proceeded to reward his friends with riches,
estates and governorships. As he wished to increase his prestige in the
Greek world, he wrote to the states saying that all tyrannies were
now abolished and that henceforth they might live under their own laws: to the Plateans in particular he wrote that he would rebuild their city because their ancestors had allowed the Greeks to make their territory the seat of war in the struggle for their common freedom. He also sent a share of the spoils to the people of Croton in Italy in honour of the spirit and valour shown by their athlete Phaëllus: this man, when the rest of the Greeks in Italy had refused to give any help to their compatriots in the Persian wars, had fitted out a ship at his own expense and sailed with it to Salamis to share in the common danger. Such was Alexander's desire to pay tribute to any manifestation of courage and to prove himself the friend and guardian of noble actions.

35. He then advanced through the province of Babylonia which immediately surrendered to him. On his march he was particularly impressed by the fissure in the earth from which fire continually poured forth as if it came from a well, and by the stream of naphtha which gushed forth so abundantly that it formed a lake not far from the chasm. This naphtha is in many ways like bitumen, but is so inflammable that a flame can set it alight by its very radiance without actually touching it, and it often kindles all the intermediate air. To demonstrate the nature of the liquid and the force of its action the barbarians sprinkled a small quantity along the street which led to Alexander's quarters. Then standing at the far end they applied their torches to the trail of moisture, as it was growing dark. The first drops instantly ignited, and in a fraction of a second with the speed of thought the flames darted to the other end and the whole street was ablaze.

Among the attendants who waited upon the king, whenever he bathed and anointed himself, was an Athenian named Athenophanes, who had the task of providing him with diversions and amusements. On one occasion a boy named Stephanus, who possessed an absurdly ugly face but an agreeable singing voice, was also in attendance in the bathroom, and Athenophanes asked the king, 'Would you care for us to try an experiment with the naphtha upon Stephanus? If it catches fire on him and is not immediately put out, then its strength must be extraordinary and irresistible.' Surprisingly, the boy agreed to try the experiment, and no sooner had he touched the liquid and anointed himself with it than the flames broke out and enveloped his body so completely that Alexander was appalled and began to fear for his life. If there had not happened to be many attendants close by holding pitchers of water for the bath, he would have been burned to death before any help could reach him. Even as it was they had great difficulty in putting out the flames, and his whole body was so severely burned that he was critically ill for a long time after.

It is natural therefore that some of those who wish to reconcile legend with fact should say that this was the drug used by Medea when in the tragedy she anoints the crown and the robe which she presents to Creon's daughter. The fire did not originate from these objects, they explain, nor did it break out of its own accord, but a flame must have been placed near them, with which the liquid was then drawn into contact so quickly that the process was invisible to the naked eye. The rays and emanations which proceed from a flame at a certain distance have no more effect on some substances than to give them light and warmth, but in the case of those which are dry and porous, or possess a sufficiently oily moisture, the heat is concentrated, then bursts into fierce flames and transforms the substance. There has been much dispute as to how naphtha is produced: whether, for example, the liquid combustible matter that feeds the flame flows out from a soil which is naturally oily and inflammable. Certainly the soil of Babylonia is very fiery, so much so that grains of barley are often thrown up out of the earth and bound away, as if the heat of the soil made the ground throb, and in the hottest part of the summer the inhabitants sleep on skins filled with water. When Harpalus, Alexander's treasurer, was left as governor of the province, he was anxious to adorn the royal gardens and walks with Greek plants and shrubs, and he succeeded with all except ivy: the soil would not nourish this, but always killed it. The plant could not endure the temper of the soil which was fiery, whereas ivy loves a cold soil. I hope the impatient reader will bear with digressions of this kind, so long as they are kept within reasonable limits.

