

COLLECTED ANCIENT GREEK NOVELS



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THE ALEXANDER ROMANCE

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Introduction

The Alexander Romance, as it is usually called, was antiquity's most successful novel. Its author is unknown, its date uncertain, its literary quality doubtful; but eighty versions in twenty-four languages testify to a popularity and diffusion exceeded only by the Bible.

The author was more a compiler than a creative artist. A Greek-speaker living in Alexandria at some time between A.D. 140 and 340, he seems to have used mainly two books, merging them to form the *Life and Deeds of Alexander of Macedon*, which is often falsely ascribed in our manuscripts to Kallisthenes, Alexander's court historian. The first of the two books was a varied collection of fictions concerning Alexander. It included a sort of epistolary novel of about 100 B.C., which consisted chiefly of the correspondence of Alexander with his adversaries, notably Darius and Poros, and revealed the character of the correspondents, as ancient epistolary fictions were meant to do (examples start at 1.36). In this book was also a different sort of letter, in which Alexander sent back a description of marvels and monsters at the fringes of the world to his mother, Olympias (2.23-41), and to his tutor Aristotle (3.17, though our particular version no longer presents it as a letter). Other pieces in this collection may have included Alexander's interview with the "naked philosophers" of India (3.5-6); the romantic novelette of Alexander and Kandake, queen of Ethiopia (3.18-23—destined to become even more romantic and "courtly" in the Middle Ages); and a pamphlet—maybe even a piece of contemporary propaganda—on how Alexander died, including his last will and testament.

The other main source for the romance was a history deriving from Kleitarchos (circa 300 B.C.), who is said by Cicero to have written "rhetorically and dramatically"—not, one notes, truthfully. It comes as a shock to realize how quickly historians fictionalized Alexander: Onesikritos, who had actually accompanied Alexander, told how Alexander had met the queen of the (mythical) Amazons (cf. 3.25-26). Historians could become preoccupied with character, meaningful incidents, and impact: even in this historical novel one should be guided by Plutarch's observation (at the very beginning of his own *Life of Alexander*) that a trivial action, remark, or joke can be more useful in biography than a major battle. Major battles are especially disappointing in the romance.

The author may have had other sources too—in particular, more popular Egyptian stories, available in Greek, of Nektanebos (see note 1 on 1.1) and of Sesonchosis (see note 38 on 1.33)—though scholars no longer think that oral tradition played a significant role.

It is easy to undervalue the author's product through hasty judgments about his intentions. Its style is limp and rarely rises above mediocre; chronology and geography are grossly muddled;¹ fact and inept fictions are indiscriminately combined. But the style may be deliberately humble: such is the style used by Xenophon of Ephesos and by Dares and Diktys, the authors of the fictional histories of Troy, and such is the style that Christians commended for their nonelite audiences. Correct chronology and geography were readily available to the author from his historian if he wanted them. And "factions" are a recognizable taste that it is perhaps too severe simply to dismiss with the judgment of R. Merkelbach that "mankind had become childlike again in late antiquity and the Middle Ages."² It should not be thought that the author or his audience was un-

1. I append a brief chronological table to illustrate the author's confusing disregard for chronology in Books 1 and 2.

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|----------|---|
| 335 B.C. | 1.27 (repeated at 1.46): Alexander destroys Thebes |
| 334 B.C. | 1.42: omens at the beginning of the expedition against Darius |
| | 1.43-44: Alexander between Macedonia and the Hellespont |
| | 1.42: Alexander at Troy |
| | 1.28: battle of the river Granikos |
| | 2.7: Darius's council of war |
| 333 B.C. | 1.41 (repeated at 2.8): Alexander healed by the doctor Philip |
| | 1.41: battle of Issos |
| | 2.17: Darius seeks the return of his family |
| 332 B.C. | 1.35: siege of Tyre |
| | 1.34: Alexander enthroned as pharaoh of Egypt |
| | 1.30: the shrine of Ammon at Siwah |
| 331 B.C. | 1.31-33: foundation of Alexandria |
| | 2.16: battle of Gaugamela (Arbela) |

It will be seen that, apart from 1.27-29 (which are peculiar to recension B), Alexander's campaigns are related in more or less inverse order.

2. R. Merkelbach, *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans* (2d. ed., Munich, 1977), 60.

able in the cold light of day to recognize fiction. His subject was not what Alexander was, but what Alexander meant, half a millennium after his death. For in this short and humble work is encapsulated, however inadequately for educated tastes, the striving of a real man, and a great man, at the limits of human nature, something more important than either fact or simple fiction. In this conception lie the grounds for the otherwise bewildering success of the romance.

It would be easier to judge the work if we knew what the author's original looked like. We have the author's manuscript of no ancient work of literature, only copies of copies of copies; but whereas in most other works scribes attempt to make exact and accurate copies, in the *Alexander Romance* the theme—Alexander's life and deeds—is so dominant over the form in which it is expressed that scribes at times alter its shape: episodes can be added, subtracted, or moved, and their expression curtailed or elaborated. The process of translation too can weaken its fixity. In short, the work proved uniquely flexible to meet the demands of different writers and audiences. On the other hand, its flexibility can be exaggerated: older versions are close enough to each other for us to come within sight of the author's original.

There are a number of recensions of the story in the Greek tradition. Recension A, though itself damaged and abbreviated, comes closest to the original. Rather more abbreviated is recension B, which includes the manuscript L on the basis of which H. van Thiel prepared the edition of the text that I use for this translation. It includes, notably, the influential letter to Olympias (2.23–41), which is missing in A; and it shows one way out of the very many in which the *Alexander Romance* could be instantiated—a way adopted by Girard of Patras, who wrote manuscript L in the early fifteenth century. On the other hand, I have adopted a less purist attitude than van Thiel: I have corrected some passages that no longer make much sense because of mistakes introduced in copying and abbreviation.³ In so doing I have attempted to return to the author's original (usually as in A). In addition, I have corrected proper names as far as possible.

The same book and chapter numbers are used for the various ancient Greek recensions. Thus, when our manuscript omits an episode found in another ancient Greek recension, the appropriate chapter numbers are missing (e.g., 2.1–5). I have indicated briefly at these points the nature of the missing episode, though it may not always be part of the author's original text.

The letter to Olympias (2.23–41), though omitted by A, was included, at least in part, in the author's original. In the form in which we

3. For typical, but uncorrected, examples, see note 7 to 1.13 and note 91 to 3.26.

find it in L, it displays a change of register from the preceding narrative, from the historical to the fantastic. The real Alexander's restless curiosity is transfigured through the medium of myth, as he reaches through darkness for the ends of the earth and the Land of the Blest, as he probes the depths of the sea and observes from the heights of the sky the slughtness of the whole world he is conquering. This mixture of fantasy and revelation at the heart of the novel has something of the spirit of Apuleius's *Cupid and Psyche* tale in *The Golden Ass*, or even of Aeneas's descent to the underworld in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Remarkably, though, the limiting of the human condition through the fantastic quest of its greatest king finds its nearest parallel in the ancient Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

In Greek, the *Alexander Romance* has been continuously read and revised through ancient, Byzantine, and modern Greek versions from its composition to the present day (Lolos cites a film of 1980 as its latest instantiation). To the East, an Armenian translation of the fifth century was its gateway to numerous languages; it influenced the great Persian poet Firdawsi and Persian manuscript illumination; through the Arabic it even reached India and Indonesia. Among the Slavs, a Bulgarian translation of recension B began the diffusion. But for European literature it was the Latin translations that were important: as early as the fourth century, Julius Valerius Polemius, consul in 338, made a stylish translation in the manner of Apuleius, an abridged version of which was well known in the Middle Ages. But the major source for the Europeans was the *Historia de Preliis Alexandri*, an enlarged edition of a translation made by Leo, an archpresbyter at Naples around 960. Of this edition there survive more than one hundred manuscripts. In addition, the *Letter to Aristotle* (the basis of 3.17) and *Alexander and Dindimus King of the Brahmins* (cf. 3.5–6) circulated separately.

Already in Old English times such texts were known. In 781 Alcuin at York sent Charlemagne a copy of *Alexander and Dindimus*. The principal *Beowulf* manuscript (circa A.D. 1000) also contains a translation of the *Letter to Aristotle*. And a late eleventh century English manuscript contains the abridged Julius Valerius, the *Letter to Aristotle*, and *Alexander and Dindimus*. But the great importance of the *Alexander Romance* began in the late twelfth century, when French chivalrous epic became fashionable. Alexander was one of a select number of favored subjects, including Troy (as in Dares and Dictys), Arthur, and Charlemagne, "factions" all. About this time Thomas of Kent used principally the abridged Julius Valerius to produce *le roman de toute chevalerie*, as the Anglo-Norman Alexander poem is called, which was soon enlarged from the French *roman d'Alexandre* prepared by his contemporary Alexandre de Bernays (or de Paris) on the basis of the *Historia de Preliis*. During the next two centuries a number of Alexander poems circulated, more than now survive, mak-

ing Alexander a household name. Thomas of Kent was the main source for the early fourteenth-century *King Alisaunder* and for an episode in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. The same century saw Alexander in a variety of meters, such as the alliterative blank verse of the not inconsiderable *Wars of Alexander* and the heroic couplets of Sir Gilbert Hay's *Alexander*. In the originally French *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, the *Letter to Aristotle* provides, for instance, the marvel of the speaking trees (3.17); and in Scotland, French poetry supplied the raw material for the *Buik of Alexander* (possibly by John Barbour). Chaucer could easily sum it up:

The storie of Alisaundre is so commune
That every wight that hath discrecioun
Hath herd somewhat or al of his fortune.
(Monk's Tale, 7.2631–33).

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TEXT

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GENERAL

Hägg, Tomas. *The Novel in Antiquity*. Oxford and Berkeley, 1983. Pages 125–40 deal with *The Alexander Romance*.

THE ALEXANDER ROMANCE

Book One

- I NO FINER OR MORE COURAGEOUS man is held to have existed than Alexander, king of Macedon. He had a special way of doing everything and found his own qualities always had Providence for a partner. In fact, his wars and battles with any one nation were over before historians had time to gather full information on its cities. The deeds of Alexander, the excellences of his body and of his soul, his success in his actions, his bravery, are our present subject. We begin with his family—and the identity of his father. People generally are under the misapprehension that he was the son of King Philip. This is quite wrong. He was not the

child of Philip but rather, as the wisest Egyptians assert, the son of Nektanebos,¹ conceived after he had been driven from his throne.

This Nektanebos was an expert in the art of magic, and since his magic gave him the advantage over all nations, by the use of this power he lived in peace. If ever an enemy force attacked him, he did not start preparing armies or constructing engines of war or readying a weapon transport or bothering his officers about battle dispositions. Instead he would set down a dish and practice dish divining. He would pour springwater into the dish, form wax models of ships and men in his hands, and put them in the dish. Then, he would don the robes of a prophet, holding a staff of ebony in his hand; and, standing, he invoked the "gods"² of his spells—spirits of the air and demons of the earth beneath—and at his spell the model men came alive. In this way he sank the model ships in the dish, and immediately, as they were being sunk, the ships at sea belonging to the enemy attacking him were destroyed through the man's expertise in magic. So then, his kingdom remained at peace.

After some time had passed, some *exploratores* (which is what the Romans call spies) came to Nektanebos and reported to him that a great war cloud, armies of innumerable warriors, was advancing on Egypt. Nektanebos's general came to him and said: "O King, live long! Dismiss now all your ways of peace and get ready for the dispositions of war: a great cloud of barbarians is attacking us. It is not just one nation that is advancing upon us, but millions of people. Advancing on us are Indians, Nokimaians, Oxydrakai, Iberians, Kauchones, Lelapes, Bosporoi, Bastranoï, Azanoi, Chalybes, and all the other great nations of the East, armies of innumerable warriors advancing against Egypt.³ So postpone your other business and consider your position."

1. Nektanebo(s) II was the last native Egyptian king of Egypt. Coming to the throne in 360 B.C., he repulsed the attack around 350 B.C. of Artaxerxes III Ochus, king of Persia. But in 343 Artaxerxes led a better-prepared invasion force, spearheaded by Greek mercenaries, and overwhelmed Egypt. Nektanebos lost heart early and fled—south to Ethiopia, never to return and never to become father of Alexander. This King Arthur, as it were, of Egypt figures in a papyrus fragment of the second century B.C. that has been thought to cast some light on the origins of the Greek novel. The papyrus preserves the so-called *Dream of Nektanebos*, part of an Egyptian story translated into Greek, which seems to tell how the gods turned against Nektanebos. It could have continued by making Nektanebos Alexander's father. To be legitimized as ruler of Egypt, Alexander would need to be son of Nektanebos and also son of Ammon.

2. *The Alexander Romance* appears to have been written from a pagan point of view, though the term "Providence above," which otherwise first gains favor with the early Christian fathers, is embedded in the novel. Our manuscript L extends the use of this Christian term and likes to emphasize that Nektanebos's gods are only so-called gods. In a later recension one even finds Ammon, who appears in a dream to Alexander at 2.13, replaced by the prophet Jeremiah!

3. This overwhelming list of frighteningly exotic barbarian tribes fails to mention the Persians who were actually conducting the invasion: our author is concerned more with effect than accuracy.

At these words of the general, King Nektanebos laughed long and said to him: "From the point of view of carrying out the responsibilities of your post, what you say is fine and reasonable; but it is still a cowardly and unsoldierlike statement. Power is not a matter of numbers; war is a matter of drive. After all, it only takes one lion to overpower many deer, and one wolf to ravage many flocks of sheep. So you go with the armies under your command and maintain your position! With one word I shall engulf the innumerable host of barbarians in the sea." And with that Nektanebos dismissed the general from his presence.

- 3 He himself, however, arose and went into the palace. When he was quite alone, he used the same invocation and looked into the dish. And there he saw the gods of Egypt steering the vessels of his foreign enemies and their armies being guided by the gods themselves. Nektanebos was a man of much experience in magic and accustomed to talking with his gods, and, learning from them that the end of the kingdom of Egypt was at hand, he put in his pocket a large quantity of gold, shaved off his hair and his beard, changed his appearance, and fled via Pelusion. After a voyage he reached Pella in Macedonia and set himself up there at a particular place as an Egyptian prophet, with a thriving business in astrology.

Meanwhile, the Egyptians were asking their "gods" whatever had become of the king of Egypt (by now the whole of Egypt had been devastated by the foreigners), and their "god" in the sanctum of the Sarapeion uttered an oracle to them in these words.

This king who has fled will come again to Egypt, not in age but in youth, and our enemy the Persians he shall subdue.⁴

They debated the meaning of what had been said to them, but finding no solution, they inscribed the oracle given to them on the pedestal of Nektanebos's statue.

- 4 After his arrival in Macedonia, Nektanebos became well known to everyone. His calculations were of such accuracy that even the queen, Olympias, heard of him and came to him by night while her husband Philip was away at war. And she learned from him what she had been seeking, and left. A few days later, she sent for him and told him to come to her. When he saw how beautiful she was, Nektanebos was filled with desire for her loveliness and, reaching out his hand, said, "Greetings, Queen of the Macedonians!"

4. An oracle to the effect that Nektanebos would return to rule again is apparently presented in the Egyptian "Demotic Chronicle" (third century B.C.). The implication of our oracle should be that he will return as the youthful Alexander. The Sarapeion is the shrine of the god Sarapis.

"Greetings to you also, most excellent prophet!" she replied. "Come here and sit down." She continued: "You are the Egyptian teacher whose complete reliability has been established by those who have tried you. Even I have been convinced by you. By what method can you command true predictions?"

He replied: "There is a wide choice of method, O Queen. There are horoscope casters, sign solvers, dream specialists, oracular ventriloquists, bird observers, birth-date examiners, and those called magoi, who have the gift of prophecy." And with that he looked up fiercely at Olympias.

Olympias said to him, "Prophet, has your gaze become fixed at the sight of me?"

"Yes, lady," he replied. "I was reminded of an oracle given to me by my own gods that I must be consulted by a queen, and, look, it has come true. So now tell me what you wish."

Putting his hand in his pocket, he took out a little tablet, which mere words could not describe. It was made up of gold and ivory, with seven stars and the ascendant. The sun was of crystal, the moon adamant, Jupiter aerial jasper, Mars bloodred hematite, Saturn serpentine, Venus sapphire, Mercury emerald, and the ascendant white marble. Olympias, fascinated by so precious a tablet, sat down beside Nektanebos and, dismissing all the servants, said to him: "Prophet, cast my horoscope and Philip's"; for there was a rumor concerning her that if Philip returned from the war, he would divorce her and marry another.

Nektanebos replied, "Tell me your date of birth and tell me Philip's." And what did Nektanebos do next? He put his own date of birth with that of Olympias and, having completed his calculations, said to her, "The rumor you have heard about yourself is not wrong; but, as an Egyptian prophet, I can help you avoid being divorced by Philip."

"How can you?" she asked.

He replied, "You must have intercourse with a god on earth, conceive by him, bear a son and rear him, and have him to avenge you for the wrongs Philip has done you."

"What god?" Olympias asked.

"Ammon of Libya," he told her.

"And what is this god like, then?" Olympias asked him.

"Middle-aged," he replied, "with golden hair and beard and with horns growing from his forehead—these too just like gold. So you must get yourself ready like a queen for him, because today in a dream you shall see this god have intercourse with you."

And she said to him, "If I see this dream, I shall revere you not as a magos, but as a god."

So Nektanebos left the queen and picked from the wasteland herbs he knew for bringing dreams and extracted their juices. Then he made a

wax model in the shape of a woman and wrote on it the name of Olympias. He lit lamps and, sprinkling the juice from the herbs over them, invoked with oaths the demons appointed to this function so that Olympias had a vision. And she saw the god Ammon embracing her that night and as he arose from her, saying to her, "Woman, you have a male child in your womb to be your avenger!"

- 6 Olympias arose from her sleep in amazement and with all speed sent for Nektanebos, and when he came, said to him: "I have seen the dream and the god Ammon you told me about. I beg of you, Prophet, bring me together with him again. And do be careful about when he is going to come to me, so that I may be better prepared for my bridegroom."

He replied: "First of all, mistress, what you saw was a dream. When the god comes in person into your sight, he will see to your needs. But if Your Majesty commands, give me a room to sleep in, so that I may intercede with him on your behalf."

"Here," she said, "have a room in my quarters. And if I manage to become pregnant by this god, I shall honor you greatly, as a queen can, and treat you as though you were the child's father."

Nektanebos said to her: "There is something you must know, mistress. Before the god enters, there is this sign: when you are sitting in your room in the evening, if you see a snake gliding towards you, dismiss the servants but do not douse the lamps that I now give you, having prepared them expertly to be lit in honor of the god. Instead, go back to your royal bed and get ready: cover your face and do not look directly at the god you saw coming to you in your dreams."

So saying, Nektanebos left, and the next day Olympias gave him a bedroom immediately next to hers.

- 7 Nektanebos got ready for himself a very soft ram's fleece, complete with the horns on its temples, and an ebony scepter and white clothing and a cloak of the exact color of a snake, and went into the bedroom where Olympias was lying covered up on the bed. But she was looking out of the corner of her eye: she saw him coming and was not afraid, since she was expecting him to be as he had appeared in the dream. The lamps lit up, and Olympias covered her face. Nektanebos, setting down his scepter, got into her bed and lay with her. And he said to her: "Have strength, woman! You have in your womb a male child to be your avenger and king and sovereign of the whole world." Then Nektanebos took his scepter and left the bedroom and hid all the props he had.

In the morning Olympias awoke, went into the room of Nektanebos, and roused him from his sleep. He rose and said: "Greetings, Queen! What news do you bring me?"

"I am surprised, Prophet," she replied, "that you do not already

know. Will this god be coming back to me? I had such pleasure from him."

"Listen to me, Queen," he said to her. "I am the prophet of this god. So, when you wish, provide me with this place to sleep undisturbed so that I may perform the purification appropriate to him. Then he will come to you."

She replied, "Have this place from now on," and gave instructions that he was to be given the keys of the bedroom.

He put his props away in a secret place and went to her as often as Olympias wanted—with her thinking he was the god Ammon.

Day by day her stomach enlarged, and Olympias asked Nektanebos, "If Philip comes home and finds me pregnant, what am I to say?"

"Have no fear, mistress," Nektanebos replied to her. "The god Ammon will help you with this by appearing to Philip in his dreams and letting him know what has happened. As a result, Philip will be unable to find fault with you."

In this way, then, Olympias was taken in by Nektanebos, thanks to his magical powers.

Presently Nektanebos took a sea hawk and enchanted it. He told it everything he wanted said to Philip in a dream, using the black arts of magic to prepare it. And the sea hawk, released by Nektanebos, flew through the night to the place where Philip was, and spoke to him in a dream. Philip, seeing the hawk speak to him, woke greatly disturbed. So without delay he sent for a dream interpreter, a distinguished Babylonian, and related the marvel to him, saying: "I saw a god in a dream. He was very handsome, with grey hair and beard, and he had horns on his temples, both like gold; and in his hand he held a scepter. It was night, and he was going to my wife, Olympias, lying down, and having intercourse with her. Then, as he rose, he said to her: 'Woman, you have conceived a male child who shall tend you and shall avenge the death of his father.' And I thought I used papyrus thread to sew her up and that I put my seal upon her. And the seal ring was of gold, containing a stone with a relief of sun, lion's head, and spear. While I was having these impressions, I seemed to see a hawk perched over me, waking me from my sleep with its wings. What does all this mean for me?" 8

So the dream interpreter said to him: "King Philip, live long! What you saw in your dream is true. Sealing your wife's womb is indicative of your confidence that your wife has actually conceived: people seal a full vessel, not an empty one. As for your sewing her up with papyrus, papyrus is produced nowhere else except in Egypt. So the seed is Egyptian, and not lowly, but dazzling and glorious, as the gold ring shows: what, after all, is more glorious than gold, a medium through which men wor-

ship the gods? As regards the seal with the sun, a lion's head beneath, and a spear: this child who is going to be born will reach the rising sun, waging war with all—like a lion—and capturing cities by force—on account of the spear beneath. As for your having seen a god with ram's horns and grey hair, this is the god of Libya, Ammon." This was the interpretation of the expert, and Philip did not like what he heard.

9 Now Olympias was in distress, as she had little confidence in Nektanebos's arrangement to deal with Philip, and when Philip returned from the war, he saw his wife was upset and said to her: "Wife, why are you upset at what has happened? It is someone else's fault—that has been shown to me in a dream—so you cannot be blamed. We kings have power over all, but we do not have power over the gods. Your affair was not with one of the people, but with one of the most magnificent beings." With these words, Philip cheered Olympias, and she thanked the prophet who had let her have advance knowledge of Philip's experiences.

10 A few days later Philip was with Olympias and said to her, "You have deceived me, wife: you were made pregnant not by a god, but by someone else—and he is going to fall into my hands!" Nektanebos heard this. There was a great banquet in the palace, and everyone was feasting with King Philip to celebrate his return. King Philip alone was downcast—because Olympias, his wife, was pregnant. So, in front of everyone, Nektanebos turned himself into a serpent larger than the original one and came into the middle of the dining hall and hissed so hideously that the foundations of the palace shook. The king's guests leapt up in panic at the sight of the serpent; Olympias, however, recognized her bridegroom and reached out her right hand to him. And the serpent stirred himself to rest his head in her hand and coiled down to Olympias's knees and, putting out his forked tongue, kissed her—a token of his love for the benefit of the onlookers. And while Philip was simultaneously protesting and yet gazing insatiably in amazement, the serpent changed himself into an eagle; and where he went, it would be pointless to say.

Regaining his composure, Philip said: "Wife, I have seen the god coming to your assistance in peril, and that proves his concern for you. But I do not at present know the identity of the god: he has displayed to me the shape of the god Ammon and of Apollo and of Asklepios."

