

JACOB ABBOTT

PYRRHUS

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Pyrrhus

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Jacob Abbott

Pyrrhus Makers of History

PREFACE

In respect to the heroes of ancient history, who lived in times antecedent to the period when the regular records of authentic history commence, no reliance can be placed upon the actual verity of the accounts which have come down to us of their lives and actions. In those ancient days there was, in fact, no line of demarkation between romance and history, and the stories which were told of Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, Romulus, Pyrrhus, and other personages as ancient as they, are all more or less fabulous and mythical. We learn this as well from the internal evidence furnished by the narratives themselves as from the researches of modern scholars, who have succeeded, in many cases, in disentangling the web, and separating the false from the true. It is none the less important, however, on this account, that these ancient tales, as they were originally told, and as they have come down to us through so many centuries, should be made known to readers of the present age. They have been circulated among mankind in their original form for twenty or thirty centuries, and they have mingled themselves inextricably with the literature, the eloquence, and the poetry of every civilized nation on the globe. Of course, to know what the story is, whether true or false, which the ancient narrators recorded, and which has been read and commented on by every succeeding generation to the present day, is an essential attainment for every well-informed man; a far more essential attainment, in fact, for the general reader, than to discover now, at this late period, what the actual facts were which gave origin to the fable.

In writing this series of histories, therefore, it has been the aim of the author not to *correct* the ancient story, but to repeat it as it stands, cautioning the reader, however, whenever occasion requires, not to suppose that the marvelous narratives are historically true.



Chapter I. Olympias and Antipater

B.C. 336-321

Situation of the country of Epirus

Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, entered at the very beginning of his life upon the extraordinary series of romantic adventures which so strikingly marked his career. He became an exile and a fugitive from his father's house when he was only two years old, having been suddenly borne away at that period by the attendants of the household, to avoid a most imminent personal danger that threatened him. The circumstances which gave occasion for this extraordinary erection were as follows:

Epirus and Macedon

Their political connections

The country of Epirus, as will be seen by the accompanying map, was situated on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea,¹ and on the southwestern confines of Macedonia. The kingdom of Epirus was thus very near to, and in some respects dependent upon, the kingdom of Macedon. In fact, the public affairs of the two countries, through the personal relations and connections which subsisted from time to time between the royal families that reigned over them respectively, were often intimately intermingled, so that there could scarcely be any important war, or even any great civil dissension in Macedon, which did not sooner or later draw the king or the people of Epirus to take part in the dispute, either on one side or on the other. And as it sometimes happened that in these questions of Macedonian politics the king and the people of Epirus took opposite sides, the affairs of the great kingdom were often the means of bringing into the smaller one an infinite degree of trouble and confusion.

Olympias

Her visits to Epirus

Philip

The period of Pyrrhus's career was immediately subsequent to that of Alexander the Great, the birth of Pyrrhus having taken place about four years after the death of Alexander. At this time it happened that the relations which subsisted between the royal families of the two kingdoms were

¹ See the opposite map.

very intimate. This intimacy arose from an extremely important intermarriage which had taken place between the two families in the preceding generation – namely, the marriage of Philip of Macedon with Olympias, the daughter of a king of Epirus. Philip and Olympias were the father and mother of Alexander the Great. Of course, during the whole period of the great conqueror's history, the people of Epirus, as well as those of Macedon, felt a special interest in his career. They considered him as a descendant of their own royal line, as well as of that of Macedon, and so, very naturally, appropriated to themselves some portion of the glory which he acquired. Olympias, too, who sometimes, after her marriage with Philip, resided at Epirus, and sometimes at Macedon, maintained an intimate and close connection, both with her own and with Philip's family; and thus, through various results of her agency, as well as through the fame of Alexander's exploits, the governments of the two countries were continually commingled.

