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MORAL ESTIMATE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

MR. AUBREY DE VERE opens his preface to *Alexander the Great, a Dramatic Poem*, by informing us that in the last century it was thought philosophical to sneer at 'the Macedonian madman,' and moral to declaim against him as a bandit. The ancients, he says, made no such mistake. He proceeds to panegyrisé Alexander as uniting the highest military genius with a statesmanship instinctive and unerring. His intellect, he tells us, was at once vast and minute. His aim was to consolidate the whole world into a single empire, redeemed from barbarism and irradiated with Greek science and art; an empire such that its citizens, *from the mouths of the Ganges to the pillars of Hercules*, should be qualified to learn from Plato and to take delight in Sophocles. It is not necessary to quote further from Mr. Aubrey de Vere. The above sufficiently shows what a picture he aims to hold up for our admiration, what impressions he desires his drama to leave on the minds of readers. In this article it is not purposed to discuss its poetical merits, which must be left to another pen and time, but to enter into the historical questions whether Alexander the Great was a beneficent or a malignant star to Greece and to mankind, and what sentiments are just concerning him. But it may concisely be said at once that the present writer is intensely opposed to Mr. de Vere's avowed judgment.

No one ever has grudged, and no one will ever grudge, praise to Alexander for military talent; but the talent was not that of a scientific general who plans a campaign, as a Von Moltke or even a Napoleon; it was only that of a quick-eyed Garibaldi or Condé. Generalship of the highest modern type was then impossible, for the plain reason that maps did not exist, and the roads which Alexander traversed were in every instance unknown to him. Not only was he without the means of forming previous plans of operation; he was also destitute of storehouses and stores for feeding his troops, and of gold or silver to purchase food and remunerate their services. The Romans, who methodised war, accounted money to be its sinews (*pecuniam nervos belli*); but all agree that Alexander entered upon war against the opulent Persian monarchy with resources of money and stores of provisions utterly inadequate, so that nothing but instant and continuous success could save him from ruin. But, says Plutarch gaily, though his resources were so small and narrow, he gave away his Macedonian possessions freely to his comrades; houses to one, a field to another, a village to a third, harbour dues to a fourth; and when some one asked, 'O king, what do you leave for yourself?' he replied, '*Hopes!*' This was very spirited, no doubt. In the midst of a martial people, and from a prince barely of age,

it may be thought very amiable; but with Grecian statesmen and philosophers the delusiveness of hope was a frequent topic. Nothing is plainer than that from the beginning Alexander was a gambler playing 'double or quits,' and that causes over which he had no control, and knew he had none, might at any moment have involved him in sudden overthrow. The unexpected death of Memnon as much as anything (says Arrian) ruined Darius's fortunes. No doubt it was just to count on the great superiority of Greek armour, Greek discipline, and Macedonian military tactics; also on the feebleness entailed on Persia by royal luxury and half-independent satraps. The successes of Xenophon and of Agesilaus had long familiarised the Greeks to the belief that a moderate Greek army was superior to a Persian host. Experienced Greek generals did not esteem the invasion of Persia to be a wild expedition; the Congress of Greece,¹ from which only the Spartans were conspicuously absent, deliberately sanctioned it. No one could foresee such a commencement as was the battle of the Granicus; everyone in the retrospect judged Alexander's conduct rash in the extreme. That it succeeded we know, but Mr. de Vere has not said a word to produce conviction that such conduct is that of a wise general.

The Persian satraps had assembled a force, powerful in cavalry, but in infantry very inferior to the Greeks, to prevent his crossing of this river, which, by the uncertainty of the bottom and steepness of the banks, was in itself formidable enough. The day was far gone, and Parmenio urged that the enemy would not dare to pass the night in proximity to Grecian infantry so

superior. (Persian cavalry always dreaded a night attack, and systematically, according to Xenophon, passed the night some twelve miles distant from an enemy.) Hence the Greeks would be able to cross by night without opposition. The young king replied that, after crossing the Hellespont, it was disgraceful to be afraid of the little Granicus; and presently plunged into the stream, bidding his thirteen squadrons of cavalry to follow. The violence and depth of the water, the rugged banks, and the enemy awaiting him, rather incited than appalled Alexander. It seemed, says Plutarch, to be a strategy of despair, not of wisdom, and indeed to be the deed of a maniac. But the young king was certain of one thing—that wherever he led, his Macedonians would follow; and this fact was the impetus to all his military conduct. The Macedonians, from their long spears, had advantage in close combat over the Persians who fought with swords; but darts and arrows from above were severely felt while they were in the river. Struggling up with difficulty through the mud, they could not keep any ranks and lines of battle, and the opposite squadrons became mixed, horse pushing against horse. The signal helmet displayed Alexander to the enemy, and three eminent Persians hurried into personal conflict with him. According to Arrian, Alexander slew the first, received from the second a blow of the sword which cut off the crest of his helmet; nevertheless him too he slew with the Macedonian pike. The third would undoubtedly have killed Alexander had he not himself first been pierced through the body by the Macedonian Cleitus.

Not unlike was the conduct of

¹ It is due to those who have read an article from my pen in *Fraser*, April 1874, to confess that, from trusting my memory, I have erroneously stated, page 474, that Philip was assassinated *before the Congress met*. Since it does not at all affect my argument, I need only regret the blunder.—F. W. N.

the younger Cyrus in the battle of Cunaxa, as narrated by Xenophon; but Cyrus egregiously miscalculated in expecting his mercenary, the Spartan Clearchus, to obey orders. Cyrus impetuously rushed against the Persian king's body-guard, commanding Clearchus to support him. But Clearchus thought this a rash procedure, disobeyed, and allowed Cyrus to be surrounded and killed; thus sacrificing the whole object of the expedition, and exposing all the Greek troops to difficulties so severe that their ultimate escape appeared miraculous. Alexander's troops and Alexander's generals were of different mettle; on that he counted, and was never deceived. Fearless exposure of his own person was his mode of inciting them; but they quite understood the error and the mischief of such conduct. Even after the final overthrow of Darius, if Alexander had been slain in battle no one could measure the calamity which such an event might entail. Nevertheless he retained this habit of acting the part of soldier as well as of general, being many times severely wounded with swords, darts, arrows, and stones, until he narrowly escaped with life in his Indian campaign. Arrian gives the account in great detail. The wall was difficult to ascend. The king thought his soldiers deficient in spirit, seized a ladder, and himself climbed to the top. Alarm for his exposure made so many hurry tumultuously that their weight broke the ladders. Finding himself alone on the top of the wall, he leaped down on the other side, and, in spite of prodigies of valour, received a very dangerous arrow-wound in the breast. The Macedonians poured in after him just in time to save his life, which for days after was accounted doubtful. His friends severely reproached him for an imprudence which might have been the ruin of them all; and (says Arrian) he was greatly vexed, be-

cause he knew that their reproaches were just; but as other men are overcome by other vices, so was he by this impetus to fight. This being his habit, surely no more words are needed to show the character of his generalship. Speed of movement, urgency in pursuit, were his two marked peculiarities; but to these he added a marvellous quickness to perceive at the moment whatever the moment admitted. On this account he will ever be named among the greatest generals of antiquity, although he was never matched against troops at all to compare to his own, nor against any experienced leader.