Olympias replied, "As he revealed to me in person when he came to me, he is the god of all Libya, Ammon."

Philip counted himself lucky at what he had seen: the child his wife bore was going to be known as the seed of a god.

11 Some days later, Philip was sitting in one of the royal gardens, when a mass of birds of various kinds was feeding there. Then, suddenly, one bird leapt into King Philip's lap and laid an egg; but it rolled off his lap

and broke as it fell on the ground. From it sprang a tiny serpent that coiled around the shell and then attempted to reenter where it had emerged; but, having got its head inside, it died. King Philip was disturbed at this, sent for an interpreter, and outlined to him what had happened. The interpreter, inspired by God, said: "King, you will have a son who will go round the whole world, bringing everyone under his sway. But, turning back towards his own kingdom, he will die young; for the serpent is a royal beast, and the egg from which the serpent came is like the world. So, having encircled the world and wanting to return where he had come from, he did not reach it but died instead." So then the interpreter, having resolved the problem, was duly rewarded by King Philip and left.

When the time came for Olympias to give birth, she sat on the birthing stool and labored. Nektanebos stood beside her and, calculating the courses of the heavenly bodies, distracted her from delivering too quickly. Using his magical powers violently to adjust the celestial bodies, he learned what the situation was and said to her: "Woman, hold yourself back and defeat the situation nature presents. If you give birth now, you will produce a servile prisoner or a monster." 12

When again the woman was in distress from her labor and was no longer able to hold out against the intensity of the contractions, Nektanebos said: "Persevere a little longer, woman. If you give birth now, your offspring will be a eunuch and a failure." In addition, with encouragement and kindly words he instructed Olympias how to hold her hands over the paths of nature and himself used his magic to restrain the woman's delivery.

Now once more observing the courses in heaven of the celestial bodies, he realized that the whole cosmos was at its zenith; and he saw a brilliance shining from heaven, as from the sun at its zenith, and said to Olympias, "Now give out the birth cry!" Indeed, he himself urged on her delivery and said to her, "You are on the point of bearing a king who will rule the world." and Olympias, bellowing louder than a cow, gave birth with good fortune to a male child. As the child fell to the ground, there were continual thunderclaps and lightning flashes stirring the whole world.

In the morning, Philip saw Olympias's newborn child and said: "I had wanted not to rear it, as it was not my offspring; but since I see that the seed came from a god and that the birth has been specially marked by heaven, he shall be raised in memory of my son by my previous wife, who died; and he shall be called Alexander." That was what Philip said, and the child received every attention. And garlands were worn throughout Macedonia, Pella, and Thrace. 13

I do not want to take long over Alexander's upbringing: he was

weaned, and he grew older. When he became a man, his appearance was not like Philip's and, indeed, not even like his mother Olympias's or his real father's—he was a type all of his own. Indeed, he had the shape of a man, but he had the mane of a lion and eyes of different colors—the right eye black, the left grey—and teeth as sharp as a serpent's; he displayed the energy of a lion. And there was no doubt of how his nature would turn out.⁵

His nurse was Lanike (the sister of Kleitos the Black); his school attendant and governor, Leonidas; his primary teacher, Polyneikes; his music teacher, Leukippos of Lemnos; his teacher of geometry, Menippos from the Peloponnese; of rhetoric, Anaximenes of Lampsakos, son of Aristokles; of philosophy, Aristotle of Stageira, son of Nikomachos.⁶

Having followed the entire curriculum, even astronomy, and being released from his studies, Alexander began in turn to teach his classmates. He drilled them for war and, standing apart, set them fighting; and when he saw one side being defeated by the other, he would go over to the losing side and help them out; and it would start winning again—so it was clear that he was victory. This, then, was Alexander's upbringing.

Now, one day Philip's horse breeders brought a colt of outstanding size from his studs and presented him to King Philip, with the words: "Lord King, we have found this horse born in the royal studs of a beauty that exceeds that of Pegasus. So we bring it to you, master." Looking at its size and beauty, King Philip was amazed. It needed the strength of them all to hold it back, and the horse breeders added, "Lord King, it is a man-eater!" "This really does show," King Philip replied, "the truth of the Greek proverb 'Close to good stands evil.' But since you have already brought him, I will take him." And he instructed his attendants to make an iron cage and to lock the horse in there without a bit "and any who are disobedient to my rule and require punishment after disobeying the law or being convicted of piracy⁷ shall be thrown to him." And the king's instructions were carried out.

14 Alexander grew older, and when he was twelve, he started accompanying his father on troop maneuvers: he armed himself, swept along with the armies, leapt on the horses. As a result, Philip, seeing him, said, "Alexander, my boy, I like your character and your bravery, if not your appearance—because it is not like mine."

5. L makes no sense of this sentence: I have substituted the version of A.

6. This list of teachers came from Favorinus's *Universal History* and provides the *terminus post quem* for the dating of the romance (circa A.D. 140).

7. A rather illogical alternative, an example of thoughtless rewriting in our manuscript; A has "so that we may throw to him those who require punishment by law, convicted of piracy or murder."

All of this was upsetting for Olympias; so she called Nektanebos to her and said to him, "Investigate what Philip intends to do with me." He set out his tablet and investigated her stars as Alexander sat by them. And Alexander said to him, "Sir, can't these stars you are talking about be seen in the sky?" "Of course they can, boy!" he replied. And Alexander said to him "Can I not know about them?" "Yes, boy," he replied, "you can when evening falls."

So in the evening Nektanebos collected Alexander and took him outside the city to a solitary spot and, looking up to the sky, showed Alexander the stars in the heavens. But Alexander took him by the hand, led him to a pit in the ground, and let him fall. Nektanebos, as he fell, took a fearful blow on the back of his head and cried: "Ah, Alexander, my boy, why did you decide to do that?"

Alexander replied, "Blame yourself, astrologer!"

"Why, boy?" he asked.

"Because," said Alexander, "you make a study of the heavens in ignorance of things on earth."

"Boy," said Nektanebos to him, "I am badly wounded. But there is no way that any mortal can overcome his fate."

"Why?" asked Alexander.

"Because I had read my own fate," said Nektanebos to him. "I was to be slain by my own child, and I have not escaped my fate: I have been slain by you."

"Am I your son then?" asked Alexander.

Then Nektanebos told him how he had been king in Egypt, had fled from Egypt, had come to live in Pella, had met Olympias and cast her horoscope, and how he had gone to her as the god Ammon and had had intercourse with her. With these words, he breathed out his spirit.

Alexander heard him say this and, being convinced that he had killed his father, was heartbroken and did not leave him in the pit for fear that he might become food for the beasts (it was night, and it was a solitary place). Moved by filial affection, he girt himself up and lifted him bravely onto his shoulders; then he took him to his mother, Olympias. At this sight Olympias said to Alexander, "What is this, my child?" And he replied, "I am another Aeneas and carry my Anchises," and proceeded to relate to her in detail everything he had heard from Nektanebos. She was astonished and blamed herself for having been deceived by him and his evil magical skills into adultery. But moved by affection, she buried him as befitted the father of Alexander, and, constructing a tomb, she had him placed there. It is one of Providence's notable marvels that Nektanebos, an Egyptian, received a funeral in the Greek style in Macedonia, but that Alexander, a Macedonian, received a funeral in the Egyptian style.

- 15 On his return from abroad Philip went off to Delphi to consult the oracle on who would succeed him as king. And the Pythia at Delphi tasted the Kastalian spring and with an oracle of the earth replied as follows:⁸

Philip, he shall be king over the whole world and shall subject all to his power, whosoever shall leap upon the horse Bucephalus and ride through the center of Pella.

(It was called Bucephalus because its shank was branded with the head [*cephale*] of an ox [*bus*].) Philip, hearing the oracle, was expecting another Hercules.

- 16 Alexander had Aristotle as his sole teacher. Many other children were studying with Aristotle, among them the sons of kings, and one day Aristotle asked one of them, "If you inherit your father's kingdom, what will you give me, your teacher?" He replied, "You shall hold a unique position of power as my companion, and I shall make you famous everywhere."

He asked another, "If you, boy, succeed to your father's kingdom, how will you treat me, your teacher?" He replied, "I shall make you a minister and consult you on all matters that require my decision."

And he also asked Alexander, "If you, Alexander, boy, succeed to the kingdom of your father Philip, how will you treat me, your teacher?" Alexander replied: "Are you asking me now about future matters, though you have no certainty about tomorrow? I shall give you your reward when the time and opportunity arrive." And Aristotle said to him, "Hail Alexander, world ruler: you shall be the greatest king."

Everyone liked Alexander, since he was intelligent and a good warrior. Only Philip had mixed feelings: it gave him pleasure to see such a warlike spirit in the boy, but it pained him to see that the boy was unlike him.

- 17 Alexander was fifteen when by chance one day he was passing the place where the horse Bucephalus was caged. He heard a terrifying neigh and, turning to the attendants, asked "What is this neighing?" In reply, the general Ptolemy said, "Master, this is the horse Bucephalus that your father caged because he was a man-eater." But the horse, hearing the sound of Alexander's voice, neighed again, not in a terrifying manner as on all previous occasions, but sweetly and clearly as though instructed by God. And when Alexander went up to the cage, straightaway the horse extended its forefeet to Alexander and licked him, indicating who its master was. Alexander observed the striking appearance of the horse and

8. The Pythia's trance was usually attributed to the effect of fumes supposed to issue from the ground, but here is ascribed to drinking the springwater of Kastalia. The phrase "with an oracle of the earth" is odd and may result from rewriting of an earlier version of this recension.

the remains of numerous slaughtered men at its feet, but elbowed aside the horse's guards and opened the cage. He grasped its mane;⁹ it obeyed him, and he leapt on it without a bridle, then rode through the center of the city of Pella. One of the horse breeders ran and informed King Philip, who was outside the city of Pella, and Philip, remembering the oracle, went to meet Alexander and greeted him with the words "Hail, Alexander, world ruler." And thereafter thought of the child's future made Philip glad.

Now one day Alexander found his father at leisure and, giving him a kiss, said, "Father, please, will you let me sail to Pisa for the Olympic Games—because I would like to take part." 18

"You want to go?" asked Philip. "So what sport have you been training in?"

"I want to enter the chariot race," replied Alexander.

"My boy," he said, "I shall now see to suitable horses for you from my stables. So they will be taken care of; but you, my boy, must train yourself more seriously—it is a prestigious competition."

Alexander replied, "Father, you just let me go to the competition: I have horses that I have reared for myself since they were young."

Philip gave Alexander a kiss and, astounded at his determination, said to him, "Boy, this is what you want; so go with my blessing."

Alexander went off to the harbor and gave instructions for a brand new ship to be built and for the horses complete with their chariots to be put aboard. Alexander embarked together with his friend Hephaistion and after a voyage reached Pisa. On disembarkation, he received numerous gifts and instructed the lads to rub down the horses. Himself, he went for a walk with his friend Hephaistion, and they ran into Nikolaos, son of King Andreas of Akarnania,¹⁰ a man proud of his wealth and good fortune—two unstable gods—and confident in his physical strength. He went up to Alexander and hailed him with the words "Greetings, young man!"

"Greetings to you too," he replied, "whoever you are and wherever you come from."

Nikolaos said to Alexander, "I am Nikolaos, king of Akarnania."

But Alexander said to him, "Do not be so proud, King Nikolaos, or preen yourself in the opinion that you are well equipped to deal with your life tomorrow: Fortune does not stay in one place, and change shows up the worthlessness of braggarts."

9. "Mane" according to A; "halter" according to the Armenian, which adds that Alexander used brute strength rather than good luck to tame the horse; "tendon" (?) according to L. In Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 6 Alexander takes the *rein* and turns Bucephalus towards the sun because he is worried by his shadow. The sense of this story has been lost by either our author or the recensions.

10. Nikolaos is invented by our author—and Akarnania was not ruled by a king!

Nikolaos replied: "What you say is right, but what you imply is not. Why are you here? As a spectator or a competitor? I understand that you are the son of Philip of Macedon."

"I may be young," Alexander replied, "but I am here to compete with you in the horse-racing."

"You should rather," said Nikolaos, "have come for the wrestling, the boxing, or the all-in fighting."¹¹

Alexander replied, "I want to take part in the chariot-racing."

Then Nikolaos boiled over with rage and contempt for Alexander, observing how young he was but not having discovered the capacity of his soul, and spat in his face, saying: "May no good come to you! See what the stadium of Pisa has sunk to!"

But Alexander, taught by nature to control his feelings, wiped off the spit that insulted him and, with a smile that meant death, said, "Nikolaos, I shall defeat you forthwith, and in your homeland of Akarnania I shall take you prisoner." And they parted as enemies.

- 19 A few days later the time for the competition arrived. Nine men had entered for the chariot race, four of them sons of kings: Nikolaos the Akarnanian himself, Xanthias the Boeotian, Kimon the Corinthian, and Alexander the Macedonian.¹² The rest were sons of satraps and of generals. Everything for the competition was in place, including the urn, from which the lots were now drawn. Nikolaos drew first place, Xanthias second, Kimon third, Kleitomachos fourth, Aristippos of Olynthos fifth, Pieros of Phokaia sixth, Kimon of Lindos seventh, Alexander of Macedon eighth, Nikomachos of Lokroi ninth. Next they took up position for the race. The trumpet rang out the signal to begin. The starting gates on the stalls were opened up. They all leapt forward at an enormous pace—first lap, second and third and fourth. Now those at the back slackened as their horses gave out; but Alexander was driving in fourth position, and behind him was Nikolaos, not so much trying to win as to kill Alexander: Nikolaos's father had been killed by Philip in a war. Alexander had the intelligence to realize this, and when the leading drivers caused each other to fall, he let Nikolaos get past. And Nikolaos, unaware of the trap, overtook him, with his thoughts on the crown of victory. Now he was driving in first position, but, two laps further on, the right-hand

11. A contest (*pankration*) combining traits of boxing and wrestling, sometimes compared to judo. Biting and gouging were not allowed, but dislocation of limbs and bone breaking were—clearly not a sport for aristocrats. Plutarch remarks how Alexander never instituted contests in boxing or all-in fighting; he also reports an anecdote in which Alexander declines to take part in foot-racing on the grounds that he would not have kings for competitors. These are the materials out of which this episode has been invented.

12. The names of the participants other than Alexander appear to be fictional.

horse of Nikolaos stumbled against the front of the chariot, and the front horses came down together with it, and Nikolaos fell. Alexander hurtled forward, thanks to the pace of his own horses, and as he passed, seized the pole of Nikolaos's rear horses, and the whole of Nikolaos's chariot collapsed together with the charioteer, and Nikolaos was killed. Now Alexander and no one else was left, and the man who died suffered what the proverb says: "Whoever makes trouble for another, makes trouble for himself."

Now Alexander was crowned and, wearing his victory crown of wild olive, went up to the temple of Olympian Zeus. And the prophet of Zeus said to him: "Alexander, Olympian Zeus makes this prediction for you: 'Be of good cheer! As you have defeated Nikolaos, so shall you defeat many in your wars.'"¹³

Alexander, receiving this omen, returned victorious to Macedonia to find that his mother, Olympias, had been divorced by King Philip and that Philip had married the sister of Lysias, by name Kleopatra. Philip's wedding was taking place that very day, and Alexander, wearing his Olympic victory crown, entered the banquet and said to King Philip: "Father, accept the victory crown of my first exertions. And when in turn I give my mother, Olympias, to another king, I shall invite you to Olympias's wedding." So saying, Alexander reclined opposite his father, Philip, but Philip was hurt by Alexander's words. 20

Then Lysias, a joker who was reclining at table, said to Philip, "King Philip, ruler over every city, now we celebrate your wedding with Kleopatra, an honorable lady, by whom you will have legitimate children, not the product of adultery—and they will look like you." Hearing Lysias say this made Alexander angry, and he reacted instantly, hurling his goblet at Lysias; it hit him on the temple and killed him. Philip, seeing what had happened, stood up, sword in hand—pointed in fury at Alexander—and fell over, tripping against the bottom of the couch. Alexander laughed and said to Philip, "Here is the man eager to take over the whole of Asia and subjugate Europe to its very foundations—and you are not capable of taking a single step." And with these words Alexander seized the sword from Philip, his father, and left all the guests half-slaughtered. It was just like watching the story of the Centaurs: some fled under the couches; some used tables for cover; others hid in dark areas. The result was that you could see Alexander as another, latter-day, Odysseus killing the suitors of Penelope. 21

Then Alexander went off and brought his mother, Olympias, into the palace, becoming an avenger of her marriage, but Lysias's sister Kleopa-

13. It is probably relevant that Niko-laos means literally "defeat-people."

tra he drove into exile. The bodyguards took up King Philip and laid him down on the couch—in extremely bad condition.¹⁴

- 22 Ten days later, Alexander went in to Philip and, sitting down by him, said to him, “King Philip—I shall call you by your name so that you may not have the displeasure of being called Father by me—I have come to you not as your son, but as your friend to intervene in your unfair treatment of your wife.”

Philip said to him, “You did a bad thing, Alexander, by killing Lysias for the improper words he uttered.”

“But you,” replied Alexander, “did a fine thing by standing up sword raised against your child, wanting to kill me, and by wanting to marry another though your previous wife, Olympias, had done you no wrong? So get up and pull yourself together—I know what is making your body sluggish¹⁵—and let us forget these errors. I shall now appeal to Olympias, my mother, to be reconciled to you: she will be persuaded by her son—even if you are not prepared to be called my father!”

With these words Alexander left and, going to his mother, Olympias, said to her: “Mother, do not be angry at what your husband has done. He does not know about your indiscretion, whereas I, the son of an Egyptian father, am the living evidence against you. So go and appeal to him to be reconciled to you: it is the decent thing for a wife to take second place to her husband.” And he took his mother to King Philip, his father, and said: “Father, turn to face your wife—I shall now call you Father, as you for your part follow the advice of your child. My mother stands at your side as a result of the many appeals I have made to her to come in to you and forget what has been done. Now embrace each other: there is no shame in your doing so in front of me—I was, after all, born from you.” So saying, he reconciled his parents, and all the Macedonians were amazed by him. And from then on people who were getting married avoided mentioning the name of Lysias, in case by the mention of his name¹⁶ they should be parted.

- 23 The city of Methone had rebelled against Philip. So Philip sent Alexander with a large army to conduct the war. But Alexander, on his ar-

14. This overcolored episode of the marriage banquet rather inverts historical truth. In 337 B.C. Philip married Kleopatra, his sixth wife, who, as a native Macedonian, posed a special threat to the position of Olympias (who came from Epirus), though there was no question of divorce. At the banquet, Attalos, a Macedonian general and uncle of Kleopatra, played the role assigned here to Lysias. But Alexander did not proceed to slaughter the wedding guests: rather, he fled with Olympias to Epirus, and was only able to return after a negotiated reconciliation. In 335 B.C. Olympias murdered the baby daughter of Philip and Kleopatra and caused Kleopatra to commit suicide.

15. The fuller version of A may make this clearer: “I know why you are sluggish: it is not your body I am talking about, but you are anguished in your soul at your errors.”

16. Lysias means “he who parts.”

rival at Methone, persuaded them by clever argument to resume their allegiance.¹⁷

On his return from Methone, having gone in to his father Philip, he was standing and saw ahead of him men dressed in foreign costume. He asked about them, "Who are these people?" and was given the reply "Satraps of Darius, king of Persia."

Alexander asked them, "What are you here for?"

"To demand from your father the usual tribute," they replied to him.

"On whose behalf," Alexander asked them, "do you demand tribute?"

The satraps of Darius replied to him, "On behalf of Darius, king of the Earth."

"If the gods," said Alexander to them, "have given men the earth as a gift for their sustenance, is Darius taking a percentage of the gods' gift?" And again he said, testing them, "What would you want to take?"

"One hundred golden eggs," they told him, "made from twenty pounds of gold."

In reply Alexander said to them, "It is not right for Philip, king of the Macedonians, to pay tribute to barbarians: it is not open to anyone who so wishes to make Greeks his subjects." So Alexander told the satraps of Darius, "Go back and tell Darius, 'Alexander, son of Philip, hereby informs you, "When Philip was on his own, he used to pay you tribute. But now he has begotten a son, Alexander, he no longer pays you tribute, and, indeed, the tribute that you have taken from him I shall come in person and take back."'" And with these words he sent away the emissaries, not even deigning to write to the king who had sent them. Philip, king of the Greeks, was pleased at this, seeing the style of Alexander's daring.¹⁸

The emissaries, however, took some money and gave it to a Greek friend of theirs who was a painter, and he did them a miniature portrait of Alexander, which they took to Darius in Babylon when they reported back to him everything Alexander had said to them.

Now another city in Thrace revolted from Philip, and he sent Alexander with a large number of soldiers to make war on it.

There was a man called Pausanias in Pella, a man of importance and great wealth who was the leader of all the Thessalonians.¹⁹ Now, this 24

17. Methone had in fact been destroyed by Philip in 354 B.C., when Alexander was two.

18. The episode of the Persian emissaries is based on a tale (Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 5) of how Alexander once entertained Persian envoys while Philip was away, asking them useful questions about their empire. Demands for tribute and haughty dismissal are fictional amplifications.

19. Thessalonike, the second city of modern Greece, was founded about 316 B.C., seven years after Alexander's death. Pausanias was in fact an aristocrat from the western fringe of Macedonia who had become a royal bodyguard. He was said by Aristotle to have killed

man had fallen in love with Olympias, Alexander's mother, and sent some people to her to persuade her to leave Philip, her husband, and marry him, sending her many gifts. But Olympias refused; so Pausanias headed for the place where Philip was, having discovered that Alexander was away at war, and arrived as a stage competition was being held. Philip was conducting proceedings in the Olympic theater when Pausanias appeared, sword in hand, in the theater with a number of other brave men, with the intention of killing Philip so that he could seize Olympias. He attacked him and struck him in the side with his sword but failed to kill him. Pandemonium resulted in the theater. And Pausanias rushed off to the palace to seize Olympias.

Now it just so happened that Alexander returned victorious from the war on the same day and saw massive uproar in the city. He asked what had happened and was told, "Pausanias is in the palace intending to seize Olympias, your mother." And immediately he went in with those of his guards he had with him and found Pausanias violently restraining Olympias as she screamed. Alexander wanted to strike him with a spear but was afraid he might hit his mother too: he was keeping hold of her with considerable force. But Alexander tore Pausanias away from his mother and used the spear he was holding to strike him. Discovering Philip was still alive, he went to him and asked, "Father, what do you want done with Pausanias?" "Bring him here to me," he replied. And when they brought him, Alexander took a dagger, put it in the hand of Philip, his father, and brought Pausanias up to him. And Philip took hold of him and cut his throat. And Philip said to Alexander: "Alexander, my boy, it is no sorrow to me that I am dying: I have had vengeance, killing my enemy like this. So Ammon the god of Libya was right when he said to Olympias, your mother, 'You shall have in your womb a male child who shall avenge the death of his father.'" So saying, Philip expired. He had a king's funeral, and the whole of Macedonia attended.

25 When calm had been restored in Pella, Alexander went up to his father Philip's statue and at the top of his voice cried out, "Sons of the Pellaans

Philip because of a personal grudge, but it has seemed suggestive that his homeland had originally been under the influence of Epirus, Olympias's home. His passion for Olympias is romantic fiction; and he was apprehended not by Alexander, but by three bodyguards as he tripped over a vine root.