Olympias as a wife

It must not, however, by any means be supposed that the relations which were established through the influence of Olympias, between the courts of Epirus and of Macedon, were always of a friendly character. They were, in fact, often the very reverse. Olympias was a woman of a very passionate and ungovernable temper, and of a very determined will; and as Philip was himself as impetuous and as resolute as she, the domestic life of this distinguished pair was a constant succession of storms. At the commencement of her married life, Olympias was, of course, generally successful in accomplishing her purposes. Among other measures, she induced Philip to establish her brother upon the throne of Epirus, in the place of another prince who was more directly in the line of succession. As, however, the true heir did not, on this account, relinquish his claims, two parties were formed in the country, adhering respectively to the two branches of the family that claimed the throne, and a division ensued, which, in the end, involved the kingdom of Epirus in protracted civil wars. While, therefore, Olympias continued to hold an influence over her husband's mind, she exercised it in such a way as to open sources of serious calamity and trouble for her own native land.

She makes many difficulties

After a time, however, she lost this influence entirely. Her disputes with Philip ended at length in a bitter and implacable quarrel. Philip married another woman, named Cleopatra, partly, indeed, as a measure of political alliance, and partly as an act of hostility and hatred against Olympias, whom he accused of the most disgraceful crimes. Olympias went home to Epirus in a rage, and sought refuge in the court of her brother.

Alexander takes part with his mother in her quarrel

Alexander, her son, was left behind at Macedon at this separation between his father and mother. He was then about nineteen years of age. He took part with his mother in the contest. It is true, he remained for a time at the court of Philip after his mother's departure, but his mind was in a very irritable and sullen mood; and at length, on the occasion of a great public festival, an angry conversation between Alexander and Philip occurred, growing out of some allusions which were made to Olympias by some of the guests, in the course of which Alexander openly denounced and defied the king, and then abruptly left the court, and went off to Epirus to join his mother. Of course the attention of the people of Epirus was strongly attracted to this quarrel, and they took sides, some with Philip, and some with Olympias and Alexander.

Olympias is suspected of having murdered her husband

Not very long after this, Philip was assassinated in the most mysterious and extraordinary manner.² Olympias was generally accused of having been the instigator of this deed. There was no positive evidence of her guilt; nor, on the other hand, had there ever been in her character and conduct any such indications of the presence of even the ordinary sentiments of justice and humanity in her heart as could form a presumption of her innocence. In a word, she was such a woman that it was more easy and natural, as it seemed, for mankind to believe her guilty than innocent; and she has accordingly been very generally condemned, though on very slender evidence, as accessory to the crime.

Alexander's treatment of his mother

Of course, the death of Philip, whether Olympias was the procurer of it or not, was of the greatest conceivable advantage to her in respect to its effect upon her position, and upon the promotion of her ambitious schemes. The way was at once opened again for her return to Macedon. Alexander, her son, succeeded immediately to the throne. He was very young, and would submit, as she supposed, very readily to the influence of his mother. This proved, in fact, in some sense to be true. Alexander, whatever may have been his faults in other respects, was a very dutiful son. He treated his mother, as long as he lived, with the utmost consideration and respect, while yet he would not in any sense subject himself to her authority and influence in his political career. He formed his own plans, and executed them in his own way; and if there was ever at any time any dispute or disagreement between him and Olympias in respect to his measures, she soon learned that he was not to be controlled in these things, and gave up the struggle. Nor was this a very extraordinary result; for we often see that a refractory woman, who can not by any process be made to submit to her husband, is easily and completely managed by a son.

His kind and considerate behavior

Things went on thus tolerably smoothly while Alexander lived. It was *only* tolerably, however; for Olympias, though she always continued on friendly terms with Alexander himself, quarreled incessantly with the commanders and ministers of state whom he left with her at Macedon while he was absent on his Asiatic campaigns. These contentions caused no very serious difficulty so long as Alexander himself was alive to interpose, when occasion required, and settle the difficulties and disputes which originated in them before they became unmanageable. Alexander was always adroit enough to do this in a manner that was respectful and considerate toward his mother, and which yet preserved the actual administrative power of the kingdom in the hands to which he had intrusted it.