Without for a moment undervaluing his high military qualities, we must not put out of sight the pre-eminent army which his able father had bequeathed to him. The western world had never before seen such an organisation. A reader of Greek accustomed to Thucydides, Xenophon, and Demosthenes finds it hard to translate the new Greek phrases made necessary in King Philip's army. The elaborateness of modern times seems to come upon us suddenly. We find Guards, Horse Guards, Foot Guards, the King's own Body Guard, the Vanguard, the King's Horse, the Cavalry, Equestrian Tetrarchies, the *Agēma* (which may seem to be the *Gros*, whether of an army or of each brigade), the Horse Darters, the Lancers, the Horse Archers, the Archers, the Forerunners (or Scouts?), besides all the Infantry common in Greece; and an apparatus for sieges, such as the old Assyrians and Egyptians display to us in sculpture and painting. The history of the transmission of this art is curious. We have no reason for supposing that the Persian ever used its higher mechanism, but the Phœnicians carried the knowledge of it to Carthage. The Carthaginians practised it elaborately in some of their Sicilian wars, and from them Dionysius of

Syracuse learned it. Philip II. of Macedon is said to have imported it into Greece from Dionysius; but his temperament was adverse to the use of force where bribery could effect his object. To him is imputed the saying, that he deemed no fortress to be impregnable if an ass laden with gold could climb up to the gate. He must have incorporated with his army sappers and miners, and men furnished with engines and ladders, skilled also in *ex tempore* construction; for in his son's campaigns these agencies come forth whenever they are wanted. It is quite unexplained how in his rapid marches through mountainous countries (as Caubul) he could carry with him huge machines that rained arrows on an enemy from a distance farther than a human arm could send them. The speed with which his engineers make bridges to cross rivers, even the great river Indus, takes one quite by surprise. Long skill and training is here presupposed. Under Alexander's successors the engines of siege attain a magnitude and importance previously unparalleled. Philip disciplined every class of troops to its own work, and from Thrace and Thessaly had men and horses beyond any previous Greek potentate. Greece had been accustomed to admire Spartan discipline; but Spartan troops were nearly all of one kind, heavy infantry. They had scarcely any cavalry, and, with all their solid armour, were unable to stand against arrows, or even against slingers and darters. Before walls or ditches they were helpless. Yet Agesilaus had not found the Persians formidable. He never encountered such clouds of arrows as Mardonius showered on the Spartans at Plataea; hence in general the Greeks feared Greek mercenaries fighting on the side of Persia far more than they feared Persians. Every Macedonian captain knew

so well the superiority of a Macedonian army, that they counted on victory if only they could meet the foe in the field, whether a Philip, a Parmenio, or an Antipater was to be the general. This must be remembered in estimating Alexander's victories.

Plutarch, desirous of exalting Alexander, makes much of his boyish utterances, among which is one of jealousy against his father for too great success. 'Why, boys,' said he, 'my father will leave ME nothing to conquer.' Everything which is told of him by his panegyrists points to the same intense egotism. To be a conqueror greater than his father, and to be a fighter equal to Achilles, and if possible to be celebrated by a poet as noble as Homer, was his ardent and constant aspiration. Alexander himself told Darius plainly what were his motives for persevering in hostility. At least Arrian (who follows the accounts of Ptolemy, son of Lagus, and Aristobulus, one of Alexander's commanders) professes to have before him the actual despatch.² After the battle of Issus, in which Darius's queen and young son and mother and other ladies had been captured, Darius wrote to ask of Alexander that he would restore them, and accept from him *friendship* and *alliance*; for which he offered full pledges, and begged for the same in turn. Alexander had treated the captive ladies with ostentatious honour; therefore a mild reply might have been hoped. Instead of this, from beginning to end the letter breathes reproach and defiance. In conclusion it says: 'Since I have defeated, first thy generals and satraps, and next thee and the forces with thee; since I hold the country, and have now in my army numbers of those who fought on thy side, come to me as to him who is lord of all Asia; then thou shalt

² 'The despatch of Alexander,' says he, 'STANDS THUS: ᾧδε ἔχει.'

receive back thy mother, thy wife and children, and much beside, whatever thou canst persuade me by asking for it. But in future do not send to me as thine equal, but as the lord of all that is thine; else I shall regard thee as injurious.' Such a repulse of friendly overtures, when Alexander had attained far more than any Greek hoped or wished, must surely be censured by every modern. Yet, before any new defeat was encountered, Darius made yet another attempt at peace. As Arrian tells it, while Alexander was engaged in the siege of Tyre, ambassadors came, offering to him ten thousand talents (say, two millions sterling) as ransom for the king's family; Darius was willing to yield to him the country *as far as the Euphrates*; he proposed that Alexander should accept his daughter in marriage, and that they should be friends and allies. The only reply of Alexander was 'that he wanted no money of Darius, for he counted all Darius's money to be his own; he would not accept a part of the country instead of the whole; and if he wished to marry a daughter of Darius, he would take her by force without her father's leave.' The historian who tells this does not seem to be aware how very inhuman was such a reply; no censure escapes him. As far as we can learn, to make Alexander great and glorious, is Alexander's motive according to his own account. Mr. de Vere would persuade us that his aims were philanthropic. The notion is in itself wholly anachronistic.

Ambition, not philanthropy, down to the present time is the motive for conquest. Philanthropy does sometimes lead to annexation; we see an instance in the archipelago of Fiji, which has been accepted reluctantly, not conquered, by the rulers of England. So, we make no doubt, the Incas of Peru benevolently accepted the responsibility of rule over various barbarian and

scattered tribes, whom they presently attached to themselves by benefits. Instances of this kind exist in history, enough barely to show what is possible to human nature; but, alas! they are very rare. Where the philanthropic object is sincere, the sense of duty and responsibility is keen, and there is no coveting of territory and power, no claim that might makes right, no violence is used to establish the claim. To make armed invasion and attack on another country is an avowal that you are not seeking the welfare of the invaded, but some interests or imagined rights of your own or of your ally. Now, it is obvious in Greek literature that up to the time of Aristotle and Alexander no idea of international right existed. In the discourses reported by Xenophon we have no hint that Socrates thought a war of Greeks even against Greeks to need justification; and Aristotle lays down that, by the natural superiority of the Greek mind, barbarians are made for subjection to Greeks; and if they do not submit, they may rightly be forced to submission—in fact, as brute animals. When Aristotle so reasoned and so believed, we cannot expect any Greek prince, or any Greek republic, to have moral scruples against invading any foreigner. If, from a modern point of view, anyone now call Alexander a 'bandit,' as Mr. de Vere complains, it is not on the bare ground that he was an invader; it must mean that he was a peculiarly reckless invader, who, with no motive then generally esteemed adequate, marked his course with blood and devastation. That is a question of detail. But up to that time the world had seen no right of territory or of empire asserted on any other argument than that of simple force. The great Darius, son of Hystaspes, piously records on his monuments the names of the successive nations which *God gave* to his sceptre.