36. After Alexander had made himself master of Susa, he found forty thousand talents of coined money in the palace, besides furniture and other treasures of incalculable value. Among these it was said were five thousand talents weight of cloth dyed with purple from Hermione, which still kept a fresh and vivid colour even after it had been

1. In the final phase of the Persian wars, 479 B.C.

1. A port on the Gulf of Spetsae in the eastern Peloponnese.
stored there for one hundred and ninety years. The reason for this, we are told, is that honey was used in the purple dyes and white olive oil in the white dyes, and each of these substances, it is said, will preserve the lustre and brilliance of the colour and prevent any fading. Deinon also tells us that the kings of Persia had water transported from the Nile and the Danube, and stored among their treasures as a testimony to the extent of their dominions and a proof that they were masters of the world.

When Alexander advanced beyond Susa, he found the province of Persis difficult to penetrate: not only was the country mountainous, but it was defended by the bravest of the Persians since Darius had taken refuge there. In spite of these obstacles Alexander found a guide who showed him the way by making a short diversion. This man had a Lycian father and a Persian mother and spoke both Greek and Persian, and it was to him, so the story goes, that the Pythian priestess had referred when she prophesied while Alexander was still a boy that a 

\[ \text{lykos} \] (wolf) would guide him on his march against the Persians. During the advance across Persis the Greeks massacred great numbers of their prisoners, and Alexander has himself recorded that he gave orders for the Persians to be slaughtered because he thought that such an example would help his cause. It is said that in Persepolis, the capital of the province, he found as much gold as he had in Susa, and that it required two thousand pairs of mules and five hundred camels to carry away the furniture and other treasures that were found there.

It was in Persepolis that Alexander saw a gigantic statue of Xerxes. This had been toppled from its pedestal and heedlessly left on the ground by a crowd of soldiers, as they forced their way into the palace, and Alexander stopped and spoke to it as though it were alive. "Shall I pass by and leave you lying there because of the expedition you led against Greece, or shall I set you up again because of your magnanimity and your virtues in other respects?" For a long while he gazed at the statue and reflected in silence, and then went on his way. It was by then winter, and he stayed in Persepolis for four months to allow his soldiers time to rest. It is said that when he first took his seat on the royal throne under the golden canopy, Demaratus the

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1. This brief allusion refers to one of Alexander's most brilliant operations, the forcing of the pass known as the Persian Gates, which on this occasion was guarded by an army of over 40,000 men (in midwinter 331 B.C.).
39. Alexander was by nature exceptionally generous and became even more so as his wealth increased. His gifts were always bestowed with grace and courtesy, and it is this alone, to tell the truth, which makes the giver’s generosity welcome. I may mention a few instances of this. When Ariston the commander of the Paonians had killed one of his enemies, he brought the man’s head, showed it to Alexander and remarked, ‘In my country, sire, a present such as this is always rewarded with a gold cup.’ Alexander laughed and replied, ‘Yes, but with an empty one. I will drink your health with a cup full of neat wine, and give it you as well.’ On another occasion one of the Macedonian soldiers was driving a mule laden with the king’s gold, and when the animal became too exhausted to carry it, he took off the load and put it on his own shoulders. When Alexander saw him struggling along in distress and learned what had happened, he called out as the soldier was about to put down his burden, ‘Hold on, don’t give up! Finish your journey and take what you are carrying to your own tent.’ Indeed he was always more offended with those who refused his gifts than with those who asked for them. He wrote to Phiocion telling him that in future he would not regard him as a friend if he declined all his favours, and in the case of Serapion, one of the youths who used to play ball with him, he never gave him anything because he never asked for anything. So one day whenever the ball came to Serapion, he made a point of throwing it to the others, until the king said, ‘Aren’t you going to throw it to me?’ ‘No,’ retorted Serapion, ‘You never ask for it!’ whereupon the king burst out laughing and loaded him with presents.

Then there was Proteas, one of the king’s drinking companions, who had a reputation as a jester, and who seemed on one occasion to have made the king angry. At this his friends pleaded for him and he himself begged for forgiveness with tears in his eyes, until Alexander said that he pardoned him. ‘Then will you first give me something to prove it?’ Proteas asked him, whereupon the king gave orders for him to be presented with five talents. His friends and bodyguards were apt to put on airs as a result of the riches he showered on them, and this is revealed in a letter Olympias once wrote him, in which she said, ‘I wish you would find other ways of rewarding those you love and honour: as it is you are making them all the equals of kings and enabling them to make plenty of friends, but leaving yourself without

any.’ Olympias often wrote to him in this strain, but Alexander kept her letters to himself with one exception. Hephæestion was in the habit of reading the king’s letters with him, and on this occasion his eye fell on a letter which had been opened. The king did not prevent him from reading it, but took the ring from his own finger and pressed the seal to his lips, so much as to tell him to keep silence.