20. The Amphiktyonic League was a loose confederation of the states of central Greece, between Macedonia and Attica (the territory of Athens). It was prompt to recognize Alexander as Philip's successor. Philip had already federated the Greeks (except the unwilling Spartans) at Corinth in 337 B.C. for a campaign against Persia and became leader of this "League of Corinth." Alexander took over his leadership and reaffirmed the intention to invade the Persian Empire, at Corinth in 335 B.C., and that is where he would have made this sort of speech—not at Pella. This event is referred to at the end of 1.27.

and Macedonians and Greeks and Amphiktyons²⁰ and Spartans and Corinthians, join with me, your comrade-in-arms, and pledge yourselves to me, to campaign against the barbarians and free ourselves from slavery to the Persians so that we who are Greeks may cease to be slaves to barbarians." And having made this speech, Alexander issued royal edicts in every city. Then men mustered from all the states and arrived in Macedonia—volunteers, all of them, as though summoned by a god-sent voice—to join the campaign. Alexander opened his father's armory and issued the young men with full military equipment. And in addition he brought all the guards of his father, Philip, by now old men, and said to them, "Veterans and mighty comrades-in-arms, consent to add your distinction to the Macedonian campaign and march with us to war!"

"King Alexander," they replied, "we have grown old marching with your father, King Philip, and our bodies are no longer strong enough to match our adversaries. Consequently, we seek to be excused from campaigning under you."

"But I am all the more keen," replied Alexander to them, "to march with you if you are old: age is often stronger than youth. Indeed, on many occasions youth, trusting in the effectiveness of the body, deviates into ill-advised action and finds the scales weighted against it and encounters sudden peril, whereas the old man thinks first and acts later, using judgment to avoid peril. So you, sirs, march with us; you will not be lined up against the enemy but will show your mettle by encouraging the young men. The contribution of both is necessary; so lend the support of your minds to the army: the conduct of war too needs intelligence. The fact is, if you will consider the battle, it is clear that your own security too depends on victory for the homeland: if we are defeated, the enemy will have no opposition save those unfit through age; whereas if we win, the victory reflects on the judgment of the advisers." So saying, Alexander persuaded all the veterans by his words to follow him.

So Alexander succeeded to the kingdom of Philip, his father, at the age of eighteen. And the disturbance occasioned by Philip's death was quelled by Antipatros, a clever man and a fast thinker. He took Alexander armed with a breastplate into the theater and developed a number of arguments in his appeal to the Macedonians to support Alexander. 26

Alexander was, it seems, more fortunate than his father, Philip, and immediately took upon himself great affairs. He brought together all his father's soldiers, counted them, and found there were 20,000 horsemen (including 8,000 armed with breastplates), 15,000 infantry, 5,000 Thracians, 30,000 Amphiktyons, Spartans, Corinthians, and Thessalonians. He found the total of all those present was 70,000, and 6,590 archers.

As the Illyrians, Paionians, and Triballoi had rebelled, he marched against them, but while he was fighting these nations, Greece revolted. A 27

rumor had got about that Alexander, king of the Macedonians, had been killed in the war, and it is said that Demosthenes brought a wounded man before the Athenian assembly who claimed he had seen Alexander lying dead. When the Thebans discovered this, they cut down the garrison that Philip had put in the Kadmeia after the battle of Chaironeia.²¹ According to the story, Demosthenes persuaded them to do this. Alexander in anger attacked the Thebans. And the Thebans had signs of the misfortunes that lay in store for them: a spider wove its web over the shrine of Demeter and the water of the spring "Dirke" turned bloody. The king took and demolished the whole city, sparing only the house of Pindar. And he is supposed also to have compelled the flautist Ismenias to play to the demolition of the city. So the Greeks took fright: they elected Alexander their leader and handed over to him the rule of Greece.

- 28 Back in Macedonia, he got everything ready for the expedition across Asia, constructing Liburnian cruisers and triremes²² and a very large number of battleships. He embarked all his troops and wagons, together with all manner of arms. And, taking 50,000 talents of gold,²³ he gave the order and came to the region of Thrace, where he took 5,000 picked men and 500 talents of gold. And all the cities received him with garlands.

At the Hellespont, he took the ships and reached Asia from Europe. There he fixed his spear in the ground and claimed Asia by right of conquest. From there Alexander came to the river Granikos, as it is called: the satraps of Darius were defending this. After a mighty battle, Alexander was victorious. He took spoils and sent them to the Athenians and to his mother, Olympias, as a gift. He decided first to subdue the coastal areas and so took possession of Ionia and after that Caria, after which he took Lydia and the treasures at Sardis. And he captured Phrygia, Lycia, and Pamphylia—where something amazing happened: Alexander had no ships with him, but part of the sea receded to let his infantry cross.²⁴

- 29 Pressing on, he rendezvoused with his fleet and crossed to Sicily.²⁵

21. Philip decisively defeated the joint forces of Athens and Thebes at Chaironeia in 338 B.C., establishing his supremacy over Greece. Alexander destroyed Thebes in 335 B.C. L tells of the destruction twice over, here and at 1.46. The other recensions omit most of 1.27–29.

22. Liburnian ships were fast warships with two banks of oars, which became important only after Octavian (Augustus) deployed them at the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. Triremes had three banks of oars.

23. A talent was the largest weight in Greek currency, roughly the weight a man can carry, about fifty pounds.

24. By Mt. Klimax in Lydia; the coastal area was only passable when northerlies blew—as they did on Alexander's arrival.

25. Alexander never went to Sicily, Italy, or Africa, though a western expedition was alleged to be among his last plans, and "What if he had?" later became a popular debating topic. On the other hand, envoys from Europe and Africa met Alexander on his return from India to Babylon, wisely, to offer congratulations, and one witness claimed that Romans were among them, something not impossible.

Subduing some people who opposed him, he crossed to the land of Italy. And the Roman generals sent Marcus, one of their generals, with a crown of pearls and another of precious stones, saying to him, "We add to your crowns, Alexander, king of the Romans and of every land," bringing him also five hundred pounds of gold. Alexander, accepting their gifts, promised to make them great and powerful and took from them two thousand archers and four hundred talents.

From there he crossed over to Africa. And the African generals met him and begged him to keep away from their city, Carthage. But Alexander despised their weakness and said to them, "Either become stronger or pay tribute to those stronger than you." 30

Setting off from there, he crossed the whole of Libya and reached the shrine of Ammon.²⁶ (He put most of his troops aboard ship and instructed them to sail away to the island of Proteus and await him there, while he himself went off to sacrifice to Ammon on the supposition that he had been begotten by Ammon.) He prayed to him in these words. "Father Ammon, if she who bore me tells the truth when she says that I was begotten by you, give me an oracle!" And Alexander saw Ammon embracing his mother, Olympias, and saying to him, "Alexander, my child, you are my seed." Discovering the actual power of Ammon, Alexander renovated his shrine and gilded his idol and consecrated it with this inscription.

DEDICATION OF ALEXANDER TO HIS FATHER, THE GOD AMMON.

He also asked to receive an oracle from him on where he might found a city named after him so that it might last in perpetual memory of him. And he saw Ammon, aged, golden-haired, with ram's horns on his temples, saying to him:

O King, you the ram-horned Phoebus addresses:
If you wish through ages unsullied²⁷ to retain your youth,
Found your city greatly famed opposite the Isle of Proteus,
Over which presides Time, son of Wealth, himself its lord,
Turning the boundless world on his five-peaked ridges.²⁸

26. As pharaoh of Egypt, Alexander became son of Ammon and was apparently greeted as such at Ammon's shrine at the oasis Siwah (in the depths of the Egyptian desert). This chapter, which accepts the parentage by Ammon, is of course inconsistent with the tale of the trickery of Nektanebos in 1.7, which maintains continuity with pharaonic rule in a different way.

27. A has "through centuries unaging," more plausibly.

28. Phoebus here denotes the sun-god (Egyptian, Ra) with whom Ammon was identified. The city to be founded is, of course, the Egyptian Alexandria, perpetuating Alexander's name. Proteus, an elusive god who could transform his appearance, lived according to Homer (*Odyssey* 4.351ff.) on Pharos. "Time, son of Wealth" refers to Sarapis, the great god developed at Alexandria for the use of Greek Egypt. The final line depicts the site as the center of the universe; van Thiel refers the five peaks to five elements in Perisan lore, as there are in fact no mountains at the site.

Receiving this oracle, Alexander tried to work out what island was meant by "the Isle of Proteus" and who the god was that presided over it. And as Alexander tried to work this out, he made another sacrifice to Ammon and journeyed to a village in Libya, where he let his troops rest.

31 As Alexander was taking a walk there, an enormous deer ran by and entered some undergrowth. Alexander called out to an archer and instructed him to shoot the beast. The archer drew his bow but did not hit the deer, and Alexander said to him, "Fellow, that was a miss [*paratonon*]"; and as a result of this, that place was called Paratone on account of Alexander's exclamation. So he built a small town there, and, inviting certain local people of good class, he gave them houses there, calling the place Paratone.

Traveling on from there, he came to Taphosirion.²⁹ Then he questioned the locals on the reason for this name, and they told him that the shrine was the grave [*taphos*] of Osiris. So, having sacrificed there too, he reached the end of his journey and came to the land of present-day Alexandria and saw a huge area stretching as far as the eye could see, containing twelve villages. Alexander marked out the length of the city from Pandysis, as it is called, to the Herakleotic mouth; and its width from the district of Mendes up to the small Hormoupolis (it was called Hormoupolis, not Hermoupolis, because everyone coming down the Nile put in [*pros-hormein*] there).³⁰ So it was as far as that locality that King Alexander marked out the city, and up to the present day it is registered as the territory of the Alexandrians.

King Alexander was advised by Kleomenes of Naukratis and Deinokrates of Rhodes not to found the city on so great a scale, "because you will not be able to find enough people to fill it; and even if you do, the administration will be unable to supply the food it would need. In addition, the inhabitants of the city will be at war with each other because of its excessive and boundless size: it is small cities that think constructively together and form constructive plans for the good of the city; whereas if you build it on the enormous scale you have planned, there will be differences and dissension among its inhabitants, as the population will be boundless." Alexander was persuaded and commissioned the architects to lay out the city on the scale they wanted, and they, under King Alex-

29. More accurately, Taposiris, the modern Abusir, thirty miles west of Alexandria. The derivation of this native Egyptian place-name from the Greek word for "grave" is naturally false. Osiris was the Egyptian god of the underworld, with whom the dead pharaoh was identified.

30. Pandysis was to the west of Alexandria, and the Herakleotic mouth of the Nile was at Kanobos, twenty miles to the east. The lesser Hermoupolis ("city of Hermes" in Greek, referring to the Egyptian god Thoth, who was identified with Hermes) was thirty miles upstream from Kanobos; Mendes (L mistakenly talks of the "shrine of Bendis" instead) was in the northeast area of the delta. This fictional first plan of Alexander would have put New York and Greater London to shame.

ander's instructions, marked out the length of the city from the river Drakon at the spit of land with Taphosirion on it up to the river Agathodaimon at Kanobos, and the width from the district of Mendes to Eurylochos and Melanthion. And Alexander ordered those who lived in this area within thirty miles of the city to move into the districts of the city, granting them areas of land and entitling them to be called Alexandrians. The chief officials of the districts were Eurylochos and Melanthos—which is where the names came from.

Alexander consulted other master builders for the city too, including Noumenios the stonemason, Kleomenes of Naukratis the engineer, and Krateros of Olynthos. Noumenios had a brother called Hyponomos: this man advised Alexander to build the city on proper foundations and to install water channels and sewers discharging into the sea—and it is called a hyponomos because he divided it.³¹

[From the land he saw an island in the sea and asked what it was called. "Pharos," the locals replied. "Proteus lived there. And we have his tomb also, which we worship, on a high mountain." They took him to what is now called the Hero's Shrine and showed him the coffin. He sacrificed to the hero Proteus and, seeing the tomb had in the course of time fallen into disrepair, gave instructions for it swiftly to be restored.] 32

Alexander ordered the perimeter of the city to be marked out so that he could take a look at it. So the workmen marked the city out with wheat meal, but all sorts of birds flew down, ate up the meal, and flew off. Alexander was very disturbed at what this sign might mean; so he sent for the interpreters and told them what had happened. Their reply was, "The city that you, King, have ordered to be built will nourish the whole world, and men born in it will be found everywhere: birds fly round the whole world."³²

So he gave instructions for the building of the city. When he had laid the foundations for the most part of the city and marked it out, Alexander inscribed five letters—A B Γ Δ E—A for "Alexander," B for "King" [*Basileus*], Γ for "of the Race" [*genos*], Δ for "of Zeus" [*Dios*], E for "has founded [*ektisen*] an inimitable city."³³ Donkeys and mules were working away. But as the gateway of the shrine was being erected, an enormous and very ancient slab, covered with letters, suddenly fell, and a large

31. Another false etymology: *hyponomos* is just Greek for "something that runs underground." The bracketed paragraph that follows is omitted by L and restored by Van Thiel from A.

32. L now omits a paragraph in which a snake troubling the workmen is caught and killed, and Alexander orders a shrine to be built for it—it is the Good Spirit (in Greek, *Agathos Daimon*). This is the shrine referred to in the next paragraph.

33. This is a colorful explanation for the fact that Alexandria was divided into 5 districts, lettered A, B, Γ, Δ, E. One may compare divisions of modern cities for postal purposes.

number of snakes came out of it and crept into the entrances of the houses, whose foundations had by now been laid. (Alexander was still present to found the city on the new moon of the month Tybi—that is, January—including the actual shrine.)³⁴ And this is why doorkeepers revere these snakes as Good Spirits entering the houses (they are not poisonous); and they garland their working animals and let them rest. This is why up to the present day the Alexandrians have kept the custom of holding the festival on the twenty-fifth of Tybi.

- 33 Alexander found a cult statue stationed on the high hills, together with the Pillars of Helion and the Hero's Shrine.³⁵ In addition he looked for the Sarapeion, in accordance with the oracle given to him by Ammon. (He had spoken to him in an oracle like this.

O king, you the ram-horned Phoebus addresses:
 If you wish through ages unsullied to retain your youth,
 Found your city greatly famed opposite the Isle of Proteus,
 Over which presides Time, son of Wealth, himself its lord,
 Turning the boundless world on his five-peaked ridges.

So Alexander was looking for him who beholds all.)³⁶ He constructed opposite the Hero's Shrine a great altar, now called the Altar of Alexander, at which he celebrated a costly sacrifice. And he offered this prayer. "You are the god who takes care of this land and beholds the boundless world—this is clear. Yourself now accept my sacrifice and be my helper in the wars." So saying, he put the victims on the altar. Then suddenly a huge eagle flew down and snatched the entrails of the offering, carried them off through the air and dropped them at another altar. Alexander, observing the spot, went there quickly and saw the entrails lying on the altar. The altar, he saw, had been set up by men of olden times. There was a precinct, with a wooden idol presiding inside. With its right hand it was soothing a beast of many shapes;³⁷ in its left hand it held a scepter. And beside the idol was a huge statue of a maiden. So he asked the people that lived there who the god of the place was. They replied that they

34. The sentence in parentheses seems to belong a few lines later.

35. The nonexistent "high hills" have been invented on the basis of the oracle. The Hero's Shrine is that of Proteus. The Pillars of Helion are puzzling: they may refer to obelisks at the Kaisareion, but they sound like Pillars of the Sun and their function here, set on high mountains, may be to mark the center of the universe as indicated in the last line of the oracle.

36. The author seems to have thought that the rare word for "turning" in the last line of the oracle meant "beholding."

37. The "beast of many shapes" is the three-headed dog, Cerberus, who guards the entrance to the underworld. In the standard iconography Sarapis, who controls the underworld, is depicted seated with scepter and with Cerberus, both of which details appear only in recension B. The "maiden" is Sarapis's consort Isis. Sarapis and Isis, when translated into traditional Greek mythology, have the status of Zeus and Hera.

did not know, but had received a tradition from their forefathers that it was a shrine of Zeus and Hera.

Here too he saw the obelisks that stand to this day in the Sarapeion, outside the present precinct. On these there were hieroglyphic letters inscribed, of the following content.³⁸

[I, Sesonchosis, King of Egypt and world ruler, built and dedicated this to Sarapis, the first god revealed to this land. (Sarapis then appears in a dream to Alexander, prophesies that Alexandria will indeed perpetuate the memory of Alexander and its name will not be changed, and tells of its future prosperity. A phrase then tries to smooth over the omission in the manuscript.)] The reward of the actual city [will be]: (and the manuscript continues) ... possessed of fine temples, exceptional in the huge size of its population, superior in its healthy climate. And I shall be its champion and stop hardships, either famine or earthquake, from taking hold: instead, they shall pass swiftly through the city, like a dream. Many kings shall come to it, not to bring war, but to pay homage. And when you become a god, your body will constantly receive homage and gifts from many kings, and you shall live in the city, dead and yet not dead: for you shall have the city that you are founding as your tomb.

Receive now, Alexander, a concise proof of my identity: add twice one hundred [S]³⁹ and one [A]; then another hundred [R] and one [A]; then four times twenty [P] and ten [I]; and, taking the first letter, put it at the end—then you will understand who has appeared to you.

Having delivered this oracle, he withdrew. Alexander, recalling the oracle, realized it was SARAPIS. The layout of the city is as Alexander arranged it, and the city was established, growing stronger day by day.

Alexander took his armies and hurried on to Egypt. When he arrived at the city of Memphis, the Egyptians enthroned him as king of Egypt 34

38. Recension B here omits about two pages, scarcely deliberately. I indicate in the text the content of what intervened. When the recension resumes, Sarapis is delivering a prophecy, but B does not notice it is in verse and, paraphrasing, destroys the meter.

There is some confusion between the names Sesonchosis and Sesostris, and the reference here is in fact to Sesostris III (1877–1839 B.C.), whose fabulous conquests, supposedly as far as Scythia and Thrace, are reported already in Herodotos and were invented, it seems, to restore the Egyptian ego by outdoing the conquests of Darius I of Persia (521–486 B.C.). In the generation after Alexander they were extended to outdo Alexander's exploits. Our author may have borrowed material from a Sesonchosis novel (of which fragments survive), and in any case he uses him here as a forerunner of Alexander.

39. Greeks, not having arabic numerals, used letters of the alphabet instead, so that 200, for instance, is S. Cf. Heliodoros 9.22.

on the throne of Hephaistos.⁴⁰ In Memphis Alexander saw a tall statue of black stone with the following inscription on its pedestal.

THIS KING WHO HAS FLED WILL COME AGAIN TO EGYPT,
NOT IN AGE BUT IN YOUTH, AND OUR ENEMY THE PERSIANS
HE SHALL SUBJECT TO US.

Alexander asked whose statue this was and the prophets told him: "This statue is of the last king of Egypt, Nektanebos. When the Persians were coming to devastate Egypt, he saw by his magical powers the gods of Egypt guiding the armies of the enemy towards us and Egypt being destroyed by them. He then realized their impending betrayal and fled. But when we conducted a search for him and inquired of the gods where our king, Nektanebos, had fled to, they gave us this response.

This king who has fled will come again to Egypt, not in age but in youth, and your enemy the Persians he shall subject to you.

When Alexander heard this, he leapt onto the statue and embraced it, saying: "This is my father—I am his son. What the oracle told you was not false. But what amazes me is that you were taken over by the barbarians even though you have invincible walls that could not be pulled down by the enemy. This must be the working of Providence above and the justice of the gods, so that you, who have a productive land and a natural river to fertilize it, are subjected to and ruled by people who do not have these advantages; otherwise, through not having them the barbarians would perish." And so saying, he demanded from them the tribute they used to pay to Darius, saying this to them, "It is not so that I may collect it for my own treasury, but rather so that I may spend it on your city, the Egyptian Alexandria, capital of the world." When he had put it this way, the Egyptians were glad to give him great quantities of money; and it was with awe and full honors that they escorted him on his departure at Pelousion.

- 35 He took his armies and marched for Syria. There he enlisted two thousand armored cavalry and arrived at Tyre. The Tyrians formed up against him to prevent his passing through their city, because of an ancient oracle that had been given to them, as follows.

When a king comes against you, men of Tyre, your city shall be razed to the ground.

This is why they offered opposition to his entry into their city. So they formed up against him, having walled the entire city, and in the violent battle between them the Tyrians killed many of the Macedonians. Alex-

40. The Egyptian god Ptah, god of craftsmen, like the Greek Hephaistos.

ander retired, defeated, to Gaza. When he had recovered his strength, he tried to work out how to sack Tyre. Then in a dream Alexander saw someone saying to him, "Alexander, do not consider going yourself as a messenger to Tyre." So when he awoke from his sleep, he sent emissaries to Tyre with a letter of the following content.

King Alexander, son of Ammon and King Philip, I who am Greatest King of Europe and the whole of Asia, of Egypt and Libya, to the Tyrians, who no longer exist:

Journeying to the regions of Syria in peace and lawfulness, I wished to enter your land. But if you Tyrians are the first to oppose our entrance as we journey, then it is only by your example that others will learn the strength of the Macedonians in the face of your mindless action and shall cower in obedience to us. And you may rely on the oracle you have been given: I shall come through your city.

Farewell, men of sense—or, otherwise, farewell men of misfortune!

Having read the king's letter, their government ordered the messengers King Alexander had sent to be flogged, asking them, "Which of you is Alexander?" And when they replied that none of them was, they crucified them.

So Alexander was trying to work out what route to enter by and how to strike down the Tyrians—he had discounted his defeat. And he saw in his sleep a satyr, one of the attendants of Dionysos, offering him a cheese [*tyros*] made from milk; he took it and trampled it under his feet. On waking, Alexander related the dream to a dream interpreter, and he said to him, "You shall be king over all Tyre, and it shall be under your control, because the satyr [*sa Tyros*, 'your Tyre'] gave you *tyros* ['cheese' or 'Tyre'], and you trampled it under your feet."

Three days later, Alexander collected his troops and, together with the three neighboring villages, who had fought bravely with Alexander, in the night opened up the gates in the walls, entering and killing the guards. Alexander sacked the whole of Tyre and razed it to the ground, and the byword "The ills of Tyre" continues to the present day. As for the three villages that had fought with him, he combined them into one city and called it Tripoli ["triple city"].

Appointing a satrap of Phoenicia at Tyre, Alexander broke camp and followed the coast of Syria. Emissaries of Darius came to meet him, bringing him a letter, a strap, a ball, and a money box of gold. Alexander accepted the letter of Darius, king of Persia, and, on reading it, found its contents were these.

King of Kings, kinsman of the gods, I who rise to heaven with the Sun, a god myself, I Darius to my servant Alexander give these orders:

I instruct you to return to your parents, to be my slave, and to sleep in the lap of your mother, Olympias: that is how old you are—you need to be corrected and nursed. So I have sent you a strap, a ball, and a money box of gold, and you can take whatever you like first. I sent the strap to let you know you still need correction. I sent the ball so that you can play with children your own age and not mislead so many young men at such an arrogant age into going around with you, like a brigand chief, and disturbing the peace of the cities: not even if this whole world is brought together by a single man, will it be able to overthrow the kingdom of the Persians. I have such huge numbers of troops that, like grains of sand, no one could even count them; and I have enough gold and silver to fill the whole earth. I have also sent you a money box full of gold so that should you run out of food to give your fellow brigands, you may give them each the wherewithal to go back to their own homeland.

But if you do not obey my instructions, I shall send a force after you, and the result will be that you will be arrested by my soldiers—and you will not be educated as the son of Philip but crucified as a rebel.

- 37 Alexander read this out before all his troops, and they were all frightened. Alexander noticed their fright and said to them: “Men of Macedonia and comrades-in-arms, why are you upset at what Darius has written, as though his boastful letter had real power? There are some dogs too who make up for being small by barking loud, as though they could give the illusion of being powerful by their barking. That is what Darius is like: in practice he is powerless, though in what he writes he seems to be someone to reckon with, just like the dogs with their barking. But even let us admit that what he says is true: it illuminates for us who it is that we must fight courageously for victory, to help us avoid the shame of defeat.”

With these words, he gave instructions for Darius’s letter carriers to have their arms tied behind their backs and to be taken away to be crucified. They said: “What harm have *we* done you, King Alexander? We are messengers: why do you give instructions for us to be killed miserably?”

