

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE FOUNDING OF ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE 336-323 B.C.

**315. Alexander's Early Character and Policy.** — At the time of his accession (336 B.C.) Alexander was a ruddy-cheeked youth of twenty years with eyes and face full of animation and with the form of an Olympic runner. There was in him the same eagerness for knowledge as for exercise; and among his tutors was Aristotle, the most learned of all the Greeks. Alexander was passionately fond of the *Iliad*, as he found in the hero Achilles his own ideal and image. The young king was an impetuous yet manly spirit, sincere in an age of deceit, incessantly active 'in the midst of a generation of drones.

When he came to his inheritance, he found the great work of his father rapidly crumbling, — the Macedonians disaffected, barbarous tribes threatening invasion, and Greece rebellious. The wise men of Macedon urged him to proceed cautiously in meeting the difficulties which beset him; but Alexander with a few masterful strokes reduced his subjects and his troublesome enemies to order.

**316. The Invasion of Asia; Battle on the Granicus (334 B.C.).** — In the spring of 334 B.C. Alexander crossed the Hellespont with forty thousand troops, and began his invasion of the Persian empire. He aspired to draw the hearts of his people to himself as the hero who would punish the Persians for desolating



ALEXANDER  
(Capitoline Museum, Rome)

his country and burning its temples. The enemy first offered resistance on the Gra-ni'cus River near Troy; without hesitation Alexander crossed the stream under a storm of darts, and carried the enemy's position by a bold dash. Half of the force which opposed him there consisted of Greeks who were serving the Asiatic king for pay. Soon afterward he learned, too, that the warships of Hellas would coöperate with the enemy. This fact determined him to follow the coast from Ephesus to the mouths of the Nile and to seize all the harbors on the way, that hostile fleets might find no landing-place in his rear. On the march he had to storm fortresses, garrison towns, and keep open his communications with Macedon. As the Greek cities of Asia Minor fell one by one into his power, he gave them democratic governments, but denied them the privilege of banishing oligarchs. Hellas had never before seen a policy at once so vigorous and so humane.

**317. The Battle of Issus (333 B.C.); Alexander and the Greeks.** — At Is'sus in Cilicia he met Darius in command of a vast host, yet posted in a narrow valley where numbers did not count. By a skilful attack he routed the unwieldy mass, and sent the royal coward into headlong flight. Alexander always exposed himself recklessly in battle, and on this occasion was wounded by a sword-thrust in the thigh. A great quantity of booty, and even the mother, wife, and children of the king, fell into his hands. These persons he treated kindly, but refused to negotiate with Darius for peace.

Soon after this battle he took captive some ambassadors who had come up from Greece to form with Darius a common plan of resistance to the Macedonians. Instead of punishing the envoys for what he might have regarded as treason, he found excuses for them and let them go. For a time Alexander tried to win the Greeks by similar acts of kindness; afterward he alienated them by his own unreasonableness.

**318. The Siege of Tyre (332 B.C.); Founding of Alexandria.** — From Issus Alexander proceeded to Tyre. The capture of this city by siege and storm was the most brilliant of all his military exploits. Tyre stood on an island; and as he had no fleet, he could only reach the city by building a mole to connect it with the main-



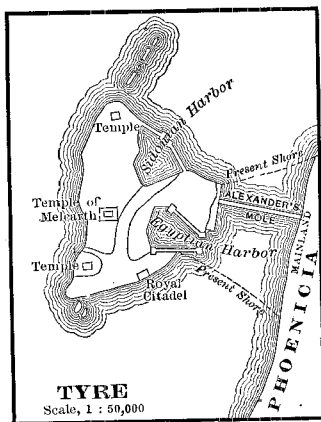
land. His plan was to lead his army along the mole to an attack on the city. Though harassed by the enemy's fireships and by sorties from the harbors, he at last succeeded in finishing the work. Meanwhile he had collected a fleet of Greek and Phoenician vessels, so that he was able to make the attack by sea as well as by land. Many thousand Tyrians were slain in the storming of their city, and thousands of captives were sold into slavery. The great emporium of the East was left a heap of ruins.