Hebrew princes spoke in the same tone concerning whatever conquests they could make on their narrower scale. None can now wonder or censure if Alexander, after the battle of Issus, says to Darius, 'By my victory *God has given me* countries which were thine.' The Persians had no title but force to the possession of Cilicia and Lydia; force might be repelled by force. From the earliest times the Greeks had swarmed out into colonies planted on the coast of Asia, without asking leave of Asiatic princes; but those princes no sooner became powerful than they endeavoured to recover the possession of their seaboard,³ and the Lydian dynasty at length absorbed into itself these Asiatic Greeks. When the Persians conquered Lydia, they naturally regarded the Greek coast as an integrant part of their domain; but the Greeks, rejoicing in the fall of the Lydian suzerain, hoped for entire independence, and had to be re-subdued. The Athenians imprudently assisted them against Darius, and sent a body of troops which took part in the burning of Sardis, the capital of Lydia. No modern empire would wink at such an outrage; nor could King Darius; yet the Athenians always speak as though his war against them had been unprovoked. Each side knew the outrages it had suffered and forgot those which it had inflicted—a common case. Unless treaties and oaths forbade, war was received as the natural and rightful relation even in Greece itself between city and city.

But when ambition is the real undeniable motive of war, there are yet two kinds of ambition—personal and national. However much we may palliate, excuse, or even praise the latter, all good feeling, all morality, and all common sense unite severely to rebuke the former. No moral reasoner can justify the deeds

of Warren Hastings or of Clive, yet we do not stigmatise the doers as vile men; Cicero may defend Fonteius, yet the reader sees that the defence amounts to this, that the oppressions complained of, if criminal, were violences perpetrated in the interests of Roman conquest, not for Fonteius's own enrichment or aggrandisement. Each nation is strong by patriotism. Patriotism seldom escapes a tinge of national vanity, and generally is deep dyed in absurd national self-esteem. One who sacrifices himself for the exaltation of his own people has in him the vital element of high virtue, even though he may injuriously overlook the rights of other peoples; hence we can honour mere soldiers, faithful servants of a dynasty or of a powerful republic, when they wholly decline all judgment of the right or wrong of a war, and bestow their entire energies and their lives to exalt their nation and dynasty. The more signally the selfish element is suppressed, the higher is the honour due to them; but just in proportion as the selfish element is combined with unjust war, our moral estimate is turned the other way. If the separate commanders are encouraged to love war because it enables them to become rich by plundering the conquered, the war is demoralising to the victors. If the king who decrees the war is aiming at the exaltation not of his own nation and race, but of his own individual person; if he is ready to trample his own people underfoot, and set up the barbarian as equal or superior, as soon as *this*, in turn, conduces to his personal magnificence; and if at the same time he is utterly reckless of human life and suffering on *both* sides, whenever he has a fancy or a whim of glory—it is rather too great a strain on our credulity to hold him up to moral admiration. Now, in

³ Bord = edge, border; a different word from *board*.

the case of Alexander we have to enquire, of which class was his ambition? Was he aiming to exalt himself, or his royal race, or to exalt Macedonia, or to exalt Greece? None of these alternatives contents Mr. de Vere, who says that Alexander was aiming to make Indians and Spaniards learn wisdom of Sophocles and Plato. But we must go into various details in order to get at the truth.

Alexander, in Greek belief, descended from Hercules on his father's side and from Achilles on his mother's. He might naturally be proud of each genealogy. The Macedonians were half-Thracian, and doubtfully Greek; but the Macedonian dynasty claimed to be Heracleid. Philip had satisfied the Olympian umpires of his right, as a genuine Greek, to send chariots and horses to contend for the prize, and was sincerely proud of the honour. Plutarch, a great admirer of Alexander, censures Philip for the pleasure which he took in the rivalry of cultivated Greek conversation, and for engraving on coins his Olympian victories; while the boyish Alexander, on the contrary, said 'he must have kings for his rivals before he would enter any contest.' Such royal airs did he give himself when he was but sixteen, that a jocosely saying became current: 'Alexander is our king, and Philip only our general;' and Philip himself was pleased with it. But the politic Philip committed at last one imprudence; it was great and fatal. He had long been tired of his queen Olympias, as well he might be, for all agree that she was proud, intemperate, and violent. Plutarch believes the story that, as the poets tell of Thracian women, she practised Orphic and Bacchanalian enthusiasm, and was a zealot of 'possessions,' inspiration, or catalepsy, which the moderns do not easily believe to have been managed without drugs or wine. Be the cause what it may,

she was very overbearing and unamiable. Alexander was moulded into pride by his mother, and was in general very much disposed to yield to her; but an utterance of his, after he was supreme in Asia, has been stereotyped: 'My mother really charges me a very high rent for my ten months' lodging [in her womb].' Philip is said already to have had another wife, Eurydice (Arrian, iii. 6), but apparently Olympias still held the chief place as queen, until he became fascinated by a much younger lady, Cleopatra, who was introduced to the Court in a magnificent wedding-feast. Her uncle, Attalus, when much the worse for wine, uttered an imprudent blessing on the marriage. Olympias flamed out with all the wrath of a Medea. Alexander expected to be disowned as successor to the throne and superseded by a new heir. He escaped with his mother into Epirus, and thence took refuge with the Illyrians. This was when he was about seventeen. With a slight turn of events his history might have been that of many Oriental princes—a son contending with his father for the throne. Philip, by kind messages, persuaded him to return; but Alexander was still jealous, and his new jealousy was of his brother Arrhidæus. Pexodorus, satrap of Caria, desired to give his daughter in marriage to Arrhidæus. Alexander, suspecting some treason in this, sent a private messenger to the satrap, dissuading the match, and asking why the young lady was not rather offered in marriage to *him*. Plutarch, who tells this, does not see how unamiable this makes Alexander towards his brother as well as his father. With his cousin Amyntas he had a deadly feud, because Amyntas, his elder, was son of Perdicas, who preceded Philip on the throne, and had ostensibly a higher claim to the succession than Alexander. All danger of collision with Philip himself was

removed by the assassin Pausanias, whom Olympias was believed by the public to have instigated.

The new reign opened with all the symptoms of a Court revolution. Noblemen who had gone into exile returned at once, among whom was Ptolemy, son of Lagus. Amyntas was put to death as a dangerous rival. Cleopatra's infant son suffered the same fate. Attalus, to whom Alexander was implacable for a drunken speech, had been sent forward by Philip with an army into Asia, but was there assassinated by Hecataeus, Alexander's emissary. Cleopatra herself was 'handled cruelly' by Olympias—words of Plutarch, which are generally interpreted to mean that she was put to death with bodily outrage.⁴ But when the violent deeds of princes are secret we must make allowance for credulous exaggerations of detail.