Alexander replied, “Blame King Darius, not me: Darius sent you with a letter like that, as though it were to a brigand chief, not to a king. So I am killing you as though you had come to a ruthless man, not a king.”

"Darius," they said, "had seen nothing when he wrote you that sort of letter. But we see such an array before us and realize that the son of King Philip is a very great and intelligent king. We implore you, Greatest King and Master, grant us life!"

Alexander said to them: "Now you have shown cowardice in the face of your punishment and beg not to die, I shall—for that reason⁴¹—release you. I am not of a mind to kill you, but only to show the difference between a Greek king and a barbarian one. So do not expect any ill-treatment at my hands: a king does not kill a messenger."

Having spoken to them in this way, Alexander told them, as dinner was being prepared, to join him at table. The letter carriers wanted to tell Alexander how, when it came to war against Darius, he could capture Darius in an ambush; but he said to them: "Do not tell me anything: if you had not been returning to him, I would have wanted to know about this from you. But as you are making your way back to him, I am not prepared to, in case any of you should report what has been said to Darius, and I should be found to deserve punishment as much as you.⁴² So be quiet and let us calmly pass over this point." The letter carriers of Darius spoke much in his praise, and the whole mass of troops cheered him.

Three days later, Alexander wrote a letter to Darius, which he also 38
read in full to his own troops in the absence of Darius's letter carriers. And its contents were as follows.

King Alexander, son of King Philip and his mother, Olympias, to the King of Kings, enthroned with the gods, who rises to heaven with the Sun, a Great God, King of the Persians, greetings:

It is a disgrace if someone priding himself on such great power and "rising with the Sun" eventually falls into base slavery to a man, Alexander. The titles of the gods, when they come into the possession of men, do not confer great power or sense upon them. For how can names of the immortal gods take up residence in destructible bodies? Note how we have condemned you for this also: you have no power over us, but usurp the title of the gods and attribute their powers on earth to yourself. I am going to wage war on you in the view that you are mortal, and which way victory goes depends on Providence above.

Why did you write also to tell us that you have in your possession all this gold and silver? So that, on discovering the fact, we would fight the war more courageously so as to capture it? For my

41. A stresses that it is *not* for that reason (which makes more sense).

42. A adds "for allowing you to escape punishment at my hands," which reveals the author's thought.

part, I shall be famous when I have defeated you, and I shall be a great king among Greeks and barbarians because I have killed Darius, such a mighty king. But if you defeat me, you will not have achieved anything remarkable: you will have defeated a brigand—according to your letter to me; but I shall have defeated the “King of Kings, great god, Darius.”

You also sent me a strap, a ball, and a money box of gold, having a joke at my expense. Well, I have received these, counting them good messages. I have taken the strap so that I may flay the barbarians with my spears and weapons and reduce them by my hands to servitude. As for the ball, you are indicating to me that I shall gain control over the whole world: the world is spherical and round. The money box of gold you sent me is an important symbol: you will be defeated by me and pay me tribute!

- 39 Having read this to his troops and sealed it, King Alexander gave it to Darius's letter carriers and gave them as a present the gold they had brought. Having experienced the magnanimity of Alexander, they withdrew and returned to Darius.

Darius read the letter of Alexander and realized the forcefulness in it. And he asked detailed questions about Alexander's intelligence and his preparations for war. This disturbed him, and he wrote his satraps a letter with the following contents.

King Darius to the generals beyond the Taurus, greetings:

I have received a report that Alexander, the son of Philip, has risen up against me. Arrest him and bring him to me, without doing him any physical harm, so that I can strip him of the purple and flog him before sending him back to his homeland, Macedonia, to his mother, Olympias, with a rattle and dice (which is how the Macedonian children play). And I shall send with him men who teach all aspects of correct behavior. And sink his ships in the depths of the sea and put the generals that accompany him in irons and send them to us. Send the remaining soldiers to the Red Sea to make their homes there. The horses and all the pack animals I give to you.

Good health.

The satraps too wrote to Darius, in these terms.

To the Great God, King Darius, greetings:

So large an army is advancing on us that we are astonished that you did not know about it before now. We have sent you those of them we have found astray, but have not dared to interrogate them

before you. So come quickly with a large force so that we do not become spoils of war.

Darius received this letter at Babylon in Persia and, reading it, wrote them this reply.

King of Kings, Great God Darius, to all his satraps and generals, greetings:

Do not expect any help from me—just show your renowned bravery! What sort of beast has sprung upon you and panicked you—you who can quench lightning bolts but cannot take the roaring of a low born man?⁴³ What have you to say for yourselves? Has one of you fallen in battle? What policy am I to adopt with you, who hold my kingdom and make excuses for a brigand because you are not prepared to have him arrested? But now, as you said, I shall come and arrest him myself.

Learning that Alexander was nearby, Darius encamped by the river 40
Pinaros⁴⁴ and wrote a letter to Alexander in these terms.

King of Kings, Great God Darius and Lord of the Nations, to Alexander, who has plundered the cities:

You are apparently unaware of the name of Darius, which the gods have honored and have decreed should share their thrones. In addition, you have not considered it happiness to escape notice as ruler of Macedonia without my authority: instead, you have passed through obscure countries and alien cities, proclaiming yourself king there and collecting desperadoes like yourself. And you fight wars against inexperienced cities, whose lordship I have always refrained from assuming and which I have considered unimportant because of their isolation; whereas you have sought tribute from them as though you were taking a collection. Are you convinced then that we are like you? But you shall not boast of your possession of the places you have taken. So you have misjudged the situation badly. In the first place you should have made amends for your foolish errors and come to me, your lord, Darius, and not continued accumulating forces of brigands. I have written to you to come and do obeisance to King Darius—and I swear to you by Zeus, the greatest god and my father, that I will not hold against you what

43. This sentence makes little sense in any recension (I present a stopgap). Clearly, in an earlier letter in the epistolary novel (see the Introduction), not, however, incorporated in our novel, the satraps had boasted they could quench lightning bolts.

44. The river at Issos, a town on the coast of Cilicia, in modern Turkey somewhat north of Iskenderun and around thirty miles from the Syrian frontier. The battle of Issos (333 B.C.) was Alexander's second major battle, after the Granikos (334).

you have done. But you persist in another, foolish, course; so I shall punish you⁴⁵ with an indescribable death; and those with you who have failed to instill good sense in you shall suffer worse than you.

- 41 When Alexander received the letter of Darius and read it, he was not incensed at Darius's haughty words.

Darius mustered a large force and came down with his children, his wife, and his mother; and around him were the ten thousand "Immortals" (they were called Immortals because their number was kept up, and new men were brought in to replace those that died).

Alexander made his way through the Cilician Taurus Mountains and came to Tarsos, the capital of Cilicia. There he saw the river Kydnos, which flows below it, and as he was pouring with sweat from the march, he took off his breastplate and took a swim in the river. But he caught a chill and became very seriously ill and was only with difficulty cured. The man who cured him was Philip, a famous doctor. Having regained his strength, he pressed on against Darius. And Darius was encamped at the place called Issos in Cilicia.⁴⁶

Provoked, Alexander hurried to do battle in the plain and drew up his forces opposite Darius. But as Darius's officers saw Alexander bring the might of his army against them at the point where he could hear Darius, they positioned the chariots and arranged the whole battle lineup. Indeed, as both sides were standing ready to engage in battle, Alexander was not prepared to let them break through inside the phalanx or to ride through and attack his rear (the majority of the chariots, pinned down on every side, were destroyed and dispersed). Mounting his horse, Alexander gave the order for the trumpeters to play the war signal, and with a huge roar from the armies a fierce battle began.

There was a lengthy engagement with missiles at the ends of the wings, where they used their spears and, struck by each other, were driven here and there. They parted, then, with each side claiming victory. But Alexander's company pressed on that of Darius and by main force broke them, so that they were routed and stumbled over each other because of the mass of soldiers. Nothing could be seen there except horses lying dead on the ground and slain men; and it was impossible to distinguish Persian from Macedonian, allies from satraps, infantry from cavalry, for the clouds of dust; for the sky was not visible, and the earth could not be made out for all the gore. Even the sun felt sympathy at

45. A has, more sensibly, "But if you persist in another, foolish, course, I shall punish you."

46. The last two paragraphs are found only in recension B and disturb the order of the novel. Darius has already arrived at Issos at 1.40 *init.*, and the incident concerning the doctor Philip is told in full later (2.8).

what was happening and, refusing to contemplate all that pollution, clouded over. But it was the Persians, forcefully driven back, who began to flee. With them was Amyntas of Antioch,⁴⁷ who had fled to Darius, having previously been dictator of Macedon. When evening fell, Darius, afraid, got away with difficulty and kept going.⁴⁸ But the royal chariot was conspicuous; so, leaving behind his own chariot, he mounted a horse and fled. Alexander was eager to capture Darius and went after him to prevent someone killing him. After pursuing him for seven miles Alexander captured Darius's chariot, bow and arrows, his wife, daughters, and mother; but Darius himself was saved by darkness; and in addition he got a fresh horse and fled.

Alexander captured Darius's tent and used it for himself. He had defeated the enemy and made himself a great reputation, but he did nothing extravagant: he simply gave instructions for the bravest and noble Persians who had died to be buried. Darius's mother, wife, and children he took with him and treated honorably. In the same way he spoke to the other prisoners too and encouraged them. The number of the fallen Persians was enormous; the fallen Macedonians were found to number 500 infantry and 160 cavalry, with 308 wounded; of the barbarians, there were 20,000, with around 4,000 men taken as slaves.

Darius, having got away safely, began enrolling more forces. And he wrote to the nations under his control to come to him with a large force. One of Alexander's spies found out that Darius was mustering armies and wrote to Alexander about the situation. On hearing this, Alexander wrote to his general Skamandros in these terms. 42

Alexander the King to our general Skamandros, greetings:

Take the phalanxes under your command and all your forces and come with all speed to us: the barbarians are said not to be far off.⁴⁹

Alexander himself took the force he had and marched onward. Crossing the Taurus, he fixed a massive spear in the ground and said, "If any mighty king, Greek, barbarian, or other, lifts this spear, it will be an evil sign for him: his city shall be lifted from its foundations."⁵⁰

47. Actually, as our author probably wrote, "Amyntas, son of Antiochos." Recension B alone preserves the detail that he had "previously been dictator," confusing him with his associate Amyntas IV, who had been child king until his regent, Philip II, deposed him. Alexander naturally had him murdered.

48. There is something amiss in this area of the text; I have improvised this sentence.

49. There was no general named Skamandros (the *river* Skamandros is mentioned a few lines later). Perhaps Kassandros is meant: he came to Alexander at Babylon in 324 B.C., shortly before Alexander's death; later (305–297 B.C.) he was king of Macedonia. In any case, this letter makes no sense in this context.

50. This is an elaboration of the authentic spear story, told in its right place at 1.28 by recension B.

He came next to the city of Pieria in Bebrykia,⁵¹ where there was a temple and a statue of Orpheus, and also the Pierian Muses and the animals standing next to his statue. As Alexander looked at it, the idol of Orpheus sweated all over. Alexander tried to find out the meaning of this sign, and Melampous the interpreter told him: "You will have to work hard, King Alexander, with sweat and toil to bring barbarian nations and Greek cities under your control. Just as Orpheus through playing the lyre and singing won over Greeks, brought barbarians round, and tamed beasts, so you too, toiling with your spear, will subject all to your rule." Hearing this, Alexander rewarded the interpreter richly and dismissed him.

And he reached Phrygia. Coming to the river Skamandros, where Achilles had leapt in, he himself leapt in too.⁵² Seeing the seven-layered shield, not very big, nor as striking as Homer had described it, he said, "Happy are you men who have found a herald such as Homer: in his poems you have become great, but from what we can see you are not worthy of what he wrote." And a poet came up to him and said, "King Alexander, we will write of your deeds better than Homer." But Alexander replied, "I would sooner be a Thersites in Homer than an Agamemnon in your writing."

- 43 From there he came to Pyle,⁵³ where he mustered the Macedonian army, together with the prisoners he had taken in the battle with Darius, and marched on to Abdera. But the inhabitants of Abdera shut the gates of their city. Alexander, enraged at this, instructed his general to burn the city. They sent him representatives, saying: "We have not closed our gates to oppose your power, but in fear of the kingdom of Persia: if Darius stays in power, he might sack our city for having received you. So come when you have defeated Darius and open the gates of the city: we will be subjects of the stronger king."

Alexander smiled at what he heard and told the representatives that had been sent to him: "You are afraid of Darius's royal power—that he will remain king and at a later date sack your city? Go back, open the gates, and live undisturbed! I am not going to enter your city until I have

51. The Bebrykes were a tribe in northern Turkey mentioned only in legend. Pieria is a region of Macedonia that includes the town Leibethra, where this episode, interpreted by the seer Aristandros, is said to have occurred before Alexander set out.

52. In the Armenian recension, and probably the author's original, Alexander does not leap in; instead, the smallness of the Skamandros is emphasized. Before this, there seems to have been a scene where Alexander makes a dedication at Achilles' tomb and connects himself with Achilles in a genealogical poem. Afterward, Olympias (!) returns home with a retinue of distinguished prisoners.

53. It is difficult to determine what place the author has in mind (Amphipolis?), especially as his account is proceeding backwards (see the chronological table in the Introduction). Abdera, on the coast, two-thirds of the way from Thessalonike to the Turkish border, had in fact been under Macedonian control since 352 B.C.

defeated Darius, the king you fear; then I will take you as my subjects." With these words for the representatives, he marched on his way.

In two days he had reached Bottiaia and Olynthos⁵⁴ and devastated the whole land of the Chalkidians and killed those in the neighborhood. From there he came to the Black Sea and subjected all the cities next to it.⁵⁵ But the Macedonians' food supplies were running out, so that they were all about to die of starvation. Alexander devised a tremendously intelligent solution. He searched out all the horses of the cavalry, slaughtered them, flayed them, and gave instructions for them to be roasted and eaten. This filled them, and they recovered from their hunger. But some of them said: "Why has Alexander decided to kill our horses? Look, for the present we are filled with food, but we are unprepared for battle with cavalry." Alexander heard this, went into the camp, and said: "Comrades-in-arms, we have slaughtered the horses, despite the fact they are vital for war, so that we may be filled with food: when an evil is replaced by a lesser evil, it is less painful. When we come to another land, we shall easily find other horses; but if we die from starvation, we shall not presently find other Macedonians." Having calmed the soldiers, he marched on to another city. 44

[Recension B omits 1.45, in which Alexander is associated with Hercules by an oracle—maybe that at Delphi. It also omits 1.46, but some manuscripts, including L, restore this highlight to the text.]

And from there he marched on to the Thebans. He sought men from them to join his campaign, but they closed the gates in the walls and did not even send representatives to him; instead, they lined up and armed themselves, ready to fight Alexander. And they sent 500 men to him to tell him "Either fight or keep away from our city." Alexander smiled and said to them: "Brave Thebans, why do you lock yourselves away inside your gates and bid King Alexander fight you? Indeed, I will fight, but it will not be against brave men with experience of war, but against amateurs and women brimming with cowardice: shutting yourselves away like little women inside your walls, you address those outside." 46

So saying, he instructed 1,000 cavalry to ride across outside the walls and shoot those standing on the walls and another 1,000 to use double axes and beams to dig out the foundations of the wall, to set fire to the gates, and to use battering rams to demolish the walls (these are appliances on wheels, heaved vigorously by a team of soldiers—they are launched at the walls from a distance and demolish even the best-constructed walling). Alexander hurried across with another 1,000 slingers

54. Bottiaia was a region of Macedonia. Olynthos, in the Chalkidike, was destroyed by Philip in 348 B.C.

55. Now, in fuller versions, Alexander reaches the Sea of Azov and land so cold it is impenetrable.

and spearmen. Fire was everywhere; and stones, missiles, and spears were being cast. The Thebans fell wounded from the walls, unable to form up against Alexander.

For three days, the whole city of Thebes was besieged. The first gate to be broken through was the Kadmean, at which Alexander was standing; and without hesitation Alexander was the first to get in, inflicting wounds on them, striking panic and confusion into them. But masses of soldiers followed him in through the other gates too—the whole horde was about 4,000 men. They killed everyone and demolished the walls: it was with the utmost rapidity that the Macedonian soldiers used to carry out all Alexander's orders. Great quantities of human gore drenched the earth. Many Thebans fell to the ground with the towers. And as their city burned furiously in the fires, the Thebans were killed by Macedonian hands.

46a Then it was that one of the Thebans, a professional flute player and a man of intelligence, saw Thebes cast to the ground and people of every age being killed. He groaned for his native city but realized that he stood out for his expertise in the flute; so he decided to fall down before Alexander and throw himself at his mercy. He came to Alexander's feet and, sinking to his knees, played a melancholy, fearful, and pitiful theme. In this way, playing a lament and entreaty by flute, he was able to placate Alexander with his many tears. And he began to speak as follows.

Great King Alexander, now learn we by experience thy godlike head to worship ...

[Recension B now omits a substantial section, replaced by 1.27. Ismenias's lament, in origin a rhetorical set piece, continues for four pages. In response, Alexander denounces Thebes and the Thebans and has the city destroyed; but (1.47) at the Isthmian Games the Theban fighter Kleitomachos so impresses him that he orders Thebes to be refounded.

Book 2 begins with Alexander at Plataia, removing its Athenian commander (!) from office. His conflict with Athens is resolved after letters and much debate among Athenian statesmen. Spartan opposition too (2.6) is ineffective, and Alexander sets off for Asia.]

Book Two

- 6 Immediately Alexander took his armies and set out via Cilicia for the land of the barbarians.
- 7 Darius gathered together the leaders of the Persians and consulted them on the question of what they should do. Darius said: "As I can see, the war is becoming increasingly serious. I thought Alexander had a brigand's ambitions, but he is undertaking the business of kings. And we

Persians may think we are great men, but Alexander is greater because of his considerable intelligence—and we sent him a strap and a ball for his play and correction! So let us consider what would serve to put things right again, in case by dismissing Alexander as worthless (because we are elated by this great Persian kingdom), we are defeated across the whole face of the earth. My worry is that the greater may be discovered inferior to the lesser, if circumstances and Providence allow the crown to change hands. It is now in our interest to rule over our own nations of barbarians and not, by seeking to redeem Greece, to lose Persia into the bargain."

Oxyathres, Darius's brother, addressed him. "That means you are doing Alexander a great favor and providing him with the confidence to march on Persia by conceding Greece to him. You yourself should emulate Alexander—that is the way you will maintain control of your kingdom. He has not delegated the war to generals and satraps as you have: he is first to rush into battles and fights at the head of his troops and by fighting sets aside his kingship; and when he has won, he takes up his crown again."

Darius asked him, "Why should I emulate him?"

Another general replied: "By doing this, Alexander is supreme in everything, postpones nothing, does everything with resolution, because he has courage. He even looks exactly like a lion."

"How do you know that?" asked Darius.

"When I was sent by you, King, to Philip," he replied, "I saw the awe in which Alexander was held in Macedonia, and his appearance, intelligence, and character. So in your turn, King, should send for your satraps and all the nations you rule—Persians, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and Babylonians in Mesopotamia⁵⁶ and the land of the Odynoi, not to mention the names of the Baktrians and Indians (you rule many nations)—and levy troops from them. If it is possible for you to have the gods as allies to help defeat the Greeks, then well and good; all the same, we will dumbfound our enemies with the massive size of our forces."

Darius, hearing this, said, "Your advice is good, but inappropriate: one Greek idea confounds hordes of barbarians, just as one wolf heads off a herd of sheep." And with that Darius gave orders for his hordes to be mustered.

Alexander, having made his way through Cilicia, came to the river "Ocean." The water was clear, and Alexander, as he saw it, wanted to bathe in the river. He stripped and leapt into it, but the water was very cold, and it brought him no relief. The chill gave him a headache and internal pains, and he was in a bad way. As Alexander lay there suffering,

⁵⁶. This part of the list of tribes has been thought to be drawn from Acts of the Apostles 2.9 and to show that our author was a Christian.

the Macedonians themselves contracted illness in their souls, worrying that Darius might learn of Alexander's illness and attack them. So it was that the one soul of Alexander broke so many souls of his troops.

At this point a man called Philip, who was a doctor,⁵⁷ prescribed Alexander a medicine that would cure his illness. Alexander was keen to take it, and Philip was making up the prescription, but a letter was handed to Alexander, sent by Parmenion, a general of King Alexander's, which ran

Darius told the doctor Philip to poison you when he had the opportunity, promising to give him his sister in marriage and to make him a partner in his kingdom; and Philip agreed to do this. So be on your guard, King, against Philip.

Alexander took the letter, but reading it did not upset him: he knew the attitude Philip had towards him. So he put the letter under his pillow. The doctor Philip came up and gave King Alexander the cup of medicine to drink, with the words "Drink, Lord King, and be rid of your illness." Alexander took the cup and said, "Look, I am drinking it," and drank it straight down. After drinking it, he then gave him the letter. Philip read the letter on his own and said, "King Alexander, you will not find this an accurate picture of me."

When he had recovered from his illness, Alexander embraced Philip and said to him: "You now know my opinion of you, Philip. I received the letter before the medicine and then proceeded to drink the medicine, entrusting myself to your name: I knew a Philip had planned no evil against Alexander."

"Lord King," Philip replied, "now you should punish the one who sent you the letter—Parmenion—as he deserves. The fact is that he himself has on many occasions tried to persuade me to poison you, the terms being that I should have Darius's sister Dadipharta in marriage. And when I refused, you can see what a dreadful situation he tried to put me in." Alexander investigated the matter, and, finding Philip to be innocent, he relieved Parmenion of his command.

- 9 From here Alexander took his armies and reached the land of the Medes. He was in a hurry to capture Greater Armenia.⁵⁸ Having subjugated it, he marched for quite some days into waterless territory, full of ravines, and, passing through the Aryan land, he reached the river Euphrates. This he bridged with arches and iron spokes,⁵⁹ and then he or-

57. This episode, duplicated in our recension at 1.41, belongs to 333 B.C. Philip the Akarnanian had been Alexander's personal doctor since youth. Parmenion, Alexander's elderly and expert second-in-command, in fact remained in his post until his execution in 330 B.C., following his son's involvement in a plot against Alexander.

58. Armenia was divided into Greater and Lesser 150 years after Alexander. Greater Armenia in fact lay east of the Euphrates.

59. Alexander used rafts and chains. The reader may speculate on how one might use "arches and iron spokes."

dered his troops to cross. But as he saw they were afraid to, he gave orders for the animals, the carts, and everyone's food to be taken across first, and only then the troops. But they were afraid, when they saw the current of the river, that the arches might come adrift. As they did not dare cross, Alexander took his guards with him and went over first. And so his whole army followed.

Immediately he gave orders for the bridges over the river Euphrates to be broken up. The whole army took this badly, and they were even more afraid, saying, "King Alexander, if it should happen that when we fight, we are routed by the barbarians, how are we going to get away safely and cross the river?"

Alexander, seeing their panic and hearing the mutterings among them, brought together all his troops and made a statement to them as follows. "Comrades-in-arms, you present fine hopes of victory, entertaining thoughts of defeat and retreat. It was for this reason that I ordered the bridge to be cut down—so that you would fight and win, or if you lost, not run away: war is not for those who run away but for those who pursue! Let us, after all, make our return to Macedonia together and return victorious. Engaging in battle is mere play for us!"

Following this statement of Alexander's, the troops cheered him, entered upon the war with confidence, and pitched camp.

Likewise, Darius's army was encamped above the river Tigris. They met each other in battle, and both sides fought valiantly against each other. One of the Persians came up behind Alexander—he had got Macedonian armor and looked like one of the Macedonian allies—and struck Alexander on the head, breaking his helmet. He was instantly arrested by Alexander's soldiers and presented to him in chains. Alexander, under the impression that he was a Macedonian, said to him, "My good man, what made you do this?"