Mazeses had been the most powerful of Darius’ officials, and although his son was already the governor of a province, Alexander now proposed to add an even larger one to it. The young man declined it, however, and said to him, ‘In the past, sire, there was only one Darius, but now you have made many Alexanders.’ Besides this he presented Parmenio with the house of Bagas at Susa, in which it is said clothes were found to the value of a thousand talents. Alexander also wrote to Antipater, warning him to keep bodyguards around him, since he was in danger of plots against his life. He sent a great many presents to his mother, but he would not allow her to interfere in affairs of state or in the management of his campaigns, and when she complained about this, he bore her scoldings with great tolerance. But on one occasion when Antipater had written him a long letter finding fault with her, he exclaimed that Antipater did not understand that one tear shed by his mother would wipe out ten thousand letters such as this.

40. Alexander now noticed that his companions had acquired thoroughly luxurious habits and had become vulgar in the extravagance of their way of living. There was Hagnon of Teos, who wore silver nails in his boots; Leonnatus, who had the dust with which he sprinkled his body for wrestling brought by camel-train from Egypt; and Philotas who hunted with nets that could enclose a space of twelve miles. When his friends bathed, they often anointed themselves with myrrh, rather than with plain oil, and were attended by masseurs and body-servants. Alexander reasoned with them and gently reproved them for these excesses. He told them he was amazed to see that men who had fought and conquered in such great battles could have forgotten that those who labour sleep more sweetly than those who are laboured for. Could they not understand, when they compared their style of living with that of the Persians, that there is nothing more slavish than the love of pleasure and nothing more princely than the

1. A regiment of light cavalry from the borders of Macedonia.

1. Plots laid by Olympias, who was on bad terms with Antipater.
life of toil? How can a man attend to his horse, he asked them, or keep his spear and his helmet clean and bright, if he has lost the habit of using his hands to look after his own precious body? Did they not know that the end and perfection of conquest is to avoid doing the same things as the conquered have done? And so, to set an example, he exerted himself more strenuously than ever in campaigns and hunting expeditions, exposing himself to hardship and danger, so that an envoy from Sparta, who was by his side when he speared a great lion, remarked, 'Alexander, you fought nobly with this lion to decide which of you should be king!' Craterus later had this hunting scene represented in bronze and dedicated it at Delphi: it showed the figures of the lion, the hounds, the king fighting with the lion, and Craterus advancing to help him. Some of these sculptures were executed by Lysippus, and some by Leochares.

41. Alexander made a point of risking his life in this way both to exercise himself and to inspire others to acts of courage, but his friends, because of the wealth and pomp with which they were surrounded, desired only to lead a life of luxury and idleness. They found his expeditions and campaigns an intolerable burden, and little by little went so far as to abuse and find fault with the king. Alexander bore this treatment with great tolerance at first, and remarked that it is the part of a king to do good to his subjects and be maligned for it. And indeed even in the most trivial services which he rendered to his friends, he revealed the affection and regard which he had for them. I will give a few examples of this.