He thus amused his mother's mind, and soothed her irritable temper by marks of consideration and regard, and sustained her in a very dignified and lofty position in the royal household, while yet he confided to her very little substantial power.

² For a full account of this transaction, see "History of Alexander the Great."

Antipater

Character of Antipater

Alexander's opinion of him

The officer whom Alexander had left in chief command at Macedon, while absent on his Asiatic expedition, was Antipater. Antipater was a very venerable man, then nearly seventy years of age. He had been the principal minister of state in Macedonia for a long period of time, having served Philip in that capacity with great fidelity and success for many years before Alexander's accession. During the whole term of his public office, he had maintained a most exalted reputation for wisdom and virtue. Philip placed the most absolute and entire confidence in him, and often committed the most momentous affairs to his direction. And yet, notwithstanding the illustrious position which Antipater thus occupied, and the great influence and control which he exercised in the public affairs of Macedon, he was simple and unpretending in his manners, and kind and considerate to all around him, as if he were entirely devoid of all feelings of personal ambition, and were actuated only by an honest and sincere devotedness to the cause of those whom he served. Various anecdotes were related of him in the Macedonian court, which showed the estimation in which he was held. For example, Philip one day, at a time when placed in circumstances which required special caution and vigilance on his part, made his appearance at a late hour in the morning, and he apologized for it by saying to the officers, "I have slept rather late this morning, but then I knew that Antipater was awake." Alexander, too, felt the highest respect and veneration for Antipater's character. At one time some person expressed surprise that Antipater did not clothe himself in a purple robe – the badge of nobility and greatness – as the other great commanders and ministers of state were accustomed to do. "Those men," said Alexander, "wear purple on the outside, but Antipater is purple within."

Olympias makes a great deal of trouble

Alexander sends Craterus home

The whole country, in a word, felt so much confidence in the wisdom, the justice, and the moderation of Antipater, that they submitted very readily to his sway during the absence of Alexander. Olympias, however, caused him continual trouble. In the exercise of his regency, he governed the country as he thought his duty to the people of the realm and to Alexander required, without yielding at all to the demands or expectations of Olympias. She, consequently, finding that he was unmanageable, did all in her power to embarrass him in his plans, and to thwart and circumvent him. She wrote letters continually to Alexander, complaining incessantly of his conduct, sometimes misrepresenting occurrences which had actually taken place, and sometimes making accusations wholly groundless and untrue. Antipater, in the same manner, in his letters to Alexander, complained of the interference of Olympias, and of the trouble and embarrassment which her conduct occasioned him. Alexander succeeded for a season in settling these difficulties more or less perfectly, from time to time, as they arose; but at last he concluded to make a change in the regency. Accordingly, on an occasion when a considerable body of new recruits from Macedon was to be marched into Asia, Alexander ordered Antipater to accompany them, and, at the same time, he sent home another general

named Craterus, in charge of a body of troops from Asia, whose term of service had expired.³ His plan was to retain Antipater in his service in Asia, and to give to Craterus the government of Macedon, thinking it possible, perhaps, that Craterus might agree better with Olympias than Antipater had done.

Antipater was not to leave Macedon until Craterus should arrive there; and while Craterus was on his journey, Alexander suddenly died. This event changed the whole aspect of affairs throughout the empire, and led to a series of very important events, which followed each other in rapid succession, and which were the means of affecting the condition and the fortunes of Olympias in a very material manner. The state of the case was substantially thus. The story forms quite a complicated plot, which it will require close attention on the part of the reader clearly to comprehend.