"King Alexander," he replied, "do not let my Macedonian armor deceive you: I am a Persian, a satrap of Darius's. I had gone up to him and said, 'If I bring you the head of Alexander, what favor will you grant me?' And he promised me a kingdom and his daughter in marriage. So I came to you and acquired Macedonian costume, and, having failed, I stand in chains before you."

On hearing this, Alexander sent for his whole army and, with everyone watching, freed him. And he said to his own army, "Men of Macedonia, this is what soldiers should be like: daring in war."

The barbarians were now without food supplies and made a detour 10 into Baktria, but Alexander stayed on there and took control of the whole area. Another of Darius's satraps came to Alexander and said: "I am a satrap of Darius's and have brought about some great successes for him in wars, but have received no thanks from him. So give me ten thousand armed soldiers, and I shall give you my king, Darius."

Alexander replied to him, "Go and assist your king, Darius: I am not entrusting other people's men to you who are attempting to betray your own."

Now, the satraps of those regions reported on Alexander as follows.

To Darius, Great King, greetings:

We had previously informed you urgently of the assault that Alexander was making on our people. We now in turn inform you that he has arrived. He has laid siege to our territory; he has killed many of our Persians, and we ourselves are in mortal danger. So make speed with a large force to reach here before he does and do not give him the chance to advance on you: the Macedonian army is powerful and enormous and is stronger than us.

Farewell.

Darius received and read their letter and then sent a letter to Alexander along the following lines.

I call upon the great god Zeus to witness what you have done to me. My mother I consider has gone to join the gods; my wife I consider I never had; my children I deem not to have been born. Myself, I shall never cease to follow up the outrage done to me. In the letter to me, it says that your behavior to my family is just and respectful. But if you were in fact acting justly, you would have acted justly towards me. You can be merciless to my family: maltreat them and take your vengeance—they are enemy children. Being kind to them will not make me your friend, nor will being cruel to them make me your enemy.

Alexander received and read Darius's letter: he smiled and wrote him this reply.

King Alexander to Darius, greetings:

Your pointless stupidity, your gabbling and ineffectual talk, the gods utterly and completely detest. Are you not ashamed at such evil words and pointless thoughts? It is not out of fear of you that I have treated those who were formerly yours with courtesy, nor in the hope that I may come to a settlement with you, so that on my arrival you might show your gratitude to us. And do not come to us: my crown is not of the same value as yours. You will certainly not impede the respect I show everyone—I shall display even more extreme kindness to those who were once yours.

This is my last letter to you.

- 11 Having written this letter to Darius, Alexander prepared for war and wrote to all his satraps.

King Alexander to all the satraps under him, those of Phrygia, Cappadocia, Paphlagonia, Arabia, and to all the others, greetings:

I want you to supply tunics for a very large army and dispatch them to us at Antioch in Syria.⁶⁰ And send us the supplies of arms that you have built up. Three thousand camels have been provided between the river Euphrates and Antioch in Syria to assist in carrying out our orders so that work proceeds on schedule. So be quick to join us.

Darius's satraps also wrote.

To Darius, Great King:

We hesitate to write to you in this way but are obliged to by circumstances. Know, King, that the Macedonian leader, Alexander, has slain two of us lords and that some of the lords have gone over to Alexander together with their harems.

Learning of this, Darius wrote to the nearest generals and satraps to get ready and set up camp. He also wrote to the kings nearest him.

Darius, King of Kings, greetings:

We are to fight a miserable nation, the Macedonians, and it will be like wiping off sweat.

The Persian army too he instructed to be in readiness, and he wrote also to Poros, king of India, requesting assistance from him.⁶¹ King 12 Poros, on receipt of Darius's letter, read of the misfortunes that had befallen him and was distressed. He replied to him as follows.

Poros, King of India, to Darius, King of Persia, greetings:

I was greatly distressed to read what you write but am in an impossible situation, because although I want to join you and offer advice on what might help, I am prevented from so doing by the illness that has a grip on me. So keep your spirits up, just as though we were with you, unable to tolerate this outrage. Write to us for anything you want: my forces are at your disposal—even the remoter nations will follow my orders.

Learning about this,⁶² Darius's mother sent to Darius, writing to him secretly like this.

60. Antioch was founded in 300 B.C.

61. The chronological order of these letters from the epistolary novel (see the Introduction) is disturbed. A letter corresponding to these stated contents is included at 2.19. Alexander came into conflict with Poros, a king in the Punjab, in 326 B.C., but there is no reason to suppose Darius was in contact with him.

62. Namely, "that Darius was preparing to fight another battle with Alexander" (from Leo's Latin translation).

To Darius, my child, greetings:

I hear you are gathering nations and wanting to engage in another battle with Alexander. Do not inflict chaos on the world, child: the future is unclear. Give up your hopes for an improvement in the situation and do not, when you are in doubt, act inflexibly and lose your life. After all, we receive the greatest respect from King Alexander: he has not treated me as the mother of an enemy, but with great courtesy, and as a result I hope that a decent agreement will be reached.

Darius read and wept, remembering his family bonds; but at the same time he was in confusion and came down on the side of war.

- 13 Alexander arrived with a large force in Persia. The city walls were high and could be seen by the Macedonians from far off. Now, the intelligent Alexander thought up a scheme. Taking the goats that were grazing there and chopping down branches from the trees, he tied the branches to the backs of the goats, and the goats followed behind the soldiers. As they were dragged along the ground, the branches disturbed the dust, and the cloud rose to Olympus, so that the Persians looking from the walls thought the mass of soldiers was beyond counting. When evening fell, he gave orders for torches and candles to be attached to the horns of the goats and for these to be lit and burn—the region was flat—and the whole plain looked like burning fire, and the Persians were afraid.

So they came within about five miles of the city of Persis,⁶³ and Alexander was looking for someone to send to Darius to declare to him when they would engage in battle. Now, Alexander was asleep that night and saw in a dream Ammon standing by him in the shape of Hermes, with his herald's wand, cloak, staff, and a Macedonian cap on his head, saying to him: "Alexander, my boy, when it is time for assistance, I am by your side. If you send a messenger to Darius, he will betray you: you yourself must become a messenger and go on your way in the dress you see me in."

"It is dangerous," Alexander replied to him, "for me, a king, to be my own messenger."

Ammon said, "But with a god to aid you, no harm shall befall you."

Alexander, having received this divine message, rose in good spirits and shared it with his satraps; but they advised him against doing this.

- 14 Taking with him a satrap by the name of Eumelos and collecting three

63. The author thinks wrongly that there is a city called Persis that is the capital of Persia. Similarly at 3.17, the land Prasiakē is thought to be a capital city. Our manuscript even presents Macedonia as a city at 3.32.

horses, he set out without delay and reached the river Stranga.⁶⁴ This river freezes in icy weather to such an extent that it forms a rock-hard surface, and beasts and wagons go over it. Then, days later, it thaws and becomes deep enough to sweep away with its current those caught trying to cross. Well, Alexander found the river frozen over, and, putting on the dress he had seen Ammon wearing in his dream, he sat on his horse and crossed alone. And when Eumelos urged him to cross together with him in case he should need help, Alexander said: "Stay here with the two horses. I have the help of him who gave me the oracle to put on this dress and travel on my own." The river was about two hundred yards wide. At the other side, Alexander went on his way and came right up to the gates of Persis. The guards there, seeing him in such dress, thought he was a god, but they held him and asked him who he was. "Take me to King Darius," replied Alexander. "I will report who I am to him."

Darius was outside the city on a hill, constructing roads and training his troops in phalanx formation as though they were Macedonians.⁶⁵ Alexander turned all heads towards him because of his strange appearance, and Darius all but fell down before him, thinking him a god descended from Olympus and that he had been adorned with barbarian robes. Darius was sitting, wearing a crown of precious stones, a silken robe with Babylonian gold embroidery and the royal purple, and golden shoes with precious stones inset up to the leggings. And he had scepters on either side and thousands upon thousands of men around him.

Darius inquired of him who he might be, observing him wearing a costume he had never seen before. Alexander replied, "I am the messenger of King Alexander."

King Darius asked him, "And why have you come to us?"

Alexander replied: "I declare to you that Alexander is here and ask when you are going to engage in battle. You must realize, King Darius, that a king who is slow to join battle has already revealed to his adversary that his battle spirit is weak. So do not be careless but announce to me when you wish to engage in battle."

Darius was angered and asked Alexander: "Is it you I am joining battle with or is it Alexander? You display enough audacity to be Alexander himself, and you reply boldly as though you were a companion of mine. But I shall proceed to my usual dinner, and you shall dine with me, see-

64. In some later recensions this river possesses the fairy-tale attribute of freezing for the night and thawing for the day; the author must surely have intended this originally—that is why Alexander travels at night. The satrap Eumelos is equally fictional.

65. "As though they were Macedonians" is my guess at the author's meaning, as the various recensions are muddled. What follows in L is ungrammatical, and in other important recensions it is Alexander who thinks Darius a god.

ing that Alexander himself also gave dinner to my letter bearers." And so speaking, Darius took Alexander by the hand and went inside his palace. And this action Alexander took as a good omen, being guided by the tyrant. Entering his palace, immediately Alexander was the first to recline at Darius's banquet.

- 15 The Persians looked in amazement at Alexander's small stature, not realizing that in a small vessel was contained the glory of heavenly Fortune. As the drinks came round more frequently, Alexander thought up this scheme: all the cups he got, he put in his pocket. People saw him and told Darius, and Darius stood up and asked, "My good man, why are you putting these in your pocket when you are at a banquet?" Then Alexander used his ingenuity and said, "Greatest King, this is what Alexander does when he gives a dinner for his officers and guards—he makes a present of the cups—and I thought you were like him."⁶⁶ So the Persians were astonished and amazed at what Alexander said: for every story, if it carries conviction, always has its audience enthralled.

A deep silence fell, and a man called Pasargès, who was a leader in Persis, examined Alexander. In fact he knew Alexander by sight: when he had first gone to Pella in Macedonia, sent as an emissary by Darius to demand the tribute, and had been prevented by Alexander, he took note of him. And having taken a reasonably long look at Alexander, he said to himself, "This is Philip's son, even if he has changed his appearance: many men can be recognized by their voice, even though they remain in darkness." Convinced by his awareness that it was Alexander himself, he leaned over to Darius and said to him, "Greatest King Darius and lord over every land, this emissary of Alexander is Alexander himself, king of Macedon, son of the late Philip, displaying his valor."

Darius and the feasters were very drunk. So Alexander, hearing what Pasargès had said to Darius at the meal and realizing that he had been recognized, outwitted them all, jumped up with the golden cups in his pockets, and left stealthily. Mounting his horse to escape the danger and finding a Persian guard at the gate with torches in his hands, he killed him and took them, leaving the city of Persis. When Darius found out, he sent armed Persians to arrest Alexander. But Alexander urged on his horse, guiding his path: it was the depths of night, and darkness had fallen from Olympus. A very large number pursued him, but they did not catch him: he managed to keep to the road surface, but the others stumbled in the darkness over cliff edges. Alexander was like a beaming star in heaven that rises alone, and as he fled he led the Persians to destruction.

66. I have omitted here an incomprehensible clause. There was in fact such a custom among the Macedonians, though the author evidently supposes there was not and glorifies the crafty acquisitiveness of Alexander.

Darius sat on his couch in misery and in addition saw an omen. A portrait of King Xerxes of which Darius was particularly fond (because it was a very fine piece of painting) fell suddenly from the roof.

Alexander got away and, continuing through that night, came at dawn to the river Stranga. He had scarcely crossed it, with his horse reaching the bank and putting its forefeet on the land, when the river melted at the sun's rays. The horse was snatched by the water and swept away, but it threw Alexander onto the land. The Persians in their pursuit of Alexander came to the river when he had already crossed and, as they were unable to cross, turned back—no man could cross the river. So the Persians turned round and reported to Darius Alexander's good luck. Darius, dumbfounded by the unexpected omen, was greatly pained. Alexander, making his way by foot from the river, found Eumelos sitting with the two horses he had left behind, and told him everything he had done.

Returning to the camp of his troops, he immediately ordered the 16 Greek phalanxes, by their names, to arms in readiness to attack Darius. He himself stood in the midst of them, encouraging them. When he had mustered all the troops, he found the number to be 120,000. Standing at a high point, he exhorted them in these words. "Comrades-in-arms, even if our number is small, all the same we have great sense, spirit, and power—more than the Persians, our opposition. So let the thoughts of none of you admit any weakness when you see the mass of the barbarians: one of you, baring his sword, will kill thousands of the enemy. Let none of you be afraid: there are millions of flies crowding the meadow, but when wasps buzz at them, they scare them away with their wings. In just this way, massive numbers do not bear comparison with intelligence: when wasps come, flies count for nothing." So speaking, Alexander encouraged his troops, and his troops showed themselves good men and cheered Alexander.

Proceeding on his way, then, he came to the region of the river Stranga, that is, to its banks. Darius, collecting his force, came himself also to the Stranga; and as he saw it was very slight and frozen, he crossed it and pressed on, sweeping through the middle of the desert. His intention was to take Alexander's troops by surprise⁶⁷ so as to find them unprepared and rout them. And criers went into their midst and called out for the best fighters for the battle, and Darius's whole army put on its full armor. Darius was on a high chariot, and his satraps sat in chariots equipped with sickles; others brought fiendish weapons and artillery.

67. The motif of surprise, of which no effective use is made, is peculiar to recension B. The battle in question is the final great battle against Darius—Gaugamela (or Arbela) of 331 B.C.

The Macedonian troops were led by Alexander mounted on the horse Bucephalus—and no one could approach this horse.

Once both sides had sounded the signal for battle, some flung stones, some shot arrows like a rainstorm sweeping down from heaven, some flung spears, others again used slings with leaden shot so as to obscure the light of day. Confusion reigned as men struck and were stricken. Many, wounded by missiles, died; others lay half-dead. The air was dark and full of blood. When many Persians had met their grim end, Darius panicked and turned the reins on the sickle chariots, and as they rotated, he mowed down the vast hordes of the Persians, like farmhands shearing corn in a field.

When Darius came to the river Stranga in his flight, he himself and his companions crossed over, finding the river frozen. But the hordes of Persians and barbarians wanting to cross the river and get away came onto it in all their numbers, and it gave way and took all it found. The remaining Persians were killed by the Macedonians.

Darius came, a fugitive, to his own palace and threw himself on the floor, wailing and tearfully lamenting for himself, having lost so huge a number of soldiers and having emptied the whole of Persia. In the grip of such calamities, he mourned to himself, saying: "Darius, so great a king, with so many nations under my control and all the cities subject to me, I who shared the thrones of the gods and rose with the Sun—now I am a solitary fugitive. It is a fact that no one plans securely for the future: Fortune only needs a slight tilt, and it raises the lowly above the clouds and draws those in the heights down to Hell."

- 17 Darius, then, lay bereft of men, he who had been the king of so many nations. Recovering a little, standing up, and regaining his composure, he wrote a letter and sent it to Alexander. Its content was as follows.

Darius to my master Alexander, greetings:

He who showed me the light of glory, in haughtiness of mind, conceived a great passion to invade Greece, unsatisfied with the gold and other riches that we have inherited from our ancestors.⁶⁸ He died after losing much gold and silver and many tents, though he had been richer than Croesus of Lydia, and he did not escape the death that awaited him. So, Alexander, you in your turn, as you have observed luck and its nemesis, set aside grandiose thoughts. Pity us who come to you for refuge, by Zeus of Suppliants and our common descent from Perseus,⁶⁹ and give me back my wife, mother, and children, recalling to your mind the hopes a father has.

68. Darius refers to his ancestor Xerxes, who invaded Greece in 480 B.C.

69. "By Zeus...Perseus" is corrupted in all recensions; a papyrus of the epistolary novel preserves the original.

In return for this I undertake to give you the treasures that our ancestors deposited in the earth in the land of Minaia and at Susa and in Baktria. I also undertake that you may be lord of the lands of the Persians, Medes, and the other nations for all time.

Farewell.

Having learned the content of this letter, Alexander gathered together his whole army and his lords and ordered Darius's letter to be read out to them. And when this letter had been read out, one of the generals, by name Parmenion, said, "King Alexander, I would have taken the money and the land he has offered you; and I would have returned Darius his mother, children, and wife, after sleeping with them."

Alexander smiled and said to him: "I, Parmenion, am taking everything from him. I am amazed that Darius thought he could ransom his own family, using my money, but much more amazed that he undertakes to hand over my own land to me. Darius fails to realize that if he does not defeat me in battle, this is all mine, together with his family. However, it is a disgrace, an outright disgrace, for the man who has defeated men manfully to be miserably overcome by women. The battle we press upon him is for what is ours: I would not have come into Asia in the first place if I had not supposed it to be mine. And if he ruled it first, he should consider that his gain, in that he held someone else's land for so long and did not suffer for it."⁷⁰

This is what Alexander said, and he told the emissaries of Darius to go back and report this themselves to Darius, without giving them a letter. Then Alexander gave instructions for the soldiers wounded in the battle to be tended with all care and for the dead to be mourned and buried. Staying there for the winter, he ordered Xerxes' palace, the finest in that land, to be burned down; but shortly after, he changed his mind and instructed them to stop.

He also saw the tombs of the Persians, decorated with great quantities of gold. And he saw also the tomb of Nebuchadnezzar (who is called Nabuchodonosor in Greek) and the offerings of the Jews that were kept there and gold mixing bowls, like those of heroes to look at. Nearby he saw the tomb of Cyrus too: it was a twelve-story tower of stone, and he lay in a golden sarcophagus on the top floor, with glass round him so that his hair and whole body could be seen through the glass.

There were Greeks here, with their feet or noses or ears mutilated, bound by shackles and nailed to the tomb of Xerxes, men of Athens, and they shouted to Alexander to save them. Alexander, seeing them, wept: it was a terrible sight. So he was deeply upset at this and ordered them to be released and to be given a thousand didrachms and to be returned each

70. The more celebrated reply, which no recension preserves accurately, was "And so would I if I were Parmenion." See Plutarch *Alexander* 29.

of them to his own country. But they took the money and asked Alexander to grant them an area of land in that place and not to be sent off to their home countries—in their present condition they would bring embarrassment upon their relatives. So he gave instructions for an area of land to be granted to them and for a gift to be made to them of corn and seed and six oxen each and sheep and everything useful for farming among other things.

- 19 Darius was preparing to engage Alexander in another battle. And he wrote to Poros, king of India, as follows.

King Darius, to Poros, King of India, greetings:

A disaster has befallen my house in these days, and now I inform you of it—the Macedonian king has attacked me and, with the feelings of a wild beast, is not prepared to return me my mother, wife, and children. I have offered him treasures and much else besides, but he will not take them. So as a result, to destroy him for what he has done, I am preparing another campaign against him, until I have vengeance on him and his nation.

It is only right, then, that you should be annoyed at what I have suffered and that you should march out to avenge the outrage done to me, remembering our traditional obligations to each other. So assemble as many nations as possible at the Caspian Gates and supply the mustered men with plenty of gold, corn, and fodder. And I shall grant you half of all the spoils I take from the enemy and the horse Bucephalus, together with the royal lands and his concubines.

On receipt of our letter muster your hordes in great haste and send them to us.

Farewell.

Alexander learned about this from one of Darius's men who had fled to him, and as soon as he had read it, he took his whole force and marched to Media. He heard that Darius was at Ekbatana at the Caspian Gates and made his pursuit intense and more audacious.

- 20 Darius's satraps, Bessos and Ariobarzanes, realized Alexander was near, and, with an insane change of mind, these men planned to kill Darius. They said to each other, "If we kill Darius, we shall receive much money from Alexander for having killed his enemy." So, having formed their evil plan, sword in hand they attacked Darius. And when Darius saw these men setting upon him with swords, he said to them: "Masters of mine who were my slaves before, what wrong have I done you that you should kill me with barbarian audacity? Do not do any more than the Macedonians have: leave me cast down like this in my palace to lament the inconstancy of Fortune; for if Alexander, king of Macedon, comes now and finds me slaughtered, as a king he will avenge a king's

blood." But they paid no attention to Darius's pleading and repaid him with murder. Darius used both hands: with the left he took hold of Bessos and brought his knee up into his groin; he checked Ariobarzanes with his right hand and held him in such a way that he could not bring his sword down on him. So their blows missed. And as the criminals no longer had the strength to kill him, they wrestled with him—he was a strong man.

Now, the Macedonians, finding the river Stranga frozen, crossed it, and Alexander entered Darius's palace. The criminals learned of Alexander's arrival and fled, leaving Darius behind, half-dead. And coming to King Darius, Alexander found him half-dead, the blood pouring from his wounds; over him he raised a lament to match his grief, poured tears upon him, and covered the body of Darius with his cloak. And laying his hands upon Darius's breast, he spoke over him words laden with pity.

"Arise, King Darius, and rule over your land and be master of what is yours! Take your crown as lord over the Persian people: keep the greatness of your realm. I swear to you by Providence above, I speak the truth to you, not fabrications. Who are they who struck you? Declare them to me, so that I may now give you rest."

And at these words of Alexander Darius groaned and, stretching out his hand, drew Alexander to him. Embracing him, he said: "King Alexander, never exult in your royal position. When you succeed in a project of divine scale and want to reach heaven with your hands, consider the future: Fortune knows no king, though he rule a vast people; with indiscriminate mind she comes down on any side. You see what I was and what I have become.

"When I die, Alexander, bury me with your own hands. Let Macedonians and Persians conduct my funeral. Darius and Alexander shall be of one family. I entrust my mother to you as though she were your mother; pity my wife as though she were your sister. My daughter Roxana I give to you as wife, so that you may leave children in remembrance for endless ages; and rejoicing in them, as we rejoice in our children, you yourself will perpetuate the memory of Philip and Roxana will perpetuate that of Darius, as time passes and you grow old together."⁷¹ So spoke Darius, and, holding onto Alexander's neck, he breathed his last.⁷²

Alexander wailed and wept with feeling for Darius, then gave instructions for him to be buried in the Persian manner. He ordered the Persians to lead the procession, then all the Macedonians to follow in arms. Alexander put his shoulder to the bier of Darius and carried it together with

21

71. The Roxana whom Alexander married was not the daughter of Darius but a Bakrian princess whom he met later in the campaign.

72. Arrian (*Anabasis* 3.21) says that Darius died before Alexander saw him.

the satraps. Everyone wept and keened, not so much for Darius as for Alexander, seeing him bearing the bier. Having conducted the funeral in accordance with the Persian usages, he dismissed the crowds.

Immediately an edict was published in each city, containing the following.

I, Alexander, son of King Philip and Queen Olympias, to those who inhabit the cities and lands of Persia, give these instructions.

I do not wish such vast numbers of men to come to an evil end. The goodwill of heaven makes me victorious over the Persians; so I thank Providence above. Now recognize that I intend to appoint satraps over you, whom you are obliged to obey, as under Darius. And recognize no other king but Alexander. Keep your own customs and your usual festivals, sacrifices, and carnivals, as under Darius. Each of you shall live in his own city; but if anyone leaves his own city or land and takes up residence in a foreign place, he shall be food for the dogs. Each of you shall have control over his own property except gold and silver: I instruct that the gold and silver should be brought to our cities and lands, but the coinage you have we allow you each to keep as your own property. I order all weapons of war to be brought to my armories. The satraps shall remain in their posts. No longer shall any nation approach you except for trade. And I intend to bring prosperity to your lands and to see that the roads of Persia are used for trade and business in total peace, so that people from Greece may trade with you and you with them: from the Euphrates and the crossing to the river Tigris up to Babylon I shall build roads and construct signs to indicate where the road leads.