He wrote to Peucetas, who had been bitten by a bear, to complain that he had described his injury to other friends but had said nothing to Alexander. 'Now,' he went on, 'you must write to tell me how you are, and whether you were let down by any of your fellow huntsmen, so that I can punish them.' When Hephaestion was absent on some business, Alexander wrote with the news that while they had been amusing themselves hunting an ichneumon, Craterus had accidentally been run through the thighs with Perdiccas' lance. After Peucetas had recovered from some illness, Alexander wrote to his friend's physician Alexippus congratulating him on the cure. When Craterus was sick, Alexander had a dream in which he offered certain sacrifices to the gods on his friend's behalf and told him to do the same, and he wrote to Craterus' physician Pausanias, when the latter wished to treat him with hellebore, expressing his anxiety and advising him how to use the drug. Ephialtes and Cissus were the first to bring the news that Harpalus had deserted, and Alexander had them put in chains because he believed that they were making a false accusation against the man. Again, when he was sending home his invalid and superannuated soldiers, Eurylochus of Aegae contrived to have his name put on the list of the sick, and when it was discovered that there was nothing wrong with him, he confessed that he was in love with a girl named Telesippe, and had planned to travel with her on her journey to the coast. Alexander made inquiries about her parentage, and when he found that she was a free-born Greek courtesan, he said, 'I will help you with your love affair, Eurylochus, but since she is a free woman, you must see whether you can win her either by presents or by courtship, but not use other means.'

42. It is in fact astonishing that he could find time to write so many letters to his friends. For example he wrote one ordering a search to be made for a slave belonging to Seleucus who had run away to Cilicia, and another praising Peucetas because he had caught Nicon, a runaway slave of Craterus, and a third to Megabyzus about a slave who had taken refuge in a sanctuary. In this he told him to try, if possible, to lure the slave outside and then arrest him, but not to lay hands on him within the sacred precincts. We are also told that when he was trying a prisoner on a capital charge, he would place a hand over one of his ears while the prosecutor was speaking, so as to keep it free and impartial for listening to the defendant. But later so many accusations were laid before him that he grew harsh and was inclined to believe even the false charges, because so much that he was told was true. Above all, if anybody spoke ill of him, his judgement was apt to desert him and his mood would become cruel and merciless, since he valued his good name more than his life or his crown.

He now set out again in pursuit of Darius, fully expecting that he would have to fight another battle. However when he learned that the

1. Harpalus, who had been guilty of maladministration during Alexander's campaigns, deserted in 325 B.C. He fled to Cilicia and after Alexander's return from India took refuge in Attica in 324. He was murdered in Crete by one of his fellow-adventurers. See Life of Demosthenes, chs. 25–6.
2. In the spring of 330 B.C. Darius had assembled a force of some 6,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry at Ecbatana.
king had been arrested by Bessus, the satrap of Bactria, he sent his Thessalian cavalry back to Greece, after first giving them a gratuity of two thousand talents, besides their regular pay. The pursuit of Darius turned out to be long and exhausting. Alexander covered more than four hundred miles in eleven days, and by this time most of his horsemen were on the verge of collapse for lack of water. At this point he met some Macedonians, who were carrying water from a river in skins on the backs of their mules, and when they saw Alexander almost fainting with thirst in the midday heat, they quickly filled a helmet and brought it to him. He asked them for whom they were carrying the water. 'For our own sons,' they told him, but so long as your life is safe, we can have other children, even if we lose these.' At this Alexander took the helmet in his hands. But then he looked up and saw the rest of his troop craning their heads and casting longing glances at the water, and he handed it back without drinking a drop. He thanked the men who had brought it, but said to them, 'If I am the only one to drink, the rest will lose heart.' However no sooner had his companions witnessed this act of self-control and magnanimity than they cried out and shouted for him to lead them on boldly. They spurred on their horses and declared that they could not feel tired or thirsty or even like mortal men, so long as they had such a king.

43. All his horsemen were fired with the same enthusiasm, but only sixty of his men, so the story goes, had kept up with Alexander when he burst into the enemy's camp. They rode over great heaps of gold and silver vessels which had been scattered on the ground, passed waggons full of women and children that were moving aimlessly about without their drivers, and at length caught up with the Persian vanguard, imagining that Darius must be among them. At last they found him lying in a waggon, riddled with javelins and at his last gasp. He asked for a drink, and when he had swallowed some cold water which a Macedonian named Polystratus brought him, he said, 'This is the final stroke of misfortune, that I should accept a service from you, and not be able to return it, but Alexander will reward you for your kindness, and the gods will repay him for his courtesy towards my mother and my wife and my children. And so through you, I give him my hand.' As he said this, he took Polystratus by the hand, and died. When Alexander came up, he showed his grief and distress at the king's death, and unfastening his own cloak, he threw it over the body and covered it. Later, after he had captured Bessus, who had murdered the king, he had him torn limb from limb. He had the tops of two straight trees bent down so that they met, and part of Bessus' body was tied to each. Then when each tree was let go and sprang back to its upright position, the part of the body attached to it was torn off by the recoil. As for Darius' body, he sent it to his mother to be laid out in royal state, and he enrolled his brother Exathres into the number of the Companions.