Though Alexander was proud of his descent from Hercules through his father, so quickly was his head turned by too rapid and dazzling success, that he presently disowned his father Philip, and wished to be accounted a son of Jupiter. This was the beginning of disgust to the Macedonians. His comrade and playmate Philotas, whom Philip had employed to reprove him for his foolish and wrongful meddling against the marriage of his brother Arrhidæus, wrote to him honest truth in Egypt, when first Alexander trumped up this monstrous fiction, and warned him of the mischief which he would do to himself by it. That Alexander never forgave him for his plain speaking appears undeniable: for, years after, when Philotas was accused of complicity in a plot against Alexander's life, Alexander, rising in the council of chief Macedonians, bitterly accused Philotas of having been a traitor

from the beginning, and adduced this letter as a proof of his early disaffection. Whether Philotas was, or was not, *at last* in complicity with the plot, it is not probable that the moderns will ever agree. Quintus Curtius condemns him; but the argument which Curtius puts into his mouth appears a complete and sufficient defence, and on this point makes him reply: 'I wrote to the king direct; I did not write to others concerning the king; I feared for him; I did not raise odium against him; my trust in friendship, and the dangerous freedom of giving true advice, have ruined me.' Be the case of Philotas as it may, all the historians agree that Alexander insisted on the title *Son of Jupiter*, for which he had obtained the sanction of the oracle of Hammon by a very dangerous journey through the desert. On one remarkable occasion (Arrian, vii. 8), when the army was able to speak with a combined shout, by which no one should be singled out for vengeance, they cry to him that 'they had best all return to Greece, and leave him to campaign in Asia by help of *his father*'—meaning Jupiter Hammon, says the historian. Plutarch, who certainly does not censure him, says that 'to the Persians he assumed the haughty tone of one who was quite convinced of his divine birth, but to the Greeks he was more moderate and sparing in his assumption of divinity, *except that* to the Athenians he wrote a letter concerning Samos saying: "I, for my part, should not have given to you a free and glorious city [Samos]; but you have received it from him who then was master of it, and *used to be called my father*"—meaning Philip.' But a king who could gratuitously write thus in a public despatch to the Athenians displayed a determination to enforce his pre-

⁴ Plutarch says that Alexander was very angry with his mother for her conduct to Cleopatra. One might interpret his words to mean that Olympias inflicted some bodily outrage that marred her beauty; but I fear that a still more terrible sense is truer.

posterous claim.⁵ And here it is difficult to understand the liberty which Mr. Aubrey de Vere takes with history. He represents Alexander as speaking with contempt and disapproval of the mythical tale of his miraculous origin (p. 7) :

Mark, Hephæstion!

The legend-mongers at their work! 'Twas thus

They forg'd in Macedon that tale pre-post'rous,

Scand'lous alike to me and to my mother,
Touching great Zeus.

Such a tale cannot have been invented before the battle of Issus, and Alexander himself eagerly adopted it (whoever was the inventor) within half a year after the battle. It is evident, therefore, that his head was turned by his sudden and vast success; and the Macedonians saw it.

A second great disgust with them was his disparaging of his father Philip, especially over his wine-cups. The Macedonians were right loyal royalists and justly proud of Philip. He had raised their country from a very feeble to a predominant position. When he came to the throne Macedonia had but half a sea-coast, from the number of independent Greek cities. He had recovered all Macedonia and added Thrace to it, including Byzantium itself; had brought Thessaly and Phocis into his dominion; had defeated the Theban and Athenian forces by land, and made himself at sea equal or superior to Athens; had become master of Molossia and Pæonia, and was at length acknowledged as the genuine Greek prince, who was the only rightful leader of Greece. His army he had so organised as to make it un-

equalled, and by the consent of one and another State he had been allowed to garrison many of the most critical fortresses in Greece. What Macedonian captain could be willing to hear Philip the Great disparaged by his own son? All the old officers of Philip were indignant at it. The habit of the Macedonians, as of the Thracians, was that of much wine-drinking, and the king was expected to dine with his chief captains and ministers. It is a sufficient mark how national customs preponderate over talents and wisdom, that the father and son who in all Greek history are signal and pre-eminent were both gravely damaged by the wine-cup. Mr. de Vere is pleased to allude to it as Alexander's '*supposed* intemperance;' and no doubt Arrian tries to excuse him, as does Plutarch, on the ground that his tarrying over the wine was from love of company, not from sensuality. Of course; so it generally is. The historical form of drunkenness with Greeks, Romans, Persians, Gauls, Germans, and we readily believe also of Macedonians, was different from that of an English artisan who stands up at the bar of a gin-palace to enjoy his solitary glass. But the evidence of mischief from these Macedonian banquets is not to be sneered away. The beginning of ruin to the house of Philip was from the wedding-feast of the new queen Cleopatra; at which her uncle Attalus, when overfilled with wine,⁶ prayed 'that the gods would give to Philip a *legitimate* successor by Cleopatra.' 'Am I then a bastard, you rascal?' cried young Alexander, and flung his cup⁷ at the head of Attalus. Philip rose in

⁵ A curious story is told, that the priest of Hammon tried to give an oracular reply in Greek; and not being deep in the Greek language, thought that παιδιον for a youth ought to be masculine; so, instead of addressing Alexander by ω παιδιον, O youth! or O my son! he said, ω παιδιος; and Alexander, in Greek fashion, instantly 'accepted the omen,' declaring that the priest had addressed him by the title ω παι Διου, O child of Jupiter!

⁶ εν τῷ πτόφ μεθύων.

⁷ 'Scyphis pugnare, Thracum est,' says Horace.

anger, and, sword in hand, tried to step across to his son; but his feet failed him, and he fell on the floor. 'Here is a man,' said the youth, 'who is preparing to cross into Asia, and is upset in passing from one seat to another.' Evidently Alexander, as well as Philip, was already the worse for wine; but that scene, in which he might have been slain by a tipsy father, must surely have impressed him deeply, if he remembered his own scoff. One who was planning to reorganise all Asia, one who knew the frightful mischiefs which a despotic king may inflict on himself as well as on others, when wine overmasters him, is not exempt from our moral criticism. The higher his intellect, the deeper is the censure deserved. But that Alexander was fond of wine, Plutarch regards as a fact, while he apologises for it. Alexander's body, he says, had a delicious fragrance; no doubt from his hot and fiery nature; for heat brings out aromatic smells; and the same heat of body made Alexander addicted to drink and passionate (*καὶ ποτικὸν καὶ θυμοειδῆ*). A history written of a king by another king, or by one of his generals, is not likely to allude to drunken bouts such as the customs of the nation sanctioned, except when special necessity required; yet wine in this Macedonian tale plays a part previously unknown in Greek history. The defence of Alexander rests on his love of conversation; but what was the talk which he most loved? The poison of flattery. Arrian, his defender, throws the fault upon those who extolled him as superior to Hercules and the other mythical heroes, and of course as far and far above his father Philip; but since Alexander never checked them, but manifestly enjoyed their praise, it necessarily became the staple of these feasts. At other times he was too busy to listen to such reptiles; the essential evil of his long sittings; the essential evil of his long sittings was, that there was plenty of time

for him to drink in such adulation, to the ever increasing disgust of Philip's old soldiers. Q. Curtius regards it as a certain fact that Alexander himself was fond of disparaging his father's deeds and exalting his own. The report of it even reached Italy, where his uncle Alexander of Epirus, who met his death in Italian battle, uttered an epigram which was re-echoed in Asia—that in Italy he had had to fight with *men*, but his nephew Alexander in Asia had alighted on *women*. No one can wonder that a king who in his boyhood was already comparing his own future deeds with those of his father, should inwardly boast to himself, after conquering Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt in less than two years, that he had far exceeded the deeds of Philip; and with each new success new vanity and new arrogance entered his heart. *In vino veritas*. After wine had sufficiently lessened his self-restraint, he was liable not merely to listen to praise from others, but to trumpet his own praise. The same wine sometimes affected the self-restraint of his comrades; and he surely must have foreseen each possibility.