It was not I who killed Darius; who his killers were, I do not know. I owe it to them to reward them richly and grant them extensive lands, as they killed our enemy.

At these words of Alexander, the Persians were bewildered, thinking Alexander was going to destroy Persis utterly. But Alexander, realizing the distress of the crowd, told them: "Why do you think, Persians, that I am looking for the men who killed Darius? If Darius had been alive, he would have launched a campaign against me, but, as it is, war has totally ceased. Accordingly, whether the man who killed him is a Macedonian or a Persian, let him come to me confidently and receive whatever he asks from me; for I swear by Providence above and by the life of my mother, Olympias, that I shall see they are marked out and notable before all mankind."

And at this oath of Alexander's the crowd broke into tears, but Bessos and Ariobarzanes came up to Alexander, expecting to receive large gifts

from him and said, "Master, we are the men who killed Darius." And straightaway Alexander ordered them to be arrested and to be crucified at Darius's grave. They cried out and said: "Did you not swear that you would see the killers of Darius were marked out and notable? How is it that you now break your oath and order us to be crucified?" To which Alexander replied: "It is not for your sake, you miserable wretches, that I shall justify myself, but for the mass of troops. Otherwise it would not have been possible to find you so easily or bring you into the open, had I not for a short while applauded the death of Darius. This is what I was praying for: the chance to sentence his killers to the severest punishment. After all, how are men who have slain their own master going to spare me? And as far as you go, you miserable men, I have not broken my oath: I swore I would see you were marked out and notable before everyone, that is, that you would be crucified for everyone to see." At these words everyone cheered him, and the detestable murderers were crucified at Darius's grave.

Alexander, having restored the whole land to peace, said to them, 22
 "Whom would you like to be viceroy of your city?" and they replied, "Adulites, the brother of Darius." And he gave orders that he should be appointed.

He had left Darius's mother, wife, and daughter in a city two days' journey away and he wrote to them like this.

King Alexander to Stateira and Rodogoune and my wife, Roxana, greetings:

Though we drew our forces up against Darius, we did not take vengeance upon him. It was instead the opposite: I prayed to have him alive under my supremacy but found him mortally wounded, and in pity covered him over with my cloak. I tried to establish from him who had struck him; however, he said nothing to me except this: "I entrust to you my mother and my wife, and particularly Roxana, my daughter and your wife." He did not manage to disclose to me what had happened to him. But those responsible for his death I have punished appropriately. He instructed us to bury him by the graves of his fathers, and this has been done.

I imagine you too have heard all this. So bring an end to your grief for him: I shall restore you to your royal prerogatives. But for the time being, remain where you are, until we have arranged everything here properly. And in accordance with Darius's instructions, I intend that Roxana, my wife, shall share my throne, providing you find this acceptable. I also wish and order her to receive obeisance from now on as Alexander's wife.

Farewell.

Rodogoune and Stateira received Alexander's letter and wrote him this reply.

To King Alexander, greetings:

We have prayed to the heavenly gods who have laid low the name of Darius and the pride of the Persians that they appoint you eternal king of the world, so full are you of reason, wisdom, and power. We know that in your arms we have not been treated as prisoners. So we pray also to Providence above to give you, moreover, all that is best so that you may rule for immeasurable time. And your deeds show that you belong to a superior race. But now we are no longer like prisoners, and we know that Alexander is another Darius for us. We do obeisance to Alexander, who has not shamed us, and we have sent letters everywhere saying, "People of Persia, look how Darius at his death has found Alexander to succeed him as Greatest King: Fortune gives Roxana in marriage to Alexander, king of the whole world. So all of you must bring proper thanks to Alexander because the pride of the Persians has now been raised even higher. Rejoice, then, with us, proclaiming Alexander Greatest King." This, then, is what we have declared to the Persians.

Farewell.

Alexander received their letter and wrote this reply.

I applaud your sentiment. And I will struggle to act worthily of your affection—since even I am a mortal man.

Farewell.

And in another letter he wrote to Roxana of his decisions.

He also wrote this letter to his mother, Olympias.

King Alexander, to my sweetest mother, greetings:

I am writing to you to send me the women's jewelry and clothing of Darius's mother and his wife, and the royal attire for Roxana, Darius's daughter and my wife.

On receipt of his letter, his mother sent him all her royal clothing and all the jewelry, made from gold and precious stones. When he had received these things, Alexander got preparations for the wedding in Darius's palace under way. And who could adequately describe the joy there at that time?

23 After this, Alexander wrote this letter to his mother.

King Alexander, to my much-beloved mother and to Aristotle, my most-esteemed teacher, greetings:

I thought it necessary to write to you of the battle I had with Darius. Hearing he was at the Gulf of Issos with a mass of soldiers and other kings, I took a large number of goats and fastened torches to their horns, then set out and marched by night. They saw the torches in the distance and thought it was an innumerable army, as a result of which their thoughts turned to panic and they were defeated. This was how I gained the victory against them. At that spot I founded a city which I called Aigai;⁷³ and I founded another city on the Gulf of Issos, calling it Alexandria. Darius was abandoned, captured, and wounded by his own satraps, and I was extremely distressed about him: having defeated him, I did not want to murder him but to have him under my command. I came upon him still alive and took off the cloak I had on and covered him. Then, recognizing the uncertainty of Fortune, as displayed in Darius's case, I lamented him. I gave him a royal funeral and ordered the ears and noses of those guarding his tomb to be cut off, following the native custom. And I ordered the killers of Darius to be crucified at Darius's grave. Leaving there, I won control of the kingdom of Ariobarzan and Manazakes; I subjugated Media and Armenia, Iberia and the whole territory of Persia that Darius ruled over.⁷⁴

[Recension C contains a narrative converted from a different letter, including chapters 24–32, in which Alexander shows respect for Jewish religion, captures Egypt, where he is crowned by the statue of Nektanebos, and founds Alexandria—again, but now his monotheism (!) is highlighted. Now follow giant ants, a river in which sand flows, Lilliputians, and a statue of Sesonchosis whose inscription denies the possibility of going further—Alexander covers it up!]

Picking up guides there, I wanted to go into the interior of the desert, following the Plough, but they advised me against going there because of the large number of wild animals that live in those places. All the same, I ignored what they said and began the journey. So we came to a region full of ravines, where the road was very narrow, and we traveled along it for eight days. We saw strange animals in those places, the like of which we had never known before. When we had crossed that region, we came to another, more dismal, one. We found there a great forest of trees

32

73. *Aiges* is Greek for "goats," and *Aigai* a common enough name for a town.

74. *Manazakes* is probably the *Mazaios* who surrendered Babylon after *Gaugamela*; *Ariobarzanes* surrendered after Darius's death (but the *Ariobarzanes* of chapter 20 = *Satibarzanes*, satrap of *Areia*). Alexander never visited Armenia or Iberia (a region north of Armenia in the Caucasus).

called anaphanda, with odd and peculiar fruit: they were enormous apples like the largest melons. And there were men too in that forest called Phytōi ["plantmen"], 24 cubits tall, with necks $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits long, and likewise with long feet. Their arms and hands were like saws. When they saw us, they rushed at the army. I was beside myself, seeing them. So I ordered one of them to be caught. But when we rushed at them with cries and the sound of trumpets, they ran away. We killed thirty-two of them, but they killed one hundred of our soldiers. So we stayed there, eating the fruit from the trees.

33 Setting out from there, we came to a green land where there were wild men like giants, round bodied with fiery faces, who looked like lions. There were some others with them called Ochlitai ["mobmen"] who had no hair at all, four cubits high and a spear's length across. And seeing us, they ran at us. They wore lion skins and were extremely strong and quite ready to fight without weapons. We struck them, and they struck us with staves, killing a considerable number of us. I was afraid they were going to rout us; so I gave instructions to set fire to the wood. And when they saw the fire, those fine specimens of men ran away. They killed 180 soldiers of ours. On the following day I decided to visit their caves. We found beasts like lions tethered at their entrances—and they had three eyes. And we saw fleas there leaping about like our frogs.

Moving on from there, we came to a place where an abundant spring rose. I ordered my chariot to be halted there, and we stayed there two months.

Leaving there, we came to the Melophagoi ["apple eaters"]. There we saw a man whose whole body was covered with hair, a huge man, and we were terrified. I ordered him to be taken, and when he was taken he glared savagely at us. I gave orders for a naked woman to be brought to him: he took her and started eating her. And when the soldiers rushed in to get her away, he gabbled in his language. His neighbors heard him and came at us from the marsh, maybe 10,000 men, but our army was 40,000 strong, and I ordered the marsh to be set on fire. And when they saw the fire, they fled. We chased them and caught three of them, who would not take any food and died after eight days. They did not have human intelligence but barked like dogs.

[In recension C, Alexander now comes to the Pillars of Hercules and Semiramis and meets further monsters. Then come the gymnosophists—whom we meet at 3.5ff.]

36 Setting out from there, we came to a river. So I gave orders to

pitch camp and for the soldiers to disarm in the usual way. There were trees in the river, and as the sun rose, they grew until midday; after midday, they grew smaller until they could not be seen at all. They gave off droplets like Persian oil of myrrh, with a very sweet and fine scent. I gave instructions for incisions to be made in the trees and the drops to be caught with sponges, but suddenly the collectors were whipped by an invisible divinity. We heard the sound of them being whipped and saw the weals rising on their backs, but we could not see who was striking them. And a voice came, saying not to make incisions or collect the liquid, "and if you do not stop, the army will be struck dumb!" I was afraid and forbade any of them to make incisions or collect the liquid.

There were black stones in the river; everyone who touched these stones turned the same color as the stones. There were also many snakes in the river and many types of fish—which were not boiled above a fire, but in cold spring water. One of the soldiers caught one, washed it, and dropped it in a container—and found the fish cooked. There were birds on the river, very like our birds, but if anyone touched them, fire came from it.

The following day we became lost. The guides said to me: "We do not know where we are going, Lord King Alexander. Let us return so that we do not stumble into worse places." But I was not prepared to return. We came across many animals: six-footed ones, three-eyed ones, five-eyed ones ten cubits long, and many other kinds of animals. Some of them ran away; others leapt at us. We came to a sandy place, from which emerged animals like wild asses of more than twenty cubits. And they had not two eyes each but six each, but only saw with the two; they were not aggressive but tame. Many others too the soldiers shot with arrows.

37

Moving on from there, we came to a place where there were men without heads, though they spoke as men do in their own language; they were hairy, wore skins, ate fish. They caught sea fish and brought us them from the sea they lived next to. Others brought truffles from the land weighing twenty-five pounds each. We saw a great many large seals crawling on the land. And my friends persistently advised me to turn back, but I would not, because I wanted to see the end of the earth.

Pressing on from there, we traveled through uninhabited land to the sea, no longer seeing anything—not bird nor beast—only the sky and the earth. We no longer saw the sun; the air was dark for ten days. We came to a place on the coast and pitched our tents and made camp there, staying very many days. In the middle of that sea there was an island, and I was keen to find out about the interior of

38

it. I ordered a very large number of boats to be constructed. Around a thousand men boarded those boats, and we sailed to the island, which was not far from the land. And on it we heard the voices of men saying in Greek

Son of Philip, seed of Egypt,
 The name you received indicates the future
 Success you shall achieve courageously:
 From the womb you have been called ALEXANDER.
 You have warded off [ALEX-] men [ANDR-] by chasing
 them off
 And scaring kings away from their possessions.
 But you shall swiftly in any case become an ex-man
 [EX-ANDR-]
 When you complete the second letter
 Of your name, which is called lambda [= 30, i.e., 30 years old].

We heard these words but did not see who spoke them. Some soldiers risked their lives to dive in and swim from the boats to the island to find out about it; and straightaway crabs emerged, dragging them into the water and killing them. We were afraid and turned back to land.

When we had disembarked from the boats and were walking about on the seashore, we found a crab emerging from the water onto the dry land. It was the size of a breastplate and its front feet, the so-called pincers, were each six feet long. Seeing it, we took spears and killed it with a struggle, because the iron would not penetrate its shell, and it smashed our spears with its front feet. When we had killed and shelled it, we found inside its shell seven pearls of great value—no man has ever seen such pearls. Seeing them, I realized they must be formed at the bottom of the unsailed sea. So I had the idea of taking a large iron cage and putting an enormous glass demijohn inside the cage, a cubit and a half thick; and I ordered a hole to be sited in the base of the demijohn to take a man's hand, because I wanted to go down and discover what was at the bottom of this sea. My intention was to keep the hole at the base of the demijohn closed from inside, but when I got down immediately to open it up, put my hand through the hole, and pick up from the sand beside it whatever I found at the bottom of this sea, then to bring my hand back in and straightaway to seal off the hole. And that is what I did. So I ordered a chain of 308 fathoms to be made and gave instructions that I was not to be pulled back up until there was a tug on the chain. "When I have been down on the bottom, I will immediately shake the demijohn for you to bring me up."

When everything had been prepared, I entered the glass demijohn to attempt the impossible. When I had entered it, the entry was immediately sealed with a leaden cap. I had descended 120 cubits when a passing fish shook the cage with its tail, and they brought me up because the chain had been tugged. I descended again, and the same thing happened to me. Going down for the third time, around 308 cubits, I saw all sorts of fish swimming around me, when, lo and behold, the biggest fish of them all came and seized me and my cage in its mouth and took me far off to the land a mile away. Now, in the boats there were the 360 men who were managing my descent: the fish took all of them with it and the four boats as well. Having reached dry land, it crushed the cage with its teeth, then cast it aside. I was scarcely breathing and frightened to death. And I fell down and worshiped Providence above who had preserved me from the terrifying beast. And I said to myself, "Alexander, give up attempting the impossible, in case by investigating the deep you lose your life." Immediately I instructed the army to move on from there and to proceed onward.

Traveling again, we came in two days to a region where the sun does not shine. There lies the Land of the Blest. As I wanted to find out about and see that region, I attempted to take my own slaves and advance there, but my friend Kallisthenes recommended that I should advance with 40 friends, 100 slaves, and 1,200 soldiers—only the reliable ones. So, leaving behind the infantry, together with the old and the women, I took soldiers, all young and hand-picked, and marched on with them, having given orders that no old man should march with us. But one inquisitive old man, with two brave sons who were real soldiers, said to them: "Children, listen to the voice of your father and take me with you—you shall not find me useless on the march. After all, look, in time of crisis King Alexander will be looking for an old man. So if you are found to have me with you, you will be greatly rewarded."

39

But they replied, "Father, we fear the king's threats and do not want to be found to have contravened his orders and lose not just the chance of this expedition, but even our lives."

The old man replied, "Get up and shave my chin and alter my appearance. I will march with you in the midst of the army, and in time of need I shall be a great help to you." And they did what their father told them.

So, traveling on from there for three days, we found a misty place. We could not go further, because there were no paths or tracks, and pitched our tents there. On the following day I took a thousand armed men and went with them to investigate if the end

of the earth was here. We went leftward (there was more light on that side) and journeyed through rocky ground with steep drops up to midday (this I did not work out by the sun; rather, by measuring out ropes in accordance with the science of surveying I calculated the distance and the time). After this we were afraid and returned because the route was impassable. I wanted to set out again and go to the right: it was an extremely level plain, but it was dark and murky. But I was in an impossible position because the young men all advised me not to proceed into that area, in case the horses got separated because of the darkness and the distance, and we were unable to get back. I said to them: "O brave men, all of you, in war! Now you realize that there is no such thing as great bravery without planning and intelligence. If an old man had come with us, he would have given us advice on how to advance into this murky area. But who among you is brave enough to go back to the camp and fetch me an old man? I will give a reward of ten pounds of gold." No one was found to do this because of the length of the journey and because the atmosphere was without light.

Now, the old man's sons came up to me and said, "If you will listen to us with forbearance, master, we will tell you something."

I replied, "Tell me whatever you wish—I swear by Providence above I shall do you no harm."

They straightaway explained about their father and how they had come to bring him; then they ran off and presented the old man himself. Seeing him, I embraced him and asked him to give us his advice. And the old man replied: "King Alexander, you must realize that unless you go there with horses, you will never see the light again. So pick out mares with foals and leave the foals here while you go off with the mares; then they will bring you out because of the foals." Having searched throughout the army, we only found 100 mares with foals. So I took these and another 100 select horses, as well as some other horses to carry what we needed, and went off, following the old man's plan, and left the foals behind.

The old man instructed his sons to collect anything they found lying on the ground after they set out, and drop it in their saddlebags. So 360 soldiers set out, and I gave orders for the 160 infantry to march in front. So it was that we journeyed about fifteen schoinoi [perhaps seventy-five miles]. We found a place, and in it there was a translucent spring, whose water flashed like lightning, and very many other sources of water. The air too in that place was fragrant, and it was not entirely dark. I became hungry and wanted to have some food; and I called over the cook, who was called Andreas, and said to him, "Prepare us a meal." He took salt fish and

went to the translucent water of the spring to wash the food. But the moment it was doused in the water, it came to life and escaped the cook's hands. In his fear he did not report to me what had happened but took some of the water and drank it, then put some in a silver container and kept it. The whole place abounded in springs, and we all drank from them. Alas for my ill luck, that it was not ordained for me to drink from that immortal spring that brought life to the lifeless and was not denied to my cook!

After taking food, we rose and traveled on more or less 230 schoinoi [circa 1,100 miles!]. After that we traveled on and saw light, but not from sun, moon, or stars. And I saw two birds flying, and they had human faces; they were crying in Greek: "Alexander, why do you tread the land that is God's alone? Turn back, poor man, turn back; you will not be able to tread the Isles of the Blest. Turn back, human being; tread the land that is granted you and do not bring trouble upon yourself!" I shivered and swiftly obeyed the instruction the birds had given me. The other bird in turn spoke in Greek. "The East," it said, "calls you, and the kingdom of Poros shall be assigned in victory to you." So speaking, the bird flew off. I succeeded in persuading the guide to stand aside and put the mares at the front of us; then with their mothers leading us back⁷⁵ we returned in twenty-two days to the cries of the foals.

Now, many individual soldiers brought back what they had found. But in particular the old man's sons filled their saddlebags, following their father's instructions. And when we got back to the light, they were discovered to have collected pure gold and pearls of great value. At the sight of this there was regret—among those who had collected something that they had not collected more, and among those who had not that they had not. And we all expressed deep gratitude to the old man for giving us such excellent advice.

After our return, the cook told what had happened to him at the spring. Hearing this, I was overwhelmed with grief and punished him severely. All the same, I said to myself, "What good does it do you, Alexander, to have regrets over a matter that is past?" But I did not know that he had drunk the water or kept some; he had only admitted that the salt fish had come to life. But the cook approached my daughter by the concubine Ounna, Kale by name, and seduced her by promising to give her water from the immortal spring—and this he did. On learning of this—I will tell you the truth—I envied them their immortality. I summoned my daughter

75. I have emended the text of L at this point; it oddly refers to following the Great Bear simultaneously.

and told her: "Take your clothes and depart from my presence: you have, after all, evidently gained immortality and become a spirit. And you shall be called a Neraïd, since you received eternity [*aïdion*] from the water [*neron*]." ⁷⁶ She departed from my presence, weeping and wailing, and went to live with the spirits in uninhabited regions. As for the cook, I ordered a millstone to be tied to his neck and that he should be cast into the sea. There he became a spirit and went off to live in a part of the sea, which was called Andreas after him. So much then about the cook and my daughter.

As a result of all this, I formed the opinion that here was the end of the earth. And I gave orders for a huge arch to be built in that place and for it to be inscribed as follows.

YOU WHO WISH TO ENTER THE LAND OF THE BLEST,
TRAVEL TO THE RIGHT AND AVOID DESTRUCTION. ⁷⁷

But I had second thoughts and wondered whether the end of the earth was really here and whether the sky sloped down [i.e., to meet the earth] here. So I decided to find out the truth. So I ordered two of the birds from that place to be caught. They were huge white birds, extremely powerful and tame: they did not fly away when they saw us. Some of the soldiers mounted their necks, and they flew up, carrying them. They eat carrion, and this is why a very large number of these birds came to us—because of the horses that were dying. So I ordered two of them to be caught and not to be given food for three days. And on the third day I gave instructions for something like a yoke to be made of timber and for it to be attached to their necks. Then I made a sort of basket from ox-hide and got into the basket myself, holding a spear about seven cubits long with horse liver on its tip. So straightaway the birds flew up to eat the liver, and I was carried up with them into the air, until I considered I was near the sky. I shivered all over because of the extreme cold of the air being beaten by the birds' wings. At that point a flying creature in the shape of a man met me and said to me: "Alexander, do you investigate the things of heaven when you have not grasped things on earth? So return swiftly to the earth and avoid becoming food for these birds!" And again he spoke to me, "Alexander, direct your gaze to the earth below." I did so with fear and saw there before me a large coiled snake and, in the middle of the snake, a tiny disk. And the creature that had met me said to me,

76. The author of this episode, then, explains the name Nereid—a nymph of the sea, daughter of Nereus, known since Homer—by misspelling it and deriving it from a word for "water" that no ancient Greek had ever heard.

77. Some ancient mystics thought it important that the dead man's soul should keep to the right on arrival below. Tablets with such instructions have been discovered in tombs.

"Turn your spear, then, against the disk—it is the world, because the snake is the sea that encircles the earth."

I turned back and by the wish of Providence above came down to earth seven days from the camp. I was utterly drained and half-dead. I found there a satrap under my power and, with three hundred cavalry from him, came to my camp. And I resolved never again to attempt the impossible.

Farewell.

[In recension C, chapter 42 tells of a sweet-tasting lake and a fish with a stone in its stomach that can be used as a torch. Women emerge at night from the lake, singing; and there is a battle with Centaurs. Chapter 43 contains a letter to Olympias summarizing Alexander's fantastic adventures. In chapter 44, downcast by a prophecy of his early death, Alexander is cheered by a dwarf's foolery.]

Book Three

After all this, Alexander marched with his forces against Poros, king of India. Having marched through much uninhabited land, through terrain without water and full of ravines, the army commanders said to their troops: "It is enough for us to have waged war as far as Persis and to have subjugated Darius for demanding tribute from the Greeks. Why then do we laboriously march against Indians, into the haunts of wild animals, no concern of Greece? If Alexander, with his great spirit, is a man of war and wants to subjugate nations of barbarians, why are we following him? Let him march and fight wars on his own!"⁷⁸ Hearing this, Alexander separated the Persian troops from the Macedonians and other Greeks and said to the Macedonians and Greeks: "Comrades-in-arms and allies, Macedonians and all you lords of the Greeks—these Persians are your enemies and mine—so why are you grumbling now? You have instructed me to march to war and fight the barbarians on my own. I will, however, remind you of this: I have won the previous wars on my own too; and, taking with me all the Persians I want, I shall win on my own again. A single idea of mine encouraged the souls of you all for the battle, when you were already weakening against the hordes of Darius. Was I not there with my shield at the head of the army in the battles? Did I not go as my own messenger to Darius? Did I not expose myself to danger? So take your own counsel and march to Macedonia on your own and get yourselves back safely and do not have any disputes with each

78. The author here blends the two mutinies: (a) in 326 B.C., after the defeat of Poros, the army refused to cross the river Hyphasis (Beas or Sutlej) into India and demanded to turn back; (b) in 324 B.C., at Opis (near Babylon), the Macedonians rebelled at the inclusion of Persians in privileged positions in Alexander's army, but later begged forgiveness.

other—so that you may learn that an army is powerless without the intelligence of a king.” So spoke Alexander, and they pleaded with him to set aside his anger and to keep them with him right to the end.

- 2 When he arrived with all his forces at the border of India, letter bearers sent by Poros, king of India, met him and gave him the letter of Poros’s. Alexander took it and read it out before his army. Its contents were these.