44. Meanwhile he himself with the flower of his army pressed on into Hyrcania. Here he came in sight of a bay of the open sea which appeared to be as large as the Black Sea, and was sweeter than the Mediterranean. He could not obtain any certain information about it, but guessed that it was probably a stagnant overflow from Lake Maeotis. However various geographers had already discovered the truth and many years before Alexander's expedition they had recorded their conclusion that this was the most northerly of four gulls which run inland from the outer Ocean and was called the Hyrcanian or Caspian Sea. In this neighbourhood the barbarians surprised the grooms, who were leading Alexander's horse Bucephalus, and captured him. Alexander was enraged and sent a herald with the threat that unless they gave back his horse, he would exterminate the whole tribe, together with their women and children. However when they returned with the horse and surrendered their cities to him, he treated them all kindly, and even gave a reward to the men who had captured Bucephalus.

45. From this point he advanced into Parthia, and it was here during a pause in the campaign that he first began to wear barbarian dress. He may have done this from a desire to adapt himself to local habits, because he understood that the sharing of race and of customs is a great step towards softening men's hearts. Alternatively, this may

1. The Sea of Azov.
2. According to the beliefs of Plutarch's time, the outer Ocean encircled the world and the Caspian flowed into it. Alexander planned an expedition to determine whether the Caspian was a lake or a gulf, but did not live to carry it out.
3. In the autumn of 330 B.C.
have been an experiment which was aimed at introducing the obeisance among the Macedonians, the first stage being to accustom them to accepting changes in his own dress and way of life. However he did not go so far as to adopt the Median costume, which was altogether barbaric and outlandish, and he wore neither trousers, nor a sleeved vest, nor a tiara. Instead he adopted a style which was a compromise between Persian and Median costume, more modest than the first, and more stately than the second. At first he wore this only when he was in the company of barbarians or with his intimate friends indoors, but later he put it on when he was riding or giving audience in public. The sight greatly displeased the Macedonians, but they admired his other virtues so much that they considered they ought to make concessions to him in some matters which either gave him pleasure or increased his prestige. For besides all his other hardships, he had recently been wounded below the knee by an arrow which splintered the shin-bone so that the fragments had to be taken out, and on another occasion he had received such a violent blow on the neck from a stone that his vision became clouded and remained so for a long time afterwards. In spite of this, he continued to expose himself unsparingly to danger: for example he crossed the river Orexiartes, which he believed to be the Tanais, routed the Scythians and pursued them for twelve miles or more, even though all this while he was suffering from an attack of dysentery.

46. It was here that he was visited by the queen of the Amazons, according to the report we have from many writers, among them Cleitarchus, Polyclitus, Onesicritus, Antigones and Ister. On the other hand Aristobulus, Charis the royal usher, Ptolemy, Anticleides, Phile of Theban and Philip of Theangela, and besides these Hecataeus of Eretria, Philip the Chalcidian and Douris of Samos all maintain that this is a fiction, and this judgement seems to be confirmed by Alexander's own testimony. In a letter to Antipater in which he describes the details of the occasion, he mentions that the king of the Scythians offered him his daughter in marriage, but he makes no reference to an Amazon. There is also a story that many years afterwards, when Lysimachus had become king of Macedonia, Onesicritus was reading aloud the fourth book of his history, which contained the tale of the Amazon, at which Lysimachus smiled and asked

1. The conical Persian head-dress which was wound like a turban.

quietly, 'I wonder where I was then.' In any case our admiration for Alexander is not diminished if we reject this story, nor increased if we regard it as true.