Mr. de Vere wishes us to make light of his killing his faithful comrade Cleitus; and since Cleitus could not be brought to life again, and Alexander was shocked at his own deed, of course all the Macedonians tried to comfort the king, and to accuse Cleitus as having provoked his own death. Arrian, a profound royalist, is very severe upon Cleitus; yet the fact comes out that Cleitus's high words were elicited by the disparagement of King Philip, which Cleitus could not endure, whether from Alexander or from Alexander's flatterers. It is seldom indeed that one can attempt to guess the utterances of tipsy men; but if you cut short either the long story of Arrian or the still longer story of Q. Curtius, you get something like this as the result: 'King Philip, my prede-

cessor,' says Alexander, 'was nothing of a general compared to me. In twelve years he did not conquer half of what I conquered in twelve months.' 'Stop!' replies Cleitus; 'remember that he never had the chance of fighting with Persians: he had to deal with stubborn Greeks. Besides, he never committed such a blunder as you did at the Granicus, where you nearly ruined us all, and nothing but this right hand saved your life.' The last words Arrian regards as abominable and inexcusable from a soldier to a king; and so, no doubt, all the flatterers urged: the greater the truth, the worse the offence. But the absurdity is, to expect a man who is half-tipsy to retain prudence and modesty. Alexander, according to his warm admirer Plutarch, was of a 'furious and violent nature' (*παγδαῖον καὶ φερόμενον σφοδρῶς*); and now, being full of wine, of course he was uncontrollable. When reminded that he owed his life to Cleitus, and virtually all his after-successes, he could not bear such an amount of indebtedness; and although all the armed men around, seeing his state, disobeyed his orders, he succeeded in snatching a weapon from one of them, and with it laid Cleitus dead. Might not one have hoped that such a tragedy would for ever have cured him of long drinking? But it did not. Indeed, Arrian, wishing to defend him, represents him as *already*^s somewhat corrupted into Asiatic depravity, implying that he was on the downhill track—not that we know anything so bad of Persian kings.

Another grievous offence to Macedonian feeling was, that he exacted of them prostration on the ground before him in Persian fashion. This was as detestable to Greeks as to Englishmen. It was emphatically the unmaning of free men. Æschylus puts into the mouth

of Agamemnon the sentiment of every Greek:

Nor yet, in fashion of barbaric wight,
Prostrate before me, mouth unmanly
words.

There could not be a more decisive proof that Alexander intended to destroy every vestige of Greek sentiment and Greek freedom, and reduce them all to the level of Oriental slaves. Disaffection was inevitable; his noblest comrades were the most certain to disapprove; the basest took the opportunity of calumniating them, and ingratiated themselves with the king by slander. We cannot know the exact time of this and that detestable whisper, nor whether it be true that Alexander tampered with Philotas's mistress, and bribed her to report month by month whatever words of indignation Philotas might drop. Such is Plutarch's account, who indeed represents Philotas as put to torture, and Alexander behind a curtain listening to every word; and when, overcome by suffering, Philotas uttered piteous entreaties to Hephæstion the torturer, Alexander drew back the curtain and reproached Philotas with unmanliness. Plutarch in general is just and tenderhearted; yet he can tell this horrible story without seeing how odious it makes Alexander. Arrian cuts the tale of Philotas short, but relates on the authority of King Ptolemy that he was killed by the darts of the Macedonians—equivalent to the modern shooting of a soldier. On this comes a second deadly crime, to which Mr. Aubrey de Vere will hardly reconcile us. 'Silly is he,' said the Greek proverb, 'who slays the father and spares the son.' 'Silly shall I be,' argued Alexander, 'if I kill Philotas and leave his father Parmenio alive.' Parmenio had conquered Media for the king, and was there at the head of a large army. Letters are therefore sent,

^s 'For Alexander had already, in the matter of drinking-bouts, made innovation towards more barbaric manners.'

with the utmost speed, to three generals in high command, ordering them to assassinate Parmenio while he is engaged in reading certain despatches, which are sent to put him off his guard. That they were all base enough to obey proves how completely the Macedonian commanders were already enslaved; but the wrath of the common soldiers was extreme, and might have been dangerous. There can be no doubt that Alexander was now hated as much as he was feared.

The accusation against Philotas had risen out of a real conspiracy of the pages when Alexander was in Bactria, of which, it was alleged, Philotas had had knowledge. Philip had established the system of royal pages—youths of the noblest families, who waited on the king, acted as grooms, helped him to mount his horse, and hunted with him. On one occasion, when a dangerous wild boar rushed at the king, the page Hermolaus killed the animal with his dart. The king was enraged at losing his own chance of killing it, and ordered the page to be flogged. Such a reward for such a service was of course unendurable to a noble Macedonian youth, who at once vowed revenge. Whether he would actually have taken the king's life we cannot now ascertain. Other pages shared the indignation of Hermolaus. The evidence against them, according to Aristobulus, was swollen by Alexander's belief in the supernatural powers of a Syrian woman who was subject to 'possessions,' and was allowed access to the king day and night, to warn him of danger. She was believed to have saved his life from Hermolaus. One thing only is here clear—that he knew himself to be hated, and through his suspicions degraded himself to precautions at once pernicious and odious. One of the alleged conspirators, Dimnus, slew himself when he found what reports and beliefs were accepted; the rest

were stoned to death, guilty or guiltless. For us it suffices to know that Alexander was definitely engaged in the task of trampling out the Greek sentiment of freedom from his own people. This is very unlike the task to which Mr. de Vere thinks he set himself, of redeeming the world from barbarism, and irradiating it with Greek science and art, with the wisdom of Plato and Sophocles.