Alexander's wife Roxana

Her babe

The question which rose first to the mind of every one, as soon as Alexander's death became known, was that of the succession. There was, as it happened, no member of Alexander's own family who could be considered as clearly and unquestionably his heir. At the time of his death he had no child. He had a wife, however, whose name was Roxana, and a child was born to her a few months after Alexander's death. Roxana was the daughter of an Asiatic prince. Alexander had taken her prisoner, with some other ladies, at a fort on a rock, where her father had placed her for safety. Roxana was extremely beautiful, and Alexander, as soon as he saw her, determined to make her his wife. Among the thousands of captives that he made in his Asiatic campaign, Roxana, it was said, was the most lovely of all; and as it was only about four years after her marriage that Alexander died, she was still in the full bloom of youth and beauty when her son was born.

Aridæus

The two competing claimants to the crown

But besides this son, born thus a few months after Alexander's death, there was a brother of Alexander, or, rather, a half-brother, whose claims to the succession seemed to be more direct, for he was living at the time that Alexander died. The name of his brother was Aridæus. He was imbecile in intellect, and wholly insignificant as a political personage, except so far as he was by birth the next heir to Alexander in the Macedonian line. He was not the son of Olympias, but of another mother, and his imbecility was caused, it was said, by an attempt of Olympias to poison him in his youth. She was prompted to do this by her rage and jealousy against his mother, for whose sake Philip had abandoned her. The poison had ruined the poor child's intellect, though it had failed to destroy his life. Alexander, when he succeeded to the throne, adopted measures to protect Aridæus from any future attempt which his mother might make to destroy him, and for this, as well as perhaps for other reasons, took Aridæus with him on his Asiatic campaign. Aridæus and Roxana were both at Babylon when Alexander died.

Whatever might be thought of the comparative claims of Aridæus and of Roxana's babe in respect to the inheritance of the Macedonian crown, it was plain that neither of them was capable of exercising any actual power – Alexander's son being incapacitated by his youthfulness, and his

³ For the route from Macedonia to Babylon, see map.

brother by his imbecility. The real power fell immediately into the hands of Alexander's great generals and counselors of state. These generals, on consultation with each other, determined not to decide the question of succession in favor of either of the two heirs, but to invest the sovereignty of the empire jointly in them both. So they gave to Aridæus the name of Philip, and to Roxana's babe that of Alexander. They made these two princes jointly the nominal sovereigns, and then proceeded, in their name, to divide all the actual power among themselves.

Some account of the Ptolemaic dynasty

In this division, Egypt, and the African countries adjoining it, were assigned to a very distinguished general of the name of Ptolemy, who became the founder of a long line of Egyptian sovereigns, known as the Ptolemaic dynasty – the line from which, some centuries later, the renowned Cleopatra sprang. Macedon and Greece, with the other European provinces, were allotted to Antipater and Craterus – Craterus himself being then on the way to Macedon with the invalid and disbanded troops whom Alexander had sent home. Craterus was in feeble health at this time, and was returning to Macedon partly on this account. In fact, he was not fully able to take the active command of the detachment committed to him, and Alexander had accordingly sent an officer with him, named Polysperchon, who was to assist him in the performance of his duties on the march. This Polysperchon, as will appear in the sequel, took a very important part in the events which occurred in Macedonia after he and Craterus had arrived there.

The distribution of Alexander's empire

Compromise between the rival claims

In addition to these great and important provinces – that of Egypt in Africa, and Macedon and Greece in Europe – there were various other smaller ones in Asia Minor and in Syria, which were assigned to different generals and ministers of state who had been attached to the service of Alexander, and who all now claimed their several portions in the general distribution of power which took place after his death. The distribution gave at first a tolerable degree of satisfaction. It was made in the *name* of Philip the king, though the personage who really controlled the arrangement was Perdiccas, the general who was nearest to the person of Alexander, and highest in rank at the time of the great conqueror's decease. In fact, as soon as Alexander died, Perdiccas assumed the command of the army, and the general direction of affairs.⁴ He intended, as was supposed, to make himself emperor in the place of Alexander. At first he had strongly urged that Roxana's child should be declared heir to the throne, to the exclusion of Aridæus. His secret motive in this was, that by governing as regent during the long minority of the infant, he might prepare the way for finally seizing the kingdom himself. The other generals of the army, however, would not consent to this; they were inclined to insist that Aridæus should be king. The army was divided on this question for some days, and the dispute ran very high. It seemed, in fact, for a time, that there was no hope that it could be accommodated. There was every indication that a civil war must ensue – to break out first under the very walls of Babylon. At length, however, as has already been stated, the question was compromised, and it was agreed that the crown of Alexander should become the joint inheritance of Aridæus and of the infant child, and that Perdiccas should exercise at Babylon the functions of regent. Of course,