47. Alexander was by now becoming anxious that the Macedonians might refuse to follow him any further in his campaigns. He therefore quartered the main body on the country and allowed them to rest, but pressed on with his best troops, consisting of twenty thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry, and marched into Hycania. He then addressed this picked force and told them that up to now the barbarians had watched them as if they were in a dream, but that if they merely threw the whole country into disorder and then retired, the Persians would fall upon them as if they were so many women. He went on to say that he would allow any of them who desired it to go back, but he called on them to witness that at the very moment when he was seeking to conquer the whole inhabited world for the Macedonians, he found himself deserted and left only with his friends and those who were willing to continue the expedition. These are almost the exact words which he used in his letter to Antipater, and he says that after he had spoken in this way, the whole of his audience shouted aloud and begged him to lead them to whatever part of the world he chose. Once he had tested the loyalty of these troops, he found no difficulty in winning over the main body, indeed they followed him with a will.

From this point he began to adapt his own style of living more closely to that of the country and tried to reconcile Asiatic and Macedonian customs: he believed that if the two traditions could be blended and assimilated in this way his authority would be more securely established when he was far away, since it would rest on goodwill rather than on force. For this reason he selected thirty thousand boys and gave orders that they should be taught to speak the Greek language and to use Macedonian weapons, and he appointed a large number of instructors to train them. His marriage to Roxane1 was a love match, which began when he first saw her at the height of her youthful beauty taking part in a dance at a banquet, but it also played a great part in furthering his policy of reconciliation. The barbarians were encouraged by the feeling of partnership which their alliance created, and they were completely won over by Alexander's

1. This took place in August 327 B.C.
moderation and courtesy and by the fact that without the sanction of marriage he would not approach the only woman who had ever conquered his heart.

Alexander noticed that among his closest friends it was Hephaestion who approved of these plans and joined him in changing his habits, while Craterus clung to Macedonian customs, and he therefore made use of the first in his dealings with the barbarians and of the second with the Greeks and Macedonians. In general he showed most affection for Hephaestion and most respect for Craterus, for he had formed the opinion and often said that Hephaestion was a friend of Alexander’s, while Craterus was a friend of the king’s. For this reason a feeling of hostility grew and festered between the two and they often came into open conflict. Once on the expedition to India they actually drew their swords and came to blows, and as their friends appeared and began to join in the quarrel, Alexander rode up and publicly reprimanded Hephaestion: he told him that he must be a fool and a madman if he did not understand that without Alexander’s favour he was nothing. Then later in private he sharply rebuked Craterus. Finally he called both men together and made them be friends again.

He swore by Zeus Ammon and the rest of the gods that these were the two men he loved best in the world, but that if he ever heard them quarrelling again, he would kill them both, or at least the one who began the quarrel. After this, it is said, neither of them ever did or said anything to offend the other even in jest.

48. Among the Macedonians at this time⁴ few men enjoyed a more prominent position than Philotas, the son of Parmenio;⁵ he had a high reputation for courage and for his ability to endure hardship and after Alexander he had no equal for generosity and devotion to his friends. At any rate we are told that when one of his intimate friends asked him for money and his steward replied that he had none

1. Probably the ablest of Alexander’s younger officers. He became second in command after Parmenio’s death in 330 B.C. He led part of the army back from India and in 324 brought the veterans back to Macedonia. He was killed in battle against Eumenes in 321.
2. The narrative now moves back to the period immediately following the murder of Darius, the autumn of 330 B.C.
3. Philotas was older than Alexander: he commanded the Companion cavalry, eight squadrons strong.