King Poros of India, to Alexander, who plunders cities:

I instruct you to withdraw. What can you, a mere man, achieve against a god? Is it because you have destroyed the good fortune of others by meeting weaker men in battle that you think yourself more mighty than me?⁷⁹ But I am invincible: not only am I the king of men, but even of gods—when Dionysos (who they say is a god) came here, the Indians used their own power to drive him away. So not only do I advise you, but also I instruct you, to set off for Greece with all speed. I am not going to be frightened by your battle with Darius or by all the good fortune you had in the face of the weakness of the other nations. But you think you are more mighty. So set off for Greece. Because if we had needed Greece, we Indians would have subjected it long before Xerxes; but as it is, we have paid no attention to it, because it is a useless nation, and there is nothing among them worth the regard of a king—everyone desires what is better.

So Alexander, having read out Poros’s letter in public before his soldiers, said to them: “Comrades-in-arms, do not be upset again at the letter of Poros’s that I have read out. Remember what Darius wrote too. It is a fact that the only state of mind barbarians have is obtuseness. Like the animals under them—tigers, lions, elephants, which exult in their courage but are easily hunted thanks to man’s nature—the kings of the barbarians too exult in the numbers of their armies but are easily defeated by the intelligence of the Greeks.”

Having given this declaration to encourage his army, Alexander wrote in reply to Poros.

King Alexander, to King Poros, greetings:

You have made us even more eager to be spurred on to battle against you by saying that Greece has nothing worth the regard of a king but that you Indians have everything—lands and cities. And I know that every man desires to seize what is better rather than to keep what is worse. Since, then, we Greeks do not have these

79. In this and the following sentence L makes insufficient sense: I have translated A with slight alterations.

things and you barbarians possess them, we desire what is better and wish to have them from you. You write to me that you are king of gods and of all men even to the extent of having more power than the god. But I am engaging in war with a loudmouthed man and an absolute barbarian, not with a god. The whole world could not stand up to a god in full armor—the rumble of thunder, the flash of lightning, or the anger of the bolt. So the nations I have defeated in war cause you no astonishment, and neither do boastful words on your part make me a coward.

Poros, receiving Alexander's letter and reading it, was very much 3 spurred on and immediately mustered the barbarian hordes and the elephants and many other animals that used to fight beside the Indians. When the Macedonians and Persians came close, Alexander saw Poros's line and was afraid not of his numbers but of the animals. He was astonished to see the strangeness of the animals: he was accustomed to fighting men, not animals.

So once more Alexander became his own messenger and entered the city where Poros was, dressed as a soldier buying provisions. Seeing him, the Indians straightaway presented him to King Poros, and Poros asked him, "How is Alexander?"

"He is alive and well," he replied, "and keen to see such a king as Poros."

Then he went out with Alexander and showed him the number of his animals and said to Alexander, "Go to Alexander and tell him, 'I am bringing animals like you to fight with you.'"

Alexander replied, "King Poros, Alexander has heard what you have said before I return to him."

"From whom?" asked Poros.

"From Poros," said he. "Being the son of a god, he cannot fail to know what is said."

So Poros sent him away with gifts.

As Alexander left Poros, he saw the lineup of animals and exercised his mind with much hard thinking. So what did the intelligent man do next? He took all the bronze statues he had and the suits of armor won in battle and had these carefully heated until the bronze was red-hot, and ordered them to be placed at the front of the battle line, like a wall. They sounded the signal for battle. Poros immediately ordered the animals to be released. So the animals, sweeping in, sprang at the statues and clutched them; immediately they burnt their mouths, and thereafter they touched no one. So in this way clever Alexander eliminated the attack of the beasts. The Persians were overpowering the Indians and pursued them with arrowshots and battles on horseback, and great was the battle

as men slew and were slain. And there fell Alexander's horse, Bucephalus, its judgment having weakened.⁸⁰ And at this event, Alexander neglected the battle; for twenty days they continued fighting with each other. And Alexander's side was beginning to surrender through fear.

- 4 So realizing that he was about to be forced into surrender, Alexander ordered a halt in the battle and made a declaration to King Poros, saying: "This is not royal power, if, whichever of us wins, our armies perish between us. But this is our nobility of body, if each of us stops the army and enters a single combat for the kingship." Poros was delighted and promised Alexander he would fight a single combat with him, seeing Alexander's body was no match for his own body—Poros was five cubits high, but Alexander not even three.⁸¹ So each side took up position to watch Poros and Alexander. But suddenly there was a disturbance in the camp of King Poros. So Poros turned round, worried, to see what the noise was. But Alexander pulled the feet from under him, leapt on him, and drove his sword into his flank, instantly killing Poros, king of India.⁸²

Both armies set to fighting each other, but Alexander said to the Indians, "Poor Indians, why are you fighting, when your king has been slain?"

They replied, "We are fighting to avoid being taken prisoner."

Alexander said to them: "Stop fighting; turn round and go to your city as free men. It was not you who recklessly attacked my army, but Poros." He said this, knowing that his army was not capable of fighting the Indians.

Immediately he gave instructions for King Poros to receive a royal burial. Then he took all the treasures from his palace and marched for the Brahmans, or Oxydrakai, not because they were warlike and numerous, but because they were gymnosophists who lived in huts and caves.⁸³

- 5 The Brahmans, on learning that King Alexander was coming to see them, sent their best philosophers to meet him with a letter. Receiving and reading the letter, Alexander found its contents to be as follows.

80. In A. more sensibly, Alexander's judgment weakens, not the horse's: he saves the corpse of the horse and neglects the fighting.

81. A cubit was eighteen inches in Athens, fourteen in Macedonia. Poros was said by historians to be five cubits high, and Alexander to be too short for Darius's throne (though he was doubtless more than three feet six inches).

82. There was no single combat; and Poros, though wounded in the battle, survived to retain his kingdom under Alexander's overlordship and to hold others won by Alexander.

83. In 326 B.C. at Taxila (near Islamabad), before the battle with Poros, Alexander had Onesikritos, a pupil of the Cynic philosopher Diogenes, meet Indian ascetics, for whom Taxila seems to have been a center. Greeks, always impressed by exotic wisdoms, had a word for them: *gymnosophistai*, "naked philosophers." One, Kalanos, joined Alexander's party, but Alexander's supposed meeting with the community became a favorite part of the romantic tradition (even in a Buddhist text, the *Sayings of Milinda*).

The Gymnosophists, to the man Alexander, write this letter:

If you come to us in war, you will not profit from it: you will not have anything to take away from us. But if you want to take what we have, there is no need for war, only for a request—not to us, but to Providence above. If you want to know who we are, the answer is: naked men who have devoted their lives to philosophy, fashioned not by ourselves, but by Providence above. War is your companion, philosophy ours.

Reading this, King Alexander traveled to them in peace. And he saw many woods and many extremely beautiful trees with all sorts of fruit and a river encircling that whole land, whose water was translucent, white as milk, and countless palm trees laden with fruit, and the vine rods with a thousand bunches of grapes, gorgeous and enticing. And Alexander saw the sages with no clothes living in huts and caves. Away at a great distance from them, he saw their women and children grazing the flocks.

Alexander inquired of them, "Do you not have graves?"

6

They replied: "This area where we live is our grave as well: here we take our rest on the earth and bury ourselves for sleep. The earth begets us, the earth feeds us, and when we die, we lie beneath the earth in eternal sleep."

He asked another question. "Who are more numerous, the living or the dead?"

They replied, "Those who have died are more numerous, but as they no longer exist, they cannot be counted—those who can be seen are more numerous than those who cannot."

He posed another question. "Which is stronger, death or life?"

They replied, "Life, because the sun has bright rays when it rises, but is weaker to the sight when it is setting."

Again he asked, "What is greater, the land or the sea?"

They replied, "The land: even the sea itself is confined by the land."

He asked another question. "Which is the most dangerous of all animals?"

They replied, "Man."

He asked, "How?"

They replied, "Your own case will convince you: you are an animal, and look how many animals you have with you so that you alone can rob the other animals of life."

He was not angry but smiled. He asked something else. "What is kingship?"

They replied, "An immoral force for superior power, daring maintained by opportunity, a golden burden."

He asked another question. "What came first, night or day?"

They replied, "Night: creatures being born develop in the darkness of the womb and are then delivered to receive the light of day."

He posed another question. "Which side is better, the right or the left?"

They replied: "The right: the sun himself rises on the right and travels to the leftward regions of the sky. And a woman suckles first on the right breast."

Then Alexander proceeded to ask them, "Do you have a lord?"

They replied, "Yes, we have a leader."

He said, "I should like to greet him."

And they pointed out Dandames to him, who was lying on the ground, with lots of tree leaves strewn over him and with cucumbers and other produce laid out before him. Seeing him, Alexander greeted him, and he in his turn said to Alexander, "Hail," but did not rise or give him the honors due to a king.

Alexander asked him if they had property.

He replied: "Our property is the land, the trees that bear fruit, the light, sun, moon, the troupe of stars, the water. When we are hungry, we go to the leafy trees and eat the fruit that grows of its own accord. As the moon waxes, all our trees produce fruit. And we have too the great river Euphrates, and whenever we are thirsty, we go to it, drink water, and are gladdened. We have, each of us, our own wife, and, during the waxing moon, each of us goes and has intercourse with his own partner, until she bears two children. We reckon one to replace the father; the other, the mother.

Hearing this, Alexander said to them all, "Ask me for what you want, and I shall grant it to you."

And they all shouted out, "Give us immortality."

Alexander replied, "I do not have power over that: I too am mortal."

"Why, then," they asked, "if you are mortal, do you wage so many wars? To win everything and carry it off somewhere? Are you not in your turn going to leave these things behind for others?"

"That," said Alexander, "is managed by Providence above, so that we may be slaves and servants of their [the gods'] commands. The sea does not stir if no wind blows upon it, nor do trees if no wind blows. The fact is that man displays no activity but for Providence above. I too would like to stop conducting wars; only, the master of my mind does not allow me. But in fact if we were all of one mind, the world would be a dull place: the sea would not be sailed, the earth not worked, marriages not celebrated, children not born. Think how many have met misfortune in the wars I have been responsible for and have lost what they had! Yet, others have had good fortune from other people's property. Everyone

takes things from everyone else and delivers them up to others: nothing belongs to anyone."

So saying, Alexander brought Dandames gold, bread, wine, and olive oil. "Take these, old man, to remember us by." But Dandames laughed and replied, "These are no use to us, but so as not to seem proud, we will take the oil from you." He made a pile of wood, set fire to it, and poured the oil into the fire before Alexander.

[Chapters 7-16: Recension A now inserts a booklet partly by Palladius (circa A.D. 364-430), *On the Tribes of India, and the Brahmans*.]

After this, Alexander left them. So he returned along the river Hyphasis, which leads to Prasiake, which is held to be the capital of India and was where Poros was king.⁸⁴ And all Poros's subjects received Alexander. He had managed all affairs along the Hyphasis, and the Indians eagerly gathered. And some of them said to Alexander, "Greatest King, you will take marvelous cities and kingdoms and mountains on which no king of the living has ever set foot." And some of the sages came to Alexander and said, "King, we have something amazing and worth your attention to show you: we will show you plants speaking with human voice." So they brought Alexander to where a shrine of the Sun and Moon was. There was an enclosure to protect them and two trees like cypresses: encircling them were trees like the myrobalanos of Egypt—their fruit too. The two trees in the middle of the garden spoke, one in a male voice, the other in a female. The name of the male one was Sun, and of the female Moon, which they called in their own language Mithras and Mao.⁸⁵ The two trees had been clothed in skins of various animals, the male one with skins of male animals, the female with female. In their vicinity there was no iron, bronze, or tin, and not even potter's clay. When Alexander asked what sort of skins were covering them, they replied by saying they were lion and leopard skins.

Alexander sought to learn more about the trees, and they told him: "In the morning when the sun rises, a voice comes from the tree, and when it is at its zenith, and a third time when it is on the point of setting. And the same thing happens in the case of the moon." And men who were clearly priests came up to Alexander and said, "Enter in purity, worship, and you will receive an oracle." But the priests said, "King

84. "Along the river Hyphasis" is an emendation of L, though Alexander actually returned by the river Hydaspes (Indus), of which the Hyphasis (Sutlej) is a tributary. Prasiake was in fact the land of the Prasioi (Sanskrit for "Easterners"), whose capital was Pali(m)bothra (near today's Patna, on the Ganges 150 miles west of the Bangladeshi border)—unvisited, of course, by Alexander, and far from Poros.

In other recensions 3.17 is the *Letter to Aristotle*. Recension B omits a number of marvels and monsters at the beginning and converts the rest into narrative.

85. This emendation (of "Mutheamatus") produces Iranian words for "sun" and "moon."

Alexander, no iron is allowed in the shrine." So he ordered swords to be laid down outside the precinct. A considerable number of men went in with Alexander, and he ordered them to form a ring and keep watch on the place. Then he called over some of the Indians who were attending him so that they could act as interpreters for him. And he swore to them that "if the sun sets and I do not hear the voice of the oracle, I shall burn you alive!"

But it happened as the sun set: an Indian voice came from the tree, but the Indians with him were afraid and did not want to translate. After some thought, Alexander took them aside individually. And they whispered in his ear, "King Alexander, soon you must die at the hands of your own people." All present were thunderstruck, but Alexander wanted to receive another oracle. Having heard the future, he went in and asked that he might embrace his mother, Olympias. And when the moon rose, the tree said in Greek, "King Alexander, you must die in Babylon and you will be killed by your own people and you will not be able to return to your mother, Olympias."

Alexander was amazed and wanted to put magnificent garlands on the trees, but the priests told him: "This is not permitted. But if you are going to use force, do what you will: for a king every law is canceled." Alexander was very upset, and, rising at first light, he went back into the shrine with the priests, his friends, and the Indians. After a prayer, he went up with the priest and, placing his hand on the tree, asked if the years of his life were complete—as this was what he wanted to know. And as soon as the sun began to rise and cast its rays on the top of the tree, a voice came out, explicitly declaring: "The years of your life are complete, and you will not be able to return to your mother, Olympias; instead, you must die in Babylon. And shortly afterwards your mother and your wife will die miserably at the hands of your own people. Ask no further questions about these matters: you shall not hear anything more." On hearing this, he was very upset. And on his departure from there, he broke camp and left India. And he came to Persia.

18 He hurried to see the palace of Semiramis—it was famous.⁸⁶ There had become queen of that whole country a woman of sublime beauty in middle age. So Alexander sent her a letter with the following content.

86. Semiramis, a legendary queen of Babylon, so appealed to Greek imagination that she seems even to have been the heroine of the early (ca. 100 B.C.?) *Ninos Romance*. The author seems to think Semiramis's city is the same as Kandake's Meroë. Meroë, on the Nile in central Sudan, was the capital of the Nubian kingdom of Napata, and Kandake was the regular name of its queens. But for Greeks the land beyond Egypt was Ethiopia and was perceived as lying to the southeast—even up to India; hence maybe our author's confusion. It has been thought that the Kandake episode was in origin a separate novelette.

King Alexander, to Queen Kandake at Meroë and the princes under her, greetings:

On my travels to Egypt I heard from the priests there about your dwellings and graves, and that for some time you had ruled Egypt. So I have sent to you. Take advice and send what seems appropriate to you.

Farewell.

Kandake replied as follows.

Queen Kandake of Meroë and all the princes, to King Alexander, greetings:

Do not think the worse of us for the color of our skin. We are purer in soul than the whitest of your people. We are in number 80 squadrons ready to do harm to aggressors. The emissaries sent by us bring you 100 solid gold ingots, 500 Ethiopians not yet mature, 200 chimpanzees, an emerald crown of a thousand pounds of gold, 10 sealed necklaces of unpierced pearls, 80 ivory caskets, and various kinds of animals from our country: 5 elephants, 10 tame leopards, in the cages 30 man-eating hounds, 30 fighting bulls, 300 elephant tusks, 300 leopard skins, 3,000 ebony staves. So send us immediately the men you want to receive the presents. And write to us about yourself when you have become king of the whole world.

Farewell.

Receiving Queen Kandake's letter and reading it, Alexander sent Kleomenes, an Egyptian,⁸⁷ to receive the presents. Kandake, on hearing how Alexander was defeating such important kings, called one of her people, a Greek painter, and gave him instructions to go and meet him and secretly to paint a likeness of Alexander. And he did so. Receiving the likeness of him, Kandake hid it away.

Some days later it happened that Kandake's son, Kandaules, in the company of some riders, was attacked by the prince of the Bebrykians,⁸⁸ and Kandaules, the son of Kandake, rode in to Alexander's tents in his flight. The guards arrested him and brought him before Ptolemy, surnamed Soter, who was second-in-command to Alexander (King Alexander was asleep). Ptolemy questioned him, "Who are you and your companions?"

87. Kleomenes of Naukratis, recognized as satrap of Egypt by Alexander, but later subordinated to Ptolemy and executed by him.

88. The names connect this story with Asia Minor: the Bebrykians are a legendary people of Bithynia; Kandaules, a king of Lydia; Amazons have several important Asia Minor connections; the real Antigonos was satrap in Asia Minor.

He replied, "I am the son of Queen Kandake."

Ptolemy asked him, "Why have you come here, then?"

He replied: "Together with my wife and a few soldiers I was on my way to celebrate the annual mystery rite among the Amazons. But the prince of the Bebrykians saw my wife and came out with a huge force; he seized my wife and killed most of my soldiers. So I am returning to collect a larger force and burn the land of the Bebrykians."

Having heard this, Ptolemy went in to Alexander, woke him, and outlined to him what Kandake's son had told him. Alexander listened and straightaway rose. He took his crown and put it on Ptolemy, put his mantle on him and said to him, "Sit on the throne as though you were Alexander and say this to the secretary, 'Call Antigonos, the principal guard.' And when I come, relate to me what you have told me and ask me, 'What policy are we to adopt here? Give me your advice.'"

So Ptolemy sat on the throne, dressed in the royal robes—and the troops, seeing him, worriedly discussed what new plan Alexander had thought up. But the son of Kandake, seeing him in the royal robes, was afraid he would order his execution—he thought it was Alexander. Then Ptolemy gave the order "Call Antigonos, my principal guard." And when Alexander came, Ptolemy said to him: "Antigonos, this is the son of Queen Kandake. His wife has been seized by the prince of the Bebrykians. What action would you advise?"

"I would advise you, King Alexander," he replied, "to arm the troops and make war on the Bebrykians so that we may free his wife and return her to him, out of respect for his mother." Kandaules, the son of Kandake, was pleased to hear this. And Ptolemy said: "If this is what you want, Antigonos, go ahead and do this as my guard. Instruct the army to prepare."

20 Ptolemy gave instructions, as though he were Alexander, to Antigonos, and this was done. Antigonos reached the region of the prince in one day together with Ptolemy. And Antigonos said to Ptolemy: "King Alexander, let us not be seen by the Bebrykians by day, in case the prince discovers and kills the woman. So let us break into the city by night and set fire to the houses: then the masses will rise and return Kandaules his wife. Our battle is not about the kingdom, but about demanding back the woman."

As Antigonos said this, Kandaules fell down before him and said: "Ah, your intelligence, Antigonos! I wish you were Alexander and not a guard of Alexander."

So then they broke into the city by night, while the people were asleep, and set fire to the suburbs. And as they woke up and asked why the city was being set on fire, Alexander had the shout raised "It is King Kandaules with a massive force, demanding you return his wife before I

set your whole city on fire." They were surrounded and all advanced to the prince's palace and by force of numbers broke it open. Kandaules' wife was in bed with the prince: they dragged her away and returned her to Kandaules, and they killed the prince.

Kandaules thanked Antigonos for his advice and idea and, embracing Antigonos, said, "Put yourself in my hands so that I can take you to my mother, Kandake, and give you the royal presents you deserve." Alexander was overjoyed and said to him: "Ask King Alexander to release me. I too would like to see your country." So Alexander sent a message to Ptolemy to send him with Kandaules as his messenger. And Ptolemy said to Kandaules: "I wish to greet your mother by letter. So take my messenger Antigonos with you and bring him back safe here to me, in the same way that I restore you and your wife safe to your mother." Kandaules replied: "King, I take this man as though he were Alexander himself. And I shall send him back to you with royal gifts."

So then Kandaules set out and took with him Alexander, a considerable number of soldiers, beasts, wagons, and many presents. On the way Alexander marveled at mountains marked out with veins of quartz that reached up to the clouds of heaven and at the towering trees laden with fruit—not of the Greek sort, but a marvel in themselves: they were apple trees glinting gold with fruit the size of citrons in Greece. And there were enormous bunches of grapes and nuts with the girth of melons and full-grown apes the size of bears and other animals of various colors and strange shapes. And there were some rocky places with downward passages. And Kandaules said, "Antigonos, these here are called the dwellings of the gods." So they journeyed on and reached the palace. He was met by his mother and brothers; but when they were about to embrace him, Kandaules said, "Do not embrace me before you have greeted the man who has saved me and been so good to my wife, Antigonos, the messenger of King Alexander." And they asked him, "In what way did he save you?" Then, when Kandaules had told them about the prince of the Bebrykians seizing his wife and the assistance Alexander had given him, the brothers and their mother, Kandake, embraced him. And there was a splendid banquet in the palace. 21

The next day, Kandake came forward in the royal crown, displaying enormous stature and having the appearance of a demigod, so much so that Alexander thought it was his own mother, Olympias. And he looked at the palace glittering with its golden ceilings and marble walls. And there were cushions of woven silk with contrasting gold embroidery on couches with legs of gold and reclining chairs with golden webbing. The tables were studded with ivory inlays, and ebony colors gleamed from the capitals of Median columns. There were countless statues of bronze and sickle-bearing chariots sculpted from porphyry com- 22

plete with the horses so that you might think they were alive and running; and there were elephants sculpted from the same stone, trampling enemies underfoot and sweeping over opponents with their trunks; and there were whole temples complete with columns sculpted from a single stone. Seeing this, then, Alexander was filled with amazement. And he ate with the brothers of Kandaules. Kandaules called his mother over and asked her to give Alexander's messenger the gifts he deserved for his good sense and to release him.

The next day, Kandake took Antigonos by the right hand and showed him translucent chambers made of indescribable stone that made one think the sun was rising inside and shining through the marble. Among the rooms she showed him a dining room of imperishable timbers, and a house not built firmly on foundations on the ground, but fixed on massive square timbers and drawn on wheels by twenty elephants. And wherever the king went in order to make war on a city, he stayed in it.

Alexander said to Kandake, "This would all be astonishing if it were among the Greeks rather than in your country, where you have mountains with such varied stone."

Kandake replied angrily, "You are right, Alexander."

Addressed by the name Alexander, he turned round and said, "Lady, my name is Antigonos. I am Alexander's messenger."

"All right," replied Kandake, "your name is Antigonos—but I am not calling you that: you are King Alexander. And now I will show you the evidence." And she took him by the hand into a chamber and brought him the portrait of him. She asked, "Do you recognize your appearance?"

Alexander recognized his picture and was disconcerted and trembled.

Kandake asked him: "Alexander, why are you trembling and disconcerted? The destroyer of Persia, the destroyer of India, he who tore down the trophies of the Medes and Parthians and overthrew the whole East, now without battle and army you have fallen under the control of Kandake. So you must now realize, Alexander, that whenever a man thinks that he is brilliant, there will be another man still more brilliant than him. Kandake's mind has been more than a match for your ingenious plan, Alexander."

Alexander was furious and gnashed his teeth. Kandake said to him: "Are you gnashing your teeth? What can you do? Such an important king and you are in the power of a single woman!"

Alexander wanted to kill himself and Kandake with a sword, but Kandake said to him: "Very brave and royal! Do not agonize, Alexander, my boy. Just as you have saved my son and his wife from the Bebrykians, I in my turn shall protect you from the barbarians—by calling you

Antigonos; for if they recognize you as Alexander, they will immediately kill you, because you killed Poros, king of India. The wife of my younger son is a daughter of Poros's. So I shall call you Antigonos: I shall protect your secret."