Darius could no longer look for help from the Phoenician navy, or from the Greeks. He now offered still more favorable terms of peace, — Alexander should have all the country west of the Euphrates, and should become the son-in-law and ally of the king. Alexander replied that he would not content himself with the half, since the whole was already his, and that if he chose to marry his adversary's daughter, he would do so without asking the father's consent. Darius then began fresh preparations for war, and

Alexander marched on to Egypt, which yielded without resistance. Near one of the mouths of the Nile he founded Alexandria to take the place of Tyre, and with its trade-routes to bind fast his new dominions to the throne of his fathers. It grew to be the greatest commercial city of the eastern Mediterranean.

Before departing from Egypt Alexander paid a visit to the oracle of the god Ammon in an oasis of the Libyan desert, and received assurance from the deity who sat in this vast solitude that he, the conqueror of nations, was in reality a son of Zeus.

**319. The Battle of Arbela (331 B.C.).** — From the Nile country Alexander led his army into the heart of the Persian empire. Some sixty miles from Ar-be'la, north of Babylon, he again met the enemy. On this occasion Darius had chosen a favorable position, a broad plain in which his enormous force found ample room for movement.



The two armies halted in view of each other. While Alexander's troops slept the night through, Darius, keeping his men under arms, reviewed them by torchlight. The Macedonian general Parmenion, beholding all the plain aglow with the lights and fires of the Asiatics, and hearing the uncertain and confused sound of voices from their camp like the distant roar of the vast ocean, was amazed at the multitude of the foe, and hastening to the tent of Alexander, besought him to make a night attack that darkness might hide them from the enemy. "I will not steal a victory!" the young king replied. He knew Darius would lose all hope of resistance only when conquered by force of arms in a straightforward battle. It was a fierce struggle which took place on the following day; but the steady advance of the phalanx and the furious charge of the Macedonian cavalry under the lead of their king won the day over the unorganized, spiritless mass of Orientals. The long struggle between two continents, which began with the earliest Persian attacks on Greece, was decided in favor of Europe by the intelligent and robust manliness of the Westerners.

**320. Other Conquests (331-323 B.C.).**—Darius fled northward, and was murdered by an attendant on the way. Alexander as his successor was master of the empire. Babylon surrendered without resistance. This city he wished to make the capital of his world empire. From Babylon he pushed on to Susa, the summer residence of the Persian kings. Here an immense treasure of silver and gold—estimated at fifty thousand talents—fell into his hands. Thence he fought his difficult way, against mountaineers and imperial troops, to Persepolis, the capital of Persia proper. In this city he found a much greater treasure of the precious metals—a hundred and twenty thousand talents. For ages the Persian kings had been hoarding this wealth, which the conqueror was now to put into circulation. One night, while he and his friends were carousing there, the idea occurred to them to burn the beautiful palace of the kings in revenge for the destruction of the Athenian temples by Xerxes. The deed was hardly done before Alexander repented his folly.

A few campaigns were still needed to pacify the great country. The victorious marches which he next made into the remote north-

erly provinces of Bac'tri-a and Sog-di-a'na and to distant India are interesting both as brilliant military achievements and as explorations of regions hitherto unknown to the Greeks. His return from India through the Ge-dro'si-an desert was a marvellous feat of endurance. Three-fourths of the army perished on the way; but Alexander was now lord of Asia, and to such a despot human life is cheap. His admiral Ne-ar'chus, who at the same time was voyaging from the mouth of the Indus to the Persian Gulf, opened to the Greeks the water-route to India. It required five months for him to make the voyage. Though under favorable conditions it could be accomplished in less time, the distance and the hardships of the route were a hindrance to its extensive use throughout ancient times.

**321. Organization of the Empire.** — Immediately after his return to Babylon, Alexander began to settle the affairs of his empire, which reached from the western limit of Greece to the Hyph'a-sis River in India, and from the Jax-ar'tes River to Nubia — the greatest extent of country yet united under one government. He left the taxes and the satrapies nearly as they were, but brought the officials under better control. The satrap had been a despot after the pattern of the king whom he served, uniting in himself all military, financial, and judicial authority; but Alexander in organizing a province assigned each of these functions to a distinct officer, so that the work of government could be done better than before, and there was less opportunity for the abuse of power. He appointed to the offices Persians as well as Macedonians and Greeks. An important element of his organization was the colonies which he planted in all parts of the empire. The nucleus of the colony was Greek and Macedonian — usually his worn-out veterans. With them were associated many natives. They were organized in the Greek form, and were self-governing and free from tribute. Their object was (1) to secure the empire by means of garrisons, (2) to promote trade and industry, (3) to fuse Hellenic with Asiatic civilization. The opportunity for colonization was one which the Greeks had long been wanting, and in which, therefore, they took an eager part.