49. Philotas had no suspicion of the trap that was being set for him and in his conversations with Antigone he uttered many indiscretions and often spoke slightlyingly of the king, sometimes through anger and sometimes through boastfulness. Even so Alexander, although he now had overwhelming evidence against Philotas, endured these insults in silence and restrained himself either because he had confidence in Parmenio’s loyalty, or perhaps because he feared the power and prestige of father and son. But meanwhile a Macedonian from Chalaestra named Dimnos organized a conspiracy against Alexander, and invited a young man named Nicomachus whose lover he was to take part in the plot. Nicomachus refused to be involved, but told his brother Cebalinus of the attempt. Cebalinus then went to Philotas and demanded that he should take them both to Alexander,
as they had something of the greatest urgency to tell him. Philotas, however, for some unknown reason, did not arrange the interview, making out that the king was engaged on more important business, and he did this not once but twice. By this time the brothers had become suspicious of Philotas, and so they turned to somebody else who brought them into the king's presence. First of all they revealed Dimnos' plot and then they made a number of insinuations against Philotas, because he had twice disregarded their requests to see the king.

This news enraged Alexander, and when he learned that Dimnos had resisted arrest, and had been killed by the men who had been sent to fetch him, he became still more disturbed, as he concluded that he had lost the chance to uncover the plot. He felt bitter resentment against Philotas and became all the more ready to listen to those who had long hated his friend. These enemies now said openly that it was folly on the king's part to suppose that a man such as Dimnos who came from the obscure town of Chalastra would ever have undertaken such a daring enterprise on his own account: it was obvious that he was a mere agent, a tool in the hands of somebody of much greater power, and that Alexander must look for the source of the conspiracy among those who had most interest in keeping it concealed. Once the king had begun to listen to these insinuations and suspicions, Philotas' enemies brought innumerable accusations against him. He was arrested, interrogated, and tortured in the presence of the king's Companions, while Alexander himself listened to the examination from behind a curtain. We are told that when he heard Philotas uttering broken and pitiful cries and pleas for mercy to Hephaestion he exclaimed, 'Ah, Philotas, if you are so weak and unmanned as this, how could you involve yourself in such a dangerous business?' Philotas was executed, and immediately afterwards Alexander sent messengers to Media and had Parmenio put to death as well. This was a man who had rendered many great services to Philip and who, of all Alexander's older friends, had urged him most strongly to undertake the invasion of Asia: of his three sons he had seen two die in battle and now he was put to death with the third.

These actions made Alexander dreaded by his friends, above all by his father Antipater, and caused him at a later date to enter into secret negotiations with the Aetolians and make an alliance with them. These people were especially afraid of Alexander, because they had destroyed the city of the Oenidae, and because the king, when he heard of it, had declared that the sons of the Oenidae would not need to seek their revenge, since he himself would punish the Aetolians.

50. Not long after this came the killing of Cleitus, whose treatment on the bare facts of the case appears to have been even more shocking than that of Philotas. However, if we consider both the occasion and the cause, we may see that it was a misfortune rather than a deliberate act, and that it was Cleitus' evil genius which took advantage of Alexander's anger and intoxication to destroy him. This was how it came about. Some men arrived from the coast bringing a present of Greek fruit for the king. Alexander admired its beauty and ripeness and sent for Cleitus to share it with him. It so happened that Cleitus was in the midst of sacrificing, but he at once left the ceremony, and three of the sheep on which libations had been poured followed him. When the king heard of this, he consulted Aristander his diviner and Cleomantis the Spartan. Since they interpreted this as an evil omen, he ordered them to offer up a sacrifice at once for Cleitus' safety. Alexander was all the more disturbed because two days before he had dreamed a strange dream in which he saw Cleitus sitting with the sons of Parmenio; they were dressed in black and all four of them were dead. However, before the sacrifice offered on Cleitus' behalf was concluded, he came at once to dine with the king, who had already sacrificed on that day to the Dioscuri.

After the company had drunk a good deal somebody began to sing the verses of a man named Pronichus (or Pierio according to another account), which had been written to humiliate and make fun of some Macedonian commanders who had recently been defeated by the barbarians. The older members of the party took offence at this and showed their resentment of both the poet and the singer.