⁴ The death of Alexander took place, and the distribution here referred to was made at Babylon. For the situation of this city in reference to Macedon and the intervening countries, see map.

when the division of the empire was made, it was made in the name of Philip; for the child of Roxana, at the time of the division, was not yet born. But, though made in King Philip's name, it was really the work of Perdiccas. His plan, it was supposed, in the assignment of provinces to the various generals, was to remove them from Babylon, and give them employment in distant fields, where they would not interfere with him in the execution of his plans for making himself master of the supreme power.

Question of marriage

Cleopatra

Nicæa

After these arrangements had been made, and the affairs of the empire had been tolerably well settled for the time being by this distribution of power, and Perdiccas began to consider what ulterior measures he should adopt for the widening and extending of his power, a question arose which for a season greatly perplexed him: it was the question of his marriage. Two proposals were made to him – one by Olympias, and one by Antipater. Each of these personages had a daughter whom they were desirous that Perdiccas should make his wife. The daughter of Olympias was named Cleopatra – that of Antipater was Nicæa. Cleopatra was a young widow. She was residing at this time in Syria. She had been married to a king of Epirus named Alexander, but was now residing in Sardis, in Asia Minor. Some of the counselors of Perdiccas represented to him very strongly that a marriage with her would strengthen his position more than any other alliance that he could form, as she was the sister of Alexander the Great, and by his marriage with her he would secure to his side the influence of Olympias and of all of Alexander's family. Perdiccas so far acceded to these views that he sent a messenger to Sardis to visit Cleopatra in his name, and to make her a present. Olympias and Cleopatra accordingly considered the arrangement a settled affair.

Nicæa is sent to Babylon

Antipater's plan

In the mean time, however, Antipater, who seems to have been more in earnest in his plans, sent off his daughter Nicæa herself to Babylon, to be offered directly to Perdiccas there. She arrived at Babylon after the messenger of Perdiccas had gone to visit Cleopatra. The arrival of Nicæa brought up very distinctly to the mind of Perdiccas the advantages of an alliance with Antipater. Olympias, it is true, had a great name, but she possessed no real power. Antipater, on the other hand, held sway over a widely-extended region, which comprised some of the most wealthy and populous countries on the globe. He had a large army under his command, too, consisting of the bravest and best-disciplined troops in the world; and he himself, though advanced in age, was a very able and effective commander. In a word, Perdiccas was persuaded, by these and similar considerations, that the alliance of Antipater would be more serviceable to him than that of Olympias, and he accordingly married Nicæa. Olympias, who had always hated Antipater before, was now, when she found herself thus supplanted by him in her plans for allying herself with Perdiccas, aroused to the highest pitch of indignation and rage.