Having said this, Kandake went out with him and said: "Kandaules, my boy, and you, my daughter Marpessa, if you had not found Alexander's army at the right time, I would not have seen you again, and you would not have found your wife. So let us treat Alexander's messenger properly and give him presents." And the other son, the younger one, said to her: "Alexander saved my brother and his wife. But my wife is in sorrow because her father, Poros, was killed by Alexander, and as he is here in her power, she wants to kill Antigonos, his messenger." But Kandake said: "And what good would it do you, my boy? If you murder him, do you defeat Alexander?" And Kandaules said to his brother: "He saved me and my wife: I in my turn will save him and send him to Alexander. So are we on this man's account to join in battle here with each other?" And his brother said, "I, my brother, for my part, do not want to; but if you do, I am readier than you." With these words, they went to start a single combat with each other.

Kandake was in anguish at the prospect of her children fighting each other. She took Alexander aside and said to him, "You are an intelligent man and have dealt with so many matters—can you not use your intelligence to devise a way of stopping my children fighting each other on your account?"

"I will go," replied Alexander, "and make peace between them." And Alexander went between them and said: "Listen, Karagos, and you, Kandaules! If you kill me here, it will not matter to Alexander: messengers that people send are not very valuable compared with the battles of kings. So if you kill me here, Alexander has more messengers. But if you want through me to take your enemy Alexander prisoner, promise to give me a share of the gifts here; in this way I will be able to stay with you and get Alexander to come here on the grounds that you want to give him the gifts you have prepared for him in person. Then, having got your enemy in your power and having avenged yourselves, you will have your cure."

He convinced the brothers, and they were reconciled. Kandake admired Alexander's intelligence and said to him, "Antigonos, I wish you were my son—through you I would have controlled all nations: you would not have defeated the enemy and their cities by war, but by your sharp mind." Alexander was delighted at the respect shown him, and Kandake resolutely kept Alexander's secret. Ten days later he set off, and Kandake gave him royal presents: a precious diamond crown, a breast-

plate with pearls and beryls, and a cloak of purple, star-bright with gold work. And she sent him on his way with a large escort and his own soldiers.

- 24 Having traveled the set number of days, he came to the place where Kandaules had told him the gods dwelt. Going inside with a few soldiers, he saw a semblance of figures and a flash of fire. Alexander, caught at the front, was frightened but stayed on to see what would happen. He saw some men reclining with a sort of torchlight gleaming from their eyes, and he saw one of them say to him: "Greetings, Alexander! Do you know who I am? I am Sesonchosis, the world ruler,⁸⁹ but I did not have your luck: you have an immortal name through founding that loved city in Egypt, Alexandria."

Alexander asked him, "How many years will I live?"

He replied, "It is good for a living man not to know when he is to die: through awaiting that hour, he has died from the moment he learns. But for the living man to be in ignorance provides him with the forgetfulness of not having in his mind whether he will even die at all. But as for the city you found, famous among all mankind, many kings will step upon its ground worshipping you as a god. And you shall live in it dead and not dead: for you shall have the city you are founding as your tomb."

- 25 When he had said this, Alexander left. Taking his men, he marched back to his army. The satraps met him and gave him the royal clothing. From there he marched to the Amazons; and when he had reached them, he sent them a letter of the following contents.

King Alexander, to the Amazons, greetings:

I think you will have heard about the battle with Darius. After that I campaigned against the Indians and defeated their leaders and subjected the people, thanks to Providence above. After that we journeyed to the Brahmins, the so-called gymnosophists. Taking tribute from them, we allowed them to stay in their own regions, on their request, and left them in peace. After that we are marching to you. Meet us with joy; we do not come to do you ill, but to see your country and at the same time to do you good.

Farewell.

Receiving Alexander's letter and reading it, they wrote Alexander this reply.

The leading Amazons and the mightiest, to Alexander, greetings:

We have written to you so that you may be informed before you set foot on our land and not have to withdraw ignominiously. By

89. In other recensions Sesonchosis (see note 38 on 1.33) shows to Alexander the creator and omnipresent god Sarapis, who then delivers the prophecy.

our letter we shall make clear the nature of our country and of ourselves, who have a way of life to be reckoned with.

We are on the other side of the river Amazon, but we live on an island:⁹⁰ the perimeter of our land is a river with no starting point, whose circuit takes a year to travel. There is a single road into our land. We virgins who live here are under arms and number 270,000. There is nothing male among us: our men live on the other side of the river and graze the land. Every year we keep a festival and make a horse sacrifice to Zeus, Poseidon, Hephaistos, and Ares, which lasts thirty days. All of us who wish to end our virginity stay with the men. But they send all the female children they bear across to us when they reach the age of seven. But when an enemy marches against our country, 120,000 of us ride out on horseback, while the rest guard the island. And we go to the border to meet them, with the men drawn up behind following us. And anyone who is wounded in the war receives adoration from our proud hearts, is garlanded, and is remembered forever. If anyone dies in battle fighting for their country, her next of kin receives no small sum of money. If anyone brings the body of an enemy to the island, the reward for this is gold, silver, and maintenance for life. So we compete for our individual reputations. If we defeat the enemy or they just run away, a terrible disgrace stays with them for all time; but if they defeat us, they will be in a situation of having defeated women. So, King Alexander, see that the same thing does not happen to you.

When you have reached a decision, write us a reply; you will find our camp on the border.

Alexander read their letter and with a smile wrote them this reply.

26

King Alexander, to the Amazons, greetings:

We have taken control of three-quarters of the world, and we have not stopped setting up monuments of our victories over every nation. A legacy of shame will be left to us if we fail to campaign against you. Now if you want to be killed and want your land to be uninhabited, stay at the border. But if you want to live in your own land rather than to try your luck in battle, cross your river and be seen by us. The men likewise are to remain on the plain. And if you do this, I swear by my father and my mother, Olympias, that I shall not harm you but shall take from you the amount of tribute you wish to give and shall not enter your land. Send whomever

90. I have adopted the Armenian version of this sentence, in the absence of sense from L or A. According to the historian Diodoros (3.53.4), the Amazons lived on an island in a marsh near Ethiopia.

you select on horseback to us; and we shall give each person you send an allowance of a stater of gold per month and maintenance. After a year, these will return, and you must send replacements.

When you have reached a decision, write us a reply.

Farewell.

On receiving and reading Alexander's letter, they held an assembly and after a debate wrote him this reply.

The leading Amazons and the mightiest, to King Alexander, greetings:

We give you permission to come to us and see our country. And we undertake to give you 100 talents of gold a year and have sent you the 500 mightiest of us to meet you, bringing you the money and 100 thoroughbred horses. You will have these women, then, for a year. But if any of them loses their virginity to a foreigner, she shall remain with you; you will inform us in writing how many stay with you; send the others back, and you will receive replacements. We accept allegiance to you, in your presence and in your absence—we have heard of your exceptional qualities and your bravery. We are people who dwell beside the world, but you have come to us as our master.⁹¹ We have decided to write to you, to live in our own land, and to be subject to you as master.

Farewell.

- 27 After this exchange of letters, Alexander wrote his mother, Olympias, this account of his deeds.

King Alexander, to my dearest mother, Olympias, greetings:

After drawing up my army against the Amazons, I marched to the city Prasiake.⁹² On my arrival in the suburbs I saw a river there, full of animals. The soldiers became very despondent. Although it was already midsummer, the rain over the land had not ceased, and many of the infantry had sore feet. There were also enormous claps of thunder and lightning flashes and bolts. As we were about to cross the river Prytanis, as it was called, it happened that many of the local inhabitants were killed by the soldiers.

Then we came to the river Thermodon, as it was called, which

91. This line only makes sense in a fuller recension: "We are nothing in comparison with the whole world you have traversed to make it worth your intervening in our affairs."

92. This is a muddled chapter: the Amazons occur twice over, as does a river full of animals. I have introduced "the city Prasiake" from the Armenian (L has instead the "river Prytanis," but rivers do not have suburbs). Even so, the city Prasiake fits badly with 3.17. The river Prytanis (a few lines later) is presumably a mistake for the river Hyphasis. These problems result from adding an independent (and incompatible) letter to Olympias to the narrative.

flows out into a flat and fertile land inhabited by the Amazons, women of exceptional height, much taller than other women, notable for their attractiveness and strength, wearing bright clothes. They used silver weapons and axes—they did not have iron or bronze. But they were drawn up with intelligence and ingenuity. When we reached the river where the Amazons lived—it is a large river that cannot be crossed and is full of animals—anyway, they crossed and formed up against us; but we persuaded them by our letters to become subject to us.

Taking tribute from them, we withdrew to the Red Sea and to the strait. And from there we came to the river Atlas. There it was impossible to see either earth or heaven, but there were many races of all kinds living there. We saw men with the heads of dogs and men with no heads at all who had their eyes and mouths on their chests; and further men with six hands, with the faces of bulls; troglodytes who lived in caves and wild men with straps for legs; and others again as shaggy as goats and with the faces of lions; and animals of every sort, various in appearance.

28

We sailed off from that river and came to a large island, 120 stades [15 miles] from land. And we found the City of the Sun there. There were twelve towers built of gold and emeralds, and the wall of that city was in the Indian style. In the middle was an altar built of gold and emerald, with sixty steps, and on top of it stood a chariot with horses, and the charioteer was of gold and emeralds, but it was not easy to see him for the mist. The priest of the Sun was an Ethiopian dressed in pure linen. He spoke to us in a barbarian language to the effect that we should leave that place. Leaving there, we walked along the road for seven days. Then we found darkness, and not even fire was to be seen in that region.

Leaving there, we came to the meadow of Nysa, and we came across a very high mountain;⁹³ I went to it and saw fine houses laden with gold and silver. And I saw a large precinct wall of sapphire with 108 steps leading up to a round temple with 100 sapphire columns forming a circle. Inside and out were figures carved in relief as though by demigods: bacchae, satyrs, women initiates playing the flute and dancing ecstatically. And the old man Maron was on a donkey. In the middle of the temple lay a couch with golden legs, made up with cushions, on which there was a man dressed in

93. An emendation of L here gives us Nysa, the mythical birthplace of the god Dionysos, but also a real town encountered by Alexander in Afghanistan, east of Kabul. The mountain is the world mountain of Indian mythology, Mt. Meru. The decorative figures belong to Greek Dionysian religion and art; Maron, a son or grandson of Dionysos, is confused with Silenos, the old reveler-companion of Dionysos who educated Maron.

silken cloth. I did not see what he looked like, as he was covered up, but I did see his strength and the heftiness of his body. And in the middle of the shrine there was hanging a one-hundred-pound golden chain and a golden wreath. Instead of fire, precious stone provided light that illuminated that whole place. A quail cage of gold was suspended from the ceiling, in which there was a bird the size of a dove, and as though with human voice, it cried out to me in Greek, saying, "Alexander, from now on stop matching yourself with the gods: return to your own palace and do not rush head over heels into the ascent to the paths of heaven." I wanted to take it and the chandelier down to send you, but I saw the man on the couch stirring, evidently to rise, and my friends said to me, "Don't, King—it is sacred." Going out into the precinct I saw there two mixing bowls of chased gold with a capacity of sixty firkins—we measured them out at the banquet. I gave orders for the whole camp to be there for a feast. There was a large, well-equipped building there and striking goblets to grace any level of elegance, carved from stone. As we and the troops were taking our places for the feast, suddenly there was a sort of violent thunder of countless flutes, cymbals, Pan-pipes, trumpets, drums, and lyres. And there was smoke all over the mountain, as though we had been hit by a storm of lightning bolts.

We were afraid and left that region, proceeding to Cyrus's palace. We found many cities deserted, including one noteworthy city with a large building where the king used to give audiences. They told me there was a bird there that spoke with human voice. When I went into the building I saw many amazing sights: it was entirely of gold, and in the middle of the ceiling there hung a gold quail cage like the first one, and inside was a golden bird like a dove. They told me it spoke to kings in whatever language was needed. I also saw there a large mixing bowl of chased gold—these things were inside Cyrus's palace—with a capacity of 160 firkins. And it was quite amazing in its decoration: on its rim it had statues, and on the top band a sea battle; its center had a blessing, and its outside was of chased gold. They told me this was from Egypt, from the city of Memphis, and had been brought from there when the Persians took control. The building where the king himself used to give audiences was constructed in the Greek style, and on it was a relief of Xerxes' naval battle. Also in the building was a throne decorated with gold and precious stones and a lyre that played itself. And around the throne was a goblet cabinet sixteen cubits long with eight shelves, and above it stood an eagle overshadowing the whole circle with its wings. And there was a climb-

ing vine of gold with seven branches, and everything was worked in gold. As for the other sights, what point is there in my attempting to tell you so much? They are such that their number prevents me from expressing their outstanding quality.

Farewell.

[Chapter 29 is missing in manuscript L. Other manuscripts include at this point an account of how Alexander encountered "vile peoples" who ate human corpses; to avoid contamination he enclosed them within an area surrounded by high mountains.]

Alexander also wrote another letter to his mother, Olympias, when he was in Babylon the Great and would presently leave the life of men, as follows.⁹⁴ 30

Great they say is the foresight of the divine powers. One of the native women gave birth to a child, the upper part of whose body, as far as the flanks, was all natural and human; but from the thighs downward there were animal heads so as to make the child just like the Scylla—there were the heads of lions and of wild dogs. And the forms moved, and everyone could make them out and recognize what each was, but the child's head was stillborn. Once the woman had given birth to the baby, she put it into the cloth and, having covered it up, arrived at Alexander's palace. She told his announcer, "Inform King Alexander that I have come concerning an amazing matter—I wish to show him something." It was midday, and Alexander was taking a siesta in his bedroom, but when he woke, he was told about the woman and ordered her to be brought in. When she came, the king dismissed all present, and when they had all gone, the woman showed him the monster that had been born, adding that she herself had given birth to it.

Seeing this, Alexander was astounded and immediately gave instructions for expert interpreters and magicians to be brought. When they came, he ordered them to deliver an interpretation of this portent that had been born, threatening them with death if they failed to tell him the truth. Of the Chaldaians, there were five who had the greatest reputation and intelligence, and one of them was much superior to them all in skill, but he, so it happened, was not in the city. Those who were in fact present said that Alexander would be stronger than all others in his wars and would become master over all mankind. The animals, they said, were the mightiest nations, subject to man's body—and this was what they indicated.

After them, the other Chaldaian too came to Alexander and, seeing what the omen was like, screamed out aloud in tears and tore his cloth-

94. There is no further letter to Olympias: what follows is not a letter (first person) but narrative (third person). This mistake occurs also in some other versions.

ing apart from sorrow. Alexander grieved not a little to see him so distressed and told him to have confidence and tell him what he saw in the sign. He made this reply to him, "King, one can no longer count you among the living."

Alexander pressed him for the details of his interpretation of the sign, and he replied: "King, most powerful of all men, you are the human shape; the animal forms are those around you. Now if the upper part was alive and moving like the animals under it, then you would have gone on to rule over all men. But just as it has departed life, so have you, King. And those around you are just like the animals under it: they have no sense and in fact are savage to men, and those around you are disposed in just this way to you." With this the Chaldaian left. As for the baby, the Chaldaian said it should be burned forthwith. After hearing this Alexander put his affairs in order daily.

31 Antipatros rose against Olympias, Alexander's mother, and treated her as he wished.⁹⁵ Alexander's mother wrote to him about Antipatros on many occasions (as Alexander's mother, she was distressed) and wanted to go across to Epirus, but Antipatros prevented her. When Alexander received the letters of his mother, Olympias, and learned from them of the pain she was experiencing, he sent a man called Krateros to Antipatros in Macedonia to be governor of it. Antipatros realized what Alexander's plan was; he knew Krateros was coming and that the soldiers were returning from Alexander to Macedonia and Thessaly on his account. He was frightened and decided to assassinate Alexander, fearing, after his treatment of Olympias, that he might be humilatingly punished. He had, indeed, heard that Alexander had become very haughty as a result of the successes he had achieved. With this in mind, he prepared a poison, which no vessel could contain without immediately breaking—not bronze nor glass nor earthenware. So Antipatros put the poison in a lead casket, and, covering it up with another casket, of iron, he gave it to his son and sent him to Babylon to Iollas, butler of King Alexander,⁹⁶ after having told him about how terrible and lethal the poison was, so that if anything happened to him in the wars at the hands of the enemy, he might take it and end it all.

Arriving in Babylon, Antipatros's son told Iollas, Alexander's butler, secretly about the giving of the poison. Now Iollas had a grudge against

95. Antipatros, the aged former minister of Philip II, was left in charge of Macedonia and Greece while Alexander was in the East. The friction with Olympias is historical, and Krateros was indeed to replace him. In the end (316 B.C.) Antipatros's son Kassandros killed Olympias.

96. Iollas (Iolaos) was actually a son of Antipatros, thus Kassandros's brother. Alexander in fact cannot have been poisoned and probably died of malaria. Medios was a Thesalian aristocrat, a Companion of Alexander's. The plot as presented recalls the unsuccessful Conspiracy of the Pages (327 B.C.).

Alexander: a few days earlier Iollas had made a mistake, and Alexander had beaten him on the head with a staff, injuring him badly. So, as a result, Iollas, in his anger at Alexander, agreed to help Antipatros's son with the crime. Iollas took in with him a man called Medios who had been badly treated like him. And they arranged among themselves how they would give Alexander the poison to drink. Alexander was resting one day after a large dinner, and the next day Medios came to him with an invitation to come to his house. Alexander accepted Medios's invitation and came to dinner with him. Others too dined with King Alexander. The plot to murder him by poison was unknown to Perdikkas, Ptolemy, Olkias, Lysimachos, Eumenios, and Kassandros; but all the others dining with Alexander were implicated in the criminal deed and had made an agreement with Iollas, King Alexander's butler, having sworn oaths to each other; by now they had ambitions on Alexander's powers. When Alexander had reclined with them, Iollas brought him an ordinary goblet of wine. There was a conversation to pass the time, and the drinking had by now been going on for a considerable time when Iollas gave him another goblet containing the poison. Alexander, as chance would have it, took the cup and upon drinking it suddenly screamed as though he had been struck through the liver by an arrow. He waited a short time and endured the pain, but then went to his own house, instructing those present to continue with the dinner.

But they were upset and immediately brought the dinner to a close and waited outside to see what would happen. Alexander, losing control of himself, said, "Roxana, lend me your help a little,"⁹⁷ and supported by her returned to his palace and lay down.

32

At daybreak he ordered Perdikkas and Ptolemy and Lysimachos to come to him and said that no one else should come in with them until he had made his will. Suddenly there was a roar from the Macedonians and a rush upon the courtyard of Alexander's palace to kill his bodyguards if they did not show them the king. Alexander asked about the noise; so Perdikkas came up to him and informed him of what was being said by the Macedonians. Alexander gave instructions for his bed to be raised to a place where the whole army could file past, see him, and go out through another door. Perdikkas carried out King Alexander's instructions, and the Macedonians alone filed in and saw him. And not one of them failed to weep at Alexander, so great a king, lying near to death on his bed. And one of them, a man not undistinguished in appearance, but an ordinary man, came close to Alexander's bed and said: "It was for the good, King Alexander, that your father, Philip, ruled and for the good

97. The unabridged version is more sensational: Roxana intercepts Alexander leaving to drown himself in the Euphrates, and Alexander complains that she is robbing him of glory for little benefit to herself.

that you too have ruled, my king. You are abandoning us; and it would be good for us in our turn to die together with you who have made the city of Macedonia free." Alexander wept and stretched out his right hand in a sign of consolation.⁹⁸

- 33 He ordered his registrar to come in and told him, concerning his wife, Roxana: "If a male child is born to me by my wife, Roxana, let him be king of the Macedonians. But if a female child is born, let them choose whomever they wish as king." And he instructed him to write to his mother as follows.⁹⁹

King Alexander to my dearest mother, greetings:

When you receive this, my last letter, prepare an expensive meal to thank Providence above for having given you such a son. But if you wish to do me honor, go on your own and collect together all men, great and humble, rich and poor, for the meal, saying to them: "See, the meal is prepared! Come and feast! But no one who now or in the past has experienced suffering should come, as I have prepared a meal not of suffering but of joy."

Farewell, Mother.

Olympias did this, but no one came to the meal—neither great nor humble, not rich, not poor, could be discovered without suffering. So immediately his mother recognized his wisdom and realized that Alexander there had departed from the living and had written this to console her, on the grounds that it was nothing strange that had happened to him, but something that had happened and continued to happen to everyone.

When Alexander had said this and much more, a mist formed in the air, and a great star appeared, shooting from heaven to the sea, and together with it an eagle; and the statue in Babylon that they said was of Zeus stirred. The star returned back up to heaven, and the eagle followed it too. And when the star was lost from view in the heavens, immediately Alexander sank into the eternal sleep.

- 14 The Persians fought with the Macedonians to take Alexander's body back with them and to proclaim him as Mithras. The Macedonians on the other hand wanted to take him back to Macedonia. Ptolemy told them, "There is an oracle of Babylonian Zeus; so we will seek an oracle from him telling us where we are to place Alexander's body." And the oracle of Zeus gave them this response.

I shall say what will benefit all. There is in Egypt a city called Memphis. There enthrone him.

98. The procession of soldiers is historical; Alexander by now could not speak.

99. The banquet episode appears only in L of the major manuscripts. A has Alexander's last will and testament, at great length.

After the oracle, there was no further discussion; they assented to Ptolemy's proposal that they should march and convey his embalmed body in a lead coffin to the city of Memphis. Ptolemy put him on a wagon and made the journey from Babylon to Egypt. And the people of Memphis heard of this and came to meet Alexander's body and escorted it into Memphis. But the archprophet of the temple at Memphis said: "Do not settle it here, but at the city he founded in Rhakotis. For wherever this body shall be, that city shall continuously be in turmoil from wars and battles." So immediately Ptolemy took it to Alexandria and erected a tomb in the shrine called The Body of Alexander and rested Alexander's remains there.¹⁰⁰

Alexander lived thirty-two years. His life was as follows. From the age of twenty he was king; and he fought wars for twelve years—and won the wars he fought. He subdued twenty-two barbarian nations and fourteen Greek tribes. He founded twelve cities, namely, Alexandria in Egypt, Alexandria by the Horpes, Alexandria at Issos, Scythian Alexandria, Alexandria on the river Granikos, Alexandria in the Troad, Alexandria at Babylon, Alexandria in Persia, the Alexandria named after the horse Bucephalus, Alexandria named after Poros, Alexandria at the river Tigris, Alexandria by the Massagetai.¹⁰¹ 35

Alexander was born on the new moon of the month of January, at sunrise, and died on the new moon of the month of April, at sunset. And they called the day of his death Neomaga¹⁰² because Alexander died young. Alexander died in the year of the world 5176, at the end of the one hundred and thirteenth Olympiad [325–324 B.C.] (the Olympiad is four years, and the first Olympiad began in the 4th year of the reign of Ahaz.)¹⁰³ From the death of Alexander to the incarnation of the Divine Logos by the Virgin is three hundred and twenty four years.

100. After two years of preparations, Alexander's body was being sent to Macedonia, but Ptolemy diverted it and after displaying it in Memphis took it to Alexandria.

101. Alexander founded many more than twelve cities. The list of names is somewhat garbled, and I have restored sense where I can. Alexandria at Issos = Iskenderun in Turkey; Alexandria Bucephalus = Jalalpur in Pakistan; Alexandria by the Massagetai may be Alexandria Eschate ("remotest") = Leninabad (formerly Khojent) in Turkestan (USSR).

102. Neomaga probably represents some Egyptian word in which Greeks thought their own word *neos* ("young") was present.

103. Ahaz was king of Judah (733–718 B.C.). The first Olympiad was in 776 B.C. Alexander died on 10 June 323 B.C.