While engaged in this work, Alexander busied himself with recruit-

ing and improving his army and with building a great fleet; for he was planning the conquest of Arabia, Africa, and Western Europe.

**322. His Death** (323 B.C.); **his Place in History**. — When ready to set out on his expedition to the West, he suddenly fell sick of a fever, caused probably by excessive drinking. As he grew rapidly worse, the soldiers forced their way in to see their beloved commander once more, and the whole army passed in single file by his bed. He was no longer able to speak, but his eyes and up-lifted hand expressed his silent farewell.

His character appears clearly even in the brief narrative given above. His genius and energy in war, in organization, and in planting colonies were marvellous. His mind expanded rapidly with the progress of his conquests. First king of Macedon, next captain-general of Hellas, then emperor of Persia, he aspired finally to be lord of the whole earth. His object was not to Hellenize the world, but to blend the continents in one nation and one civilization. But the dizzy height of power to which he had climbed disturbed his mental poise; in an outburst of passion he murdered his dearest friend; his lust for worship grew upon him till he bade the manly Macedonians grovel before him like servile Asiatics, and sent an order to the Greeks to recognize him as a god. Year by year he grew more egotistical and more despotic and violent.

It would be idle to speculate on what he might have accomplished had he lived to old age. We must judge him by his actual achievements. His conquests stimulated exploration and discovery, introducing a great age of scientific invention. They tended to break down the barrier between Greek and barbarian, and they gave Hellenic civilization to the world. People of widely separated countries became better acquainted with one another, and thus acquired a more liberal spirit and a broader view of mankind. The building up of an empire far greater than the Persian was itself a stage in the growth of the idea that all men are brothers. It is a fact, too, that Alexander's conquests made easier the growth of the Roman empire. On the other hand, the conquest conferred no lasting benefit on the masses of the conquered. The Macedonian successors of Alexander were more oppressive plunderers than the native rulers had been; and the

civilization of the Greek cities did not extend far beyond their walls. Within a few centuries the more remote cities lost their distinctive Hellenic character. Apart, then, from the country lying immediately round the east Mediterranean, which kept in close touch with Europe, the career of Alexander and the rule of his successors formed but an episode in the history of the Orient.

**323. Summary of Alexander's Career.** — (1) On his accession Alexander crushed all opposition to himself in Macedon and Greece. (2) He then invaded the Persian empire and won the battles of Granicus and Issus. (3) Next he captured Tyre and founded Alexandria. (4) In the critical battle of Arbela he overthrew the vast army of Darius. (5) Afterward he took possession of Babylon and the Persian capitals Susa and Persepolis. (6) In his last campaigns he subdued the northeastern provinces of the empire and conquered a great part of India. (7) Meanwhile he was reorganizing the empire and planting many colonies. (8) Preparations for further conquests were cut short by death.

### Suggestive Questions

1. Can we say that under Philip and Alexander Greece was still free? Give reasons for your opinion. 2. How much was the success of Alexander due to his father and his generals, and how much to himself? 3. What weaknesses on the Persian side contributed largely to Alexander's success? 4. Are there reasons for believing that without Philip and Alexander the Greeks would ever have conquered Persia? 5. Explain this statement from Wheeler's *Alexander the Great*: "The seed-ground of European civilization is neither Greece nor the Orient, but a world joined of the two." 6. In your further study of ancient history, try to find what benefits, if any, civilization derived from Alexander's conquests.

### Note-book Topic

**Alexander.** — Fling, *Source Book of Greek History*, 300-329 (Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander*); Plutarch, *Alexander*; Wheeler, *Alexander the Great*; Hogarth, *Philip and Alexander*.



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