Callisthenes the philosopher had been the tutor of Hermolaus and a great favourite with him. The flatterers knew that Alexander dreaded his honesty and his courage, and they laid a plot to force him to deliver his opinion on the question of prostration before the king by questions over the wine. Arrian, who calls him clownish or rude (*ἄγροικος*), gives his speech at great length; but no rudeness is apparent in it to us. He says that he honours Alexander as the first of men, but different honours are due to men and to gods; that prostration is fit honour to gods only; that Alexander would not approve of a low multitude voting a common man into the royal throne, nor can the gods be pleased with men voting a man into divine honours; that Darius, honoured by prostrations, was defeated by Alexander, to whom no prostrations had been used. Indeed, the great Cyrus, who first received such honour, had been chastised by the Massagetans, and the great Darius by other Scythians, as Xerxes and the later kings by Greeks. This discourse, says Arrian, violently displeased Alexander, but was acceptable to the Macedonians. Callisthenes afterwards distinctly refused to prostrate himself. He now was accused of having incited the pages to their conspiracy. That the mode of his death was uncertain, Arrian regards as remarkable; for Aristobulus says he was put in fetters and carried about wherever the army went, until he died of disease;

Ptolemy says he was first tortured on the rack and then hanged. Every honourable Greek philosopher had now full warning to keep his distance from Alexander. To Aristotle the king had already sent from Asia a characteristic complaint, when the philosopher published some lectures. Plutarch professes to give the very words of the letter. 'Alexander sends greeting to Aristotle. You do wrong in publishing your lectures. For wherein shall we excel other men, if you impart to them the instruction which you gave to us? But I, for my part, would rather excel men in the noblest experiences [science] than in military forces. Farewell.' This is not in the tone of one who desires all foreign peoples to imbibe Greek science and philosophy, as Mr. de Vere fancies.

The pride and violence of Alexander, his vices and his crimes, one by one, Arrian seems able to defend or excuse; but when all culminates in his assumption and enforcement of the Persian dress, the historian's eyes seem at last to be opened. 'I do not praise,' says he, 'his excessive punishment of Bessus' (whom he first scourged and exhibited naked in a cage, afterwards cut off his nose and ears, and sent him to be put to death by his own countrymen), 'and I confess that Alexander was enticed to imitate Persian luxury and barbaric ceremonialism; nor can I praise that he, being a Heracleid, wore Median vesture instead of his native Macedonian, and assumed the Persian tiara instead of his own victorious garb. But if the mighty deeds of Alexander can teach us anything they teach this, that no accumulation of outward magnificence conduces to any man's welfare, if he cannot retain sobriety of mind (*σωφροσύνη*).' Let this be a set-off to Mr. de Vere's other quotation from Arrian, which he says 'is doubtless right'—that Alexander assumed the Persian dress that he might appear not

altogether to despise the barbarians. The matter is indeed quite plain. He himself took three noble Persian ladies as his wives, one of them a daughter of Darius—a frank adopting of the Oriental seraglio, the curse of princes and nations. He induced eighty of his high officers similarly to take Persian wives. The marriages were all conducted with Persian ceremonies, and to all of them the king gave liberal dowries. More than 10,000 Greek soldiers followed the example of marrying native women. The king had the names of them all registered, and sent marriage gifts to every one. Nothing is clearer than that he desired to shift his centre of support. Instead of depending on Greeks, who were sure to abhor and resist his striving after Oriental despotism, he aimed simply to step into the shoes of Darius, and let the Persians feel that their *institutions* remained unchanged; they had only changed one *king* for another. To Macedonians, and to all Greeks who had a particle of free spirit, such conduct appeared treason to Greece, who had freely chosen him as leader, treason also to freedom. As Callisthenes said to his face, the progenitors of the Macedonian dynasty came from Argos to Macedonia; there, not by force, but by law, they were accepted as rulers, and received honour as men, not as gods. Surely the idea that Alexander was bent on imparting the blessings of Greek civilisation to all Asia is, in the face of the facts, only a wild fiction.

And here the thought presents itself, What is the erudition of Mr. Aubrey de Vere? Has he enough knowledge of Greek to read Arrian or Plutarch for himself? A matter in itself slight moves strong disbelief. Nine times in his drama he pronounces the name *Κρατερός* *Cratērus*. It would appear that he cannot ever have seen the name in Greek letters, common as it is, or

he could not make such a blunder. There is no ambiguity about it. Thus:

- p. 27. Or keen-edg'd, like Cratērus. This I grant him—
 p. 74. But sacrilege. I scorn your words, Cratērus.
 p. 79. Which by Cratērus, Ptolemy, Hephæstion—
 p. 90. Forth, sirs, and meet them. Let Cratērus bide—

He is uniformly consistent with himself in the error. So too he pronounces Heraclides (p. 212) with short penultima, evidently unaware that it is Ἡρακλειδης in the Greek. The *Nisæan* horses (ἵπποι Νισαῖοι) he converts into *Nysæan* (p. 164), misled by *Nύσα*, *Nysa*, the supposed Bacchanalian centre. In p. 96 he makes the Macedonians talk familiarly of the philosophy of Epicurus, whom our books represent as 'flourishing' half a century later. At that day Epicurus surely cannot have been known. On the whole, Mr. de Vere does not, *primâ facie*, command any deference to his opinions; else one might be curious to know, whence he gets his information that Alexander planned the conquest of Italy and Spain. 'The empire which Alexander had resolved to create was that of the whole world. *Had he lived, he must have created it . . . had ten years more been accorded. But it was not to be. Alexander was not to tread the banks of the Tiber. . . . He had aspired to give to one small spot on earth's surface, Greece, a power extending over the earth. . . .* Will he, perhaps, appeal to the wild speech in which he strives to persuade his soldiers to march to the mouths of the Ganges, assuring them that the sea of Bengal joins the Caspian Sea, and that he will carry his army from the Ganges round Africa to the pillars of Hercules, 'and so all Africa becomes ours'? How can a modern who knows anything of geography fail to see that if he was serious, he was a fool,

rather than a statesman with unerring judgment?

The schemes of Alexander were wild enough, and it is not requisite to attribute to him what is wilder still. All his generals—and one may add, all his soldiers—knew that his dream of holding India to the mouths of the Ganges was morally and physically impossible. To imagine that the native Indians would submit voluntarily and become loyal to his sceptre, was simply ridiculous. Greek heroism and discipline must make the conquest; but the entire military population of Greece was insufficient to garrison and maintain even the Persian empire, say nothing of India proper. Alexander showed admirable military judgment in choosing sites for Greek colonies, but he could not people them without unpeopling Greece. The vast drain of young men and mature men to fill his armies quickly made the native population decay, and the Macedonian army there under Antipater crushed all that remained of liberty. Mr. de Vere whimsically says that Alexander was aiming 'to give to Greece (!) a power extending over the whole earth,' at the very time when he was actually trampling Greece itself, as well as Greek institutions and sentiments, under foot, training Persian levies to control what he regarded as Greek insolence, and putting forward native Persians, who willingly submitted to prostration and all Oriental servility, into high posts expressly as a curb on the Macedonians. It may even seem that from the day that Alexander set foot on Asia he abandoned all thought of returning to Greece. This explains his lavish giving away of Macedonian revenues. Like Achilles, that type of pride and royal egotism, he meant to conquer or die; at best Macedonia was nothing to him but a distant recruiting-ground. When Parmenio or any other general dropped the suggestion, 'Is it not time to think