1. Antipater had been left as regent in Macedonia in Alexander's absence.
2. A town in Acaeania at the mouth of the Acheloos.
3. Two years after in the autumn of 328 B.C. at Marakanda (Samarkand).
4. It was widely believed that every man receives at birth a daemon which is associated with him for life. It may be good or evil. See the Lives of Dion, Brutus and Julius Caesar.
but Alexander and those sitting near him listened with obvious pleasure and told the man to continue. Thereupon Cleitus, who had already drunk too much and was rough and hot-tempered by nature, became angrier than ever and shouted that it was not right for Macedonians to be insulted in the presence of barbarians and enemies, even if they had met with misfortune, for they were better men than those who were laughing at them. Alexander retorted that if Cleitus was trying to disguise cowardice as misfortune, he must be pleading his own case. At this Cleitus sprang to his feet and shouted back, ‘Yes, it was my cowardice that saved your life, you who call yourself the son of the gods, when you were turning your back to Sphthridates’ sword. And it is the blood of these Macedonians and their wounds which have made you so great that you disown your father Philip and claim to be the son of Ammon!’

51. These words made Alexander furious. ‘You scum,’ he cried out, ‘do you think that you can keep on speaking of me like this, and stir up trouble among the Macedonians and not pay for it?’ ‘Oh, but we Macedonians do pay for it,’ Cleitus retorted. ‘Just think of the rewards we get for all our efforts. It’s the dead ones who are happy, because they never lived to see Macedonians being beaten with Median rods, or begging the Persians for an audience with our own king.’ Cleitus blurted out all this impulsively, whereupon Alexander’s friends jumped up and began to abuse him, while the older men tried to calm down both sides. Then Alexander turned to Xenodochus of Cardia and Artemius of Colophon and asked them, ‘When you see the Greeks walking about among the Macedonians, do they not look to you like demi-gods among so many wild beasts?’ But Cleitus refused to take back anything and he challenged Alexander to speak out whatever he wished to say in front of the company, or else not invite to his table free-born men who spoke their minds: it would be better for him to spend his time among barbarians and slaves, who would prostrate themselves before his white tunic and his Persian girdle. At this Alexander could no longer control his rage: he hurled one of the apples that lay on the table at Cleitus, hit him, and then looked around for his dagger. One of his bodyguards, Aristophanes, had already moved it out of harm’s way, and the others crowded around him and begged him to be quiet. But Alexander leaped to his feet and shouted out in the Macedonian tongue for his bodyguard to turn out, a signal that this was an extreme emergency; then he ordered his trumpeter to sound the alarm, and because the man was unwilling to obey, he struck him with his fist. Afterwards the trumpeter was highly praised for his conduct, because it was chiefly thanks to him that the whole camp was not thrown into a turmoil. Meanwhile as Cleitus still refused to give way, his friends with great difficulty pushed him out of the banqueting room. But soon afterwards he came in by another door, and, as he did so, recited in a loud and contemptuous voice this line from Euripides’ Andromache:

Alas, what evil customs reign in Greece.

At this Alexander seized a spear from one of his guards, faced Cleitus as he was drawing aside the curtain of the doorway, and ran him through. With a roar of pain and a groan, Cleitus fell, and immediately the king’s anger left him. When he came to himself and saw his friends standing around him speechless, he snatched the weapon out of the dead body and would have plunged it into his own throat if the guards had not forestalled him by seizing his hands and carrying him by force into his chamber.

52. There he spent the rest of the night and the whole of the following day sobbing in an agony of remorse. At last he lay exhausted by his grief, uttering deep groans but unable to speak a word, until his friends, alarmed at his silence, forced their way into his room. He paid no attention to what any of them said, except that when Aristander the diviner reminded him of the dream he had had concerning Cleitus and its significance, and told him that these events had long ago been ordained by fate, he seemed to accept this assurance. For this reason they brought to him two philosophers, Callisthenes, who was the great-nephew of Aristotle, and Anaxarchus of Abdera. Callisthenes used a gentle and comforting manner towards the king to relieve his suffering, skirting round the subject and never referring to it directly in order to spare his feelings. Anaxarchus, on the other hand, had always pursued an independent approach to philosophy.

1. Line 683.
2. Cleitus was some twenty years older than Alexander, whom he had often tended in his childhood: his sister had been the young prince’s wet-nurse.