Another matrimonial question

Cynane

Excitement in the army

Ada's new name

Besides the marriage of Perdiccas, another matrimonial question arose about this time, which led to a great deal of difficulty. There was a lady of the royal family of Macedon named Cynane – a daughter of Philip of Macedon, and half-sister of Alexander the Great – who had a daughter named Ada. Cynane conceived the design of marrying her daughter to King Philip, who was now, as well as Roxana and her babe, in the hands of Perdiccas as their guardian. Cynane set out from Macedon with her daughter, on the journey to Asia, in order to carry this arrangement into effect. This was considered as a very bold undertaking on the part of Cynane and her daughter; for Perdiccas would, of course, be implacably hostile to any plan for the marriage of Philip, and especially so to his marrying a princess of the royal family of Macedon. In fact, as soon as Perdiccas heard of the movement which Cynane was making, he was enraged at the audacity of it, and sent messengers to intercept Cynane and murder her on the way. This transaction, however, as soon as it was known, produced a great excitement throughout the whole of the Macedonian army. The army, in fact, felt so strong an attachment for every branch and every member of the family of Alexander, that they would not tolerate any violence or wrong against any one of them. Perdiccas was quite terrified at the storm which he had raised. He immediately countermanded the orders which he had given to the assassins; and, to atone for his error and allay the excitement, he received Ada, when she arrived at Babylon, with great apparent kindness, and finally consented to the plan of her being married to Philip. She was accordingly married to him, and the army was appeased. Ada received at this time the name of Eurydice, and she became subsequently, under that name, quite renowned in history.

Various intrigues

Schemes of Antipater and Ptolemy

Nicæa

Perdiccas' plans

During the time in which these several transactions were taking place, various intrigues and contentions were going on among the governors of the different provinces in Europe and Asia, which, as the results of them did not particularly affect the affairs of Epirus, we need not here particularly describe. During all this period, however, Perdiccas was extending and maturing his

arrangements, and laying his plans for securing the whole empire to himself; while Antipater and Ptolemy, in Macedon and Egypt, were all the time holding secret communications with each other, and endeavoring to devise means by which they might thwart and circumvent him. The quarrel was an example of what very often occurs in such political systems as the Macedonian empire presented at this time – namely, a combining of the extremities against the centre. For some time the efforts of the hostile parties were confined to the maneuvers and counter-maneuvers which they devised against each other. Antipater was, in fact, restrained from open hostility against Perdiccas from a regard to his daughter Nicæa, who, as has been already mentioned, was Perdiccas' wife. At length, however, under the influence of the increasing hostility which prevailed between the two families, Perdiccas determined to divorce Nicæa, and marry Cleopatra after all. As soon as Antipater learned this, he resolved at once upon open war. The campaign commenced with a double operation. Perdiccas himself raised an army; and, taking Philip and Eurydice, and also Roxana and her babe in his train, he marched into Egypt to make war against Ptolemy. At the same time, Antipater and Craterus, at the head of a large Macedonian force, passed across the Hellespont into Asia Minor, on their way to attack Perdiccas in Babylon. Perdiccas sent a large detachment of troops, under the command of a distinguished general, to meet and encounter Antipater and Craterus in Asia Minor, while he was himself engaged in the Egyptian campaign.

A battle

Craterus is killed

Discontent

Unpopularity of Perdiccas

The result of the contest was fatal to the cause of Perdiccas. Antipater advanced triumphantly through Asia Minor, though in one of the battles which took place there Craterus was slain. But while Craterus himself fell, his troops were victorious. Thus the fortunes of war in this quarter went against Perdiccas. The result of his own operations in Egypt was still more disastrous to him. As he approached the Egyptian frontier, he found his soldiers very averse to fighting against Ptolemy, a general whom they had always regarded with extreme respect and veneration, and who, as was well known, had governed his province in Egypt with the greatest wisdom, justice, and moderation. Perdiccas treated this disaffection in a very haughty and domineering manner. He called his soldiers rebels, and threatened to punish them as such. This aroused their indignation, and from secret murmurings they proceeded to loud and angry complaints. Perdiccas was not their king, they said, to lord it over them in that imperious manner. He was nothing but the tutor of their kings, and they would not submit to any insolence from him. Perdiccas was soon quite alarmed to observe the degree of dissatisfaction which he had awakened, and the violence of the form which it seemed to be assuming. He changed his tone, and attempted to soothe and conciliate the minds of his men. He at length succeeded so far as to restore some degree of order and discipline to the army, and in that condition the expedition entered Egypt.⁵

⁵ For the route taken by this expedition, see map.