of home?' he at once treated it as disaffection. The desire of soldiers to return to their native lands and friends, was with him base and stupid ingratitude. On two occasions Arrian gives a very full account of his resentment, but condensation is here desirable. After Alexander's victories over the Indian king Porus the army showed extreme reluctance to march farther eastward, and the dissatisfaction was too great and general to be dissembled. He tried to persuade them to march to the mouths of the Ganges, and his speech shows us on what motives he relies. 'He makes them rich by plunder; he shares toil and danger with them; no nation has yet withstood them, and none will be able. *He will make them satraps* over new and new lands. He gives them even now *good pay*. After they have overrun all Asia *he will load them with riches*, and either will let them go home, or will lead them home, or will make those envied who prefer to stay with him in Asia. Such were the base arguments by which from the beginning he had trained his soldiers to thrive on the misery of the conquered peoples. But the army felt the toils, the wounds, the numbers who had perished, the little chance of carrying home a robust frame: in short, they were home-sick; and, to his extreme disgust, he was forced to listen to an honest speech from his old officer Cœnus, who, after long silence, expounded to him the views and feelings of the army. Mr. Aubrey de Vere seems to think that the soldiers were fools and narrow-minded, and that, even years later, an inscrutable Providence, cutting short Alexander's life, alone hindered the accomplishment of conquests far more difficult than any which he had achieved. If he

had economised his own strength and that of his Greek troops, he might doubtless have reigned over all Darius's empire and over Greece in addition, but certainly not while he lavished Greek life recklessly.

Mr. de Vere is indignant that Alexander should be spoken of as the Macedonian 'madman,' and evidently does not understand what is the justification of that epithet. It is because he was not satisfied with encountering inevitable dangers and losses, but gratuitously espoused and invented needless dangers and new losses. The battle of the Granicus was the first manifestation of this folly. His war against Tyre was a signal and needless cruelty, which might have been fatal to him. The Tyrians, having no aid from Darius, sent ambassadors to say they would perform all his commands, except that they must receive neither a Persian nor a Macedonian force *within their city*—an island. If he had accepted this compromise, their fleet and their resources would at once have been at his disposal; and as soon as the fortunes of Darius were manifestly irretrievable, the very small reserve of respect for Persian rule⁹ was certain to vanish. But Alexander's pride was inflamed that any exception or reserve, however temporary, should oppose his absolute will. He sent away the ambassadors in anger, and commenced a war which proved extremely difficult. In it he received and inflicted cruel wounds, wasting time and enormous effort. At the end he won a ruined city, having spoiled its site for ever by his works; and after all the slaughter in the siege, and frightful carnage in the final storming, he had the miserable satisfaction of selling into slavery thirty thousand Tyrians and foreigners who were in the city.

⁹ The case is not fully explained. Perhaps the Persian kings had so far honoured and gratified the Tyrians as to stipulate that no Persian force should enter their city. A highly reasonable request.

No other Greek general would have committed such an error, if we may not call it crime. Again and again we find him undertake dangerous and difficult enterprises, wasteful of Greek life, not because they are needful, but barely because of the difficulty.

In Sogdiana there was a natural rock, supposed to be impregnable; among the Paraitakæ a second rock; among the Bazeri (modern Caubul?) a third, which it was said Hercules had failed to take. He must waste blood and time to capture them all. The mention of Hercules instantly inflamed his passion to outdo the mythical hero. When he came to the Iaxartes (the Sir Deria), the river which separated the Massagetan Scythians from the Persian empire, he of course found Scythian cavalry watching him. They shoot arrows into the stream to show him that he must not cross. It is an unendurable insult, he says: he must chastise them. He crosses the river, undergoes hard fighting, takes credit for victory, but presently has to come back again, half poisoned by drinking foul water, with no reward but needless bloodshed. Naturally, when he turns his back, they come over to help his enemy. But nothing so much deserves to be called a wicked destruction of his soldiers as his march through Gedrosia, the modern Beloochistân. After the toils, wounds, and losses encountered to conquer in India territories which could not be kept permanently, he built a fleet of transports and sailed down to the mouths of the Indus. There he heard that no army had ever passed safe through Gedrosia; that Queen Semiramis had attempted it, and brought through only *twenty* men, and the great Cyrus had come through with *seven* only. This immediately determined him to do (says Nearchus, his ad-

miral) what to them had been impossible. (The tales were, no doubt, mythical; but Alexander had an open ear to every lying legend, equally as to soothsayers and cataleptic women.) All the sufferings elsewhere endured by the army were as nothing compared to this. Heat, want of water and of fodder, presently reduced them to the utmost distress. They could not feed or water their cattle; they killed them for food. Alexander knew it, and did not dare to forbid it. The waggons had to be abandoned. They dug into the sand for partial supplies of water. A miserable stream and timely rain saved a part of the army. Many are said to have perished by excess of drinking after long thirst and heat, probably also after long fatigue and fasting. Alexander in the worst suffering displayed great¹⁰ magnanimity, and, like the Hebrew king David, when water was brought to him that did not suffice for many, poured it out on the ground. The guides professed to have quite lost the tracks, and a miserable time had still to be endured. That he got through safe with any considerable part of his men, seemed to be a miracle; and meanwhile several satraps took great liberties, not expecting that he would ever reappear. It cannot be pretended that such a king either economised his resources or acted as one who understood the difficulties of his own task. It is vain to talk of his statesmanship, when his military impetus and habit of sacrificing everything for the victory of the moment uniformly carried him away.

His cruelties to the unfortunate and innocent Asiatics would not deserve censure from a Greek point of view, if they had proceeded from any long-sighted policy. Philip also was cruel to the Phocians where it served his ambition. No

¹⁰ Plutarch tells a story not unlike this on a different occasion.

one greatly blamed Alexander for his severity to Thebes; though all shuddered. He sold all the Thebans who survived his attack, men, women, and children, into slavery, divided their country among his allies, and razed the walls to the ground. This was intended to strike terror into every Greek city, and teach to all the danger of his enmity. Beyond a doubt it was politic, but not the act of one who desired to exalt Greece. It was in his uniform style of pure egotism. But his cruelties to the unhappy Asiatics who for the first time heard his name are repeated to satiety. He comes suddenly into Bactria, where is only one strong place, Cyropolis. He captures *five cities in two days*, and massacres as many of the people as he can. He places cavalry round one city to intercept fugitives who might report his presence to the next, lest the people run away into the woods and mountains and be harder to catch. Nevertheless the smoke of the burning city gave warning. Tidings also of the disaster came, and the population took flight; but they were mercilessly slaughtered—unarmed and without discrimination. In storming these hapless and utterly weak places Alexander gave strict orders to kill every man, and make slaves of the women and children. (What the army could possibly do with so many slaves, and how they could be fed, here as elsewhere is unexplained.) When Alexander was wounded, as often happened, the Macedonians were made doubly ferocious. Nothing so bloody is ever imputed by the Greeks to Xerxes. Our historians would never have been silent had he committed such atrocities as they tell of Alexander.