Transit of the Nile

Extraordinary incident

Perdiccas crossed one of the branches of the Nile, and then led his army forward to attack Ptolemy in a strong fortress, where he had intrenched himself with his troops. The forces of Perdiccas, though much more numerous than those of Ptolemy, fought with very little spirit; while those of Ptolemy exerted themselves to the utmost, under the influence of the strong attachment which they felt for their commander. Perdiccas was beaten in the engagement; and he was so much weakened by the defeat, that he determined to retreat back across the river. When the army arrived at the bank of the stream, the troops began to pass over; but after about half the army had crossed, they found, to their surprise, that the water, which had been growing gradually deeper all the time, became impassable. The cause of this deepening of the stream was at first a great mystery, since the surface of the water, as was evident by marks along the shore, remained all the time at the same level. It was at length ascertained that the cause of this extraordinary phenomenon was, that the sands in the bottom of the river were trampled up by the feet of the men and horses in crossing, so that the current of the water could wash them away; and such was the immense number of footsteps made by the successive bodies of troops, that, by the time the transportation had been half accomplished, the water had become too deep to be forded. Perdiccas was thus, as it were, caught in a trap – half his army being on one side of the river, and himself, with the remainder, on the other.

Great numbers swept into the river and destroyed

He was seriously alarmed at the dangerous situation in which he thus found himself placed, and immediately resorted to a variety of expedients to remedy the unexpected difficulty. All his efforts were, however, vain. Finally, as it seemed imperiously necessary to effect a junction between the two divisions of his army, he ordered those who had gone over to make an attempt, at all hazards, to return. They did so; but in the attempt, vast numbers of men got beyond their depth, and were swept down by the current and drowned. Multitudes of the bodies, both of the dead and of the dying, were seized and devoured by the crocodiles which lined the shores of the river below. There were about two thousand men thus lost in the attempt to recross the stream.

In all military operations, the criterion of merit, in the opinion of an army, is success; and, of course, the discontent and disaffection which prevailed in the camp of Perdiccas broke out anew in consequence of these misfortunes. There was a general mutiny. The officers themselves took the lead in it, and one hundred of them went over in a body to Ptolemy's side, taking with them a considerable portion of the army; while those that were left remained with Perdiccas, not to defend, but to destroy him. A troop of horse gathered around his tent, guarding it on all sides, to prevent the escape of their victim, and then a certain number of the men rushed in and killed him in the midst of his terror and despair.

The kings are to be sent back to Babylon

Antipater returns to Macedon full of honors

Ptolemy now advanced to the camp of Perdiccas, and was received there with acclamation. The whole army submitted themselves at once to his command. An arrangement was made for the return of the army to Babylon, with the kings and their train. Pithon, one of the generals of Perdiccas, took the command of the army, and the charge of the royal family, on the return. In the mean time, Antipater had passed into Asia, victorious over the forces that Perdiccas had sent against him. A new congress of generals was held, and a new distribution of power was made. By the new arrangement, Antipater was to retain his command in Macedon and Greece, and to have the custody of the kings. Accordingly, when every thing had thus been settled, Antipater set out on his return to Macedon, with Philip and Eurydice, and also Roxana and the infant Alexander, in his train. The venerable soldier – for he was now about eighty years of age – was received in Macedon, on his return, with universal honor and applause. There were several considerations, in fact, which conspired to exalt Antipater in the estimation of his countrymen on this occasion. He had performed a great military exploit in conducting the expedition into Asia, from which he was now triumphantly returning. He was bringing back to Macedon, too, the royal family of Alexander, the representatives of the ancient Macedonian line; and by being made the custodian of these princes, and regent of the empire in their name, he had been raised to the most exalted position which the whole world at that period could afford. The Macedonians received him, accordingly, on his return, with loud and universal acclamations.