And this may remind us of the burning of the palace in Persepolis. Alexander himself was afterwards ashamed of it, and so, apparently, was King Ptolemy, who represents it as an act of mistaken policy. Forsooth, Xerxes burnt Athens, and Alexander wished to avenge the outrage! Had, then, the countless multitudes¹¹ relentlessly slaughtered in pursuit, after his great victories, been insufficient revenge for ancient deeds? And did Alexander forget that Persepolis was now his own city, and that he was burning his own palace? Arrian elsewhere, in courtier fashion, says that Ptolemy, being a king, was likely to tell the truth; but he forgets that it must have been very painful to him to tell facts disagreeable to his royal patron and friend, on whose favour and successes his own fortune had been built up. Plutarch gives another account, which Mr. de Vere believes, that the palace was burnt under the initiative of the Attic courtesan Thais in the midst of drunken festivity; that she was the mistress of Ptolemy; that Alexander was not master of himself when, with garland on his head and lamp in hand, he assisted and aided in the conflagration; finally, that the Macedonians eagerly assisted, because they thought it a certain proof that Alexander did not mean to keep Persia and live among barbarians. This is the more probable account, but it was morally impossible for King Ptolemy to publish it.

One cannot read the details of battle, and fire, and ravage of peaceable homes, without seeing the vast amount of suffering, of starvation, and of ruined prosperity entailed by this ruthless conquest over a vast area of country. If it

¹¹ In all mere estimates of force we may justly suspect immense exaggeration. Arrian says that, after the last great battle with Darius, as many as 300,000 corpses of barbarians were gathered, and a far greater number of persons were captured. One may suspect that he wrote Δ, and that it has been corrupted to Α. This would reduce the number to 40,000, and agree with Q. Curtius.

had been followed by a total overthrow of old corrupting despotism, and the introduction of nobler institutions, we might say it was a dreadful price paid for a great good; but when Alexander carefully preserved all the worst Persian institutions, who will show us any good at all from it? So successfully did he act the part of a mere Asiatic, born in a seraglio, that Persian tradition, and the celebrated Persian epic, represent him as a younger Persian prince who dethroned his own brother, and so succeeded to the throne. If we ask, Wherein did he improve Persia? we get from some the reply, 'He diffused a knowledge of the Greek language.' Yet the Greek language and Greek literature could not save Greece itself from decay, nor from worse and worse corruption, under the despotism which he imposed and bequeathed. He exposed his own life recklessly, month by month, yet never took a single precaution for the benefit of the empire in case of his death. This is in perfect harmony with the essential egotism of his character. He believed himself the most generous of mankind, because he gave away the fruit of other men's labour to his soldiers; and he frequently boasted that he retained nothing for himself, when he was claiming supreme power over all their property, their lives, and their honour. At the last, when they saw he was dying, they implored him to name his successor; but to the question, 'To whom do you leave the empire?' he would give no other answer than, 'To the strongest man among you.' Hereby he entailed on Asia the new misery of twenty years' civil war among his generals.

The mischief to Greece in each new generation was worse and worse. Freedom was almost everywhere crushed. All the young men had to unlearn patriotism, and accept the creed that to become

mercenary soldiers in Asia, or suffer conscription under a tyrant, was a life good enough for a Greek. That genius in Greece perished with Demosthenes is so often remarked, that it is difficult to understand how any scholars blind themselves to the evidence that Alexander was the assassin both of liberty and of genius. Of course the evil results from the overthrow of law and of all semblance of right could not appear at once. The vast system of standing armies undermined in Greece industrial pursuits, cultivation of the soil, and family life. The same result, depopulation, followed in Italy from the demand of men for the Roman legions; and we cannot be wrong in tracing to the same cause the marked and steady decay of population in Greece. As to Asia, we have no documents to base assertion upon, but nothing visible denotes that under Macedonian or Parthian despots things were better than under Persian. While princes are born in a seraglio, and practise polygamy from an early age, no royal dynasty is long equal to common men in body or mind. To join personal despotism to polygamy is fatal to all enduring good government; yet this is exactly what Alexander did. Of durable prosperity he laid no foundations. Military posts in abundance he planned and fortified; docks for ship-building he established on the rivers of the Panjâb; but how could he hope to obtain allegiance from the people? He depended on mere force. When his back was turned they revolted. He might well say, as Napoleon I. said, 'Ah! I cannot be everywhere.' When an Indian king—Musicanus—revolted, Alexander in revenge razed to the ground the walls of the cities which he had placed under Musicanus, and reduced the people into slavery (what he did with them as slaves is never explained, and this makes one hope there is exaggeration), and where he had himself placed

garrisons he dismantled and destroyed the citadels; an impotent mode of securing future submission. Musicanus, having been caught by the Macedonian Peithon, was sent back by Alexander to be hanged among his own people. It must surely be evident that Alexander could not always be an Achilles, and that the Panjâb was certain to be lost to him the moment that it ceased to fear an overwhelming military force. The description of the army with which he conquered it, takes one quite by surprise, though in his letter to Darius after the battle of Issus he boasts that many who in that battle were in the king's ranks now fight in his. But in India the Greeks in Alexander's army were so outnumbered by Asiatics that, if the king had died of the arrow-shot in his lungs, they feared to be massacred by their own auxiliaries. Were these to garrison all India for the king?

We cannot wonder at the entire absence of prudence in a young man spoiled from childhood, intoxicated with military success, and bent on egotistical glory; but to extol such conduct as 'instinctive and unerring statesmanship' is very delusive doctrine. 'If I were Alexander I would accept Darius's offers,' said Parmenio. 'So would I, if I were Parmenio,' replied Alexander, insolently and foolishly; yet it is lauded as a right royal sentiment. Parmenio thought it better to accept treasure freely granted by Darius, and use resources accumulated in the past, than to seize supplies by wasteful and odious

rapine; better to accept three solid countries with the whole sea-coast fronting Greece, and take time to consolidate the conquests and press lightly on the conquered, than to push farther at once and risk their communications with home; better to establish peace with Darius, even if it could not last very long, and secure their home predominance, than to make the quarrel with Darius implacable and give hope to all the Grecian enemies of Macedonia. If Antipater had been defeated in Greece, Alexander might have been ruined by it in Asia; the loss of a single battle by Alexander himself against Darius might have been fatal. Parmenio, it seems, is a stupid pedant in Mr. de Vere's estimate. If his advice had been taken—if the Greek dominion had never gone beyond the Euphrates—we cannot be sure that the history of mankind would have been happier, simply because vast contingencies always elude certain knowledge. But, without rashness, we may say,—acquaintance with the masterpieces of Greek literary genius would even then have been diffused in the East among minds capable of appreciating them. Whether Parthians or Babylonians ever got much benefit from such literature, it is truly hard to ascertain; but high literary eminence does not need WAR to extend the sphere of its admiration. If anyone lay stress on *such* a result of Macedonian conquest, he confesses that it was very barren of good in Asia; that it was deadly to Greece is no theory, but manifest fact.

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