Chapter II. Cassander

B.C. 320-316

Antipater's difficulties

Although Antipater, on his return to Macedon, came back loaded with honors, and in the full and triumphant possession of power, his situation was still not without its difficulties. He had for enemies, in Macedon, two of the most violent and unmanageable women that ever lived – Olympias and Eurydice – who quarreled with him incessantly, and who hated each other even more than they hated him.

Trouble with Olympias and Eurydice

Olympias was at this time in Epirus. She remained there, because she did not choose to put herself under Antipater's power by residing in Macedon. She succeeded, however, by her maneuvers and intrigues, in giving Antipater a great deal of trouble. Her ancient animosity against him had been very much increased and aggravated by the failure of her plan for marrying her daughter Cleopatra to Perdiccas, through the advances which Antipater made in behalf of his daughter Nicæa; and though Nicæa and Perdiccas were now dead, yet the transaction was an offense which such a woman as Olympias never could forgive.

Character of Eurydice

Her dictatorial and overbearing demeanor

Eurydice was a still greater source of annoyance and embarrassment to Antipater than Olympias herself. She was a woman of very masculine turn of mind, and she had been brought up by her mother, Cynane, to martial exercises, such as those to which young men in those days were customarily trained. She could shoot arrows, and throw the javelin, and ride on horseback at the head of a troop of armed men. As soon as she was married to Philip she began at once to assume an air of authority, thinking, apparently, that she herself, being the wife of the king, was entitled to a much greater share of the regal authority than the generals, who, as she considered them, were merely his tutors and guardians, or, at most, only military agents, appointed to execute his will. During the memorable expedition into Egypt, Perdiccas had found it very difficult to exercise any control over her; and after the death of Perdiccas, she assumed a more lofty and imperious tone than ever. She quarreled incessantly with Pithon, the commander of the army, on the return from Egypt; and she made the most resolute and determined opposition to the appointment of Antipater as the custodian of the persons of the kings.

The convention of Triparadeisus

Violence of Eurydice

Antipater's life in danger

The place where the consultation was held, at which this appointment was made, was Triparadeisus,⁶ in Syria. This was the place where the expedition of Antipater, coming from Asia Minor, met the army of Egypt on its return. As soon as the junction of the two armies was effected, and the grand council was convened, Eurydice made the most violent opposition to the proceedings. Antipater reproved her for evincing such turbulence and insubordination of spirit. This made her more angry than ever; and when at length Antipater was appointed to the regency, she went out and made a formal harangue to the army, in which she denounced Antipater in the severest terms, and loaded him with criminations and reproaches, and endeavored to incite the soldiers to a revolt. Antipater endeavored to defend himself against these accusations by a calm reply; but the influence which Eurydice's tempestuous eloquence exerted on the minds of the soldiery was too much for him. A very serious riot ensued, which threatened to lead to the most disastrous results. For a time Antipater's life was in most imminent danger, and he was saved only by the interposition of some of the other generals, who hazarded their own lives to rescue him from the enraged soldiery.

Eurydice forced to submit

The excitement of this scene gradually subsided, and, as the generals persisted in the arrangement which they had made, Eurydice found herself forced to submit to it. She had, in fact, no real power in her hands except that of making temporary mischief and disturbance; and, as is usually the case with characters like hers, when she found that those around her could not be driven from their ground by her fractiousness and obstinacy, she submitted herself to the necessity of the case, though in a moody and sullen manner. Such were the relations which Antipater and Eurydice bore to each other on the return of Antipater to Macedon.

Antipater is dangerously sick

The troubles, however, in his government, which Antipater might have reasonably expected to arise from his connection with Olympias and Eurydice, were destined to a very short continuance, so far as he personally was concerned; for, not long after his return to Macedon, he fell sick of a dangerous disease, under which it was soon evident that the vital principle, at the advanced age to which he had attained, must soon succumb. In fact, Antipater himself soon gave up all hopes of recovery, and began at once to make arrangements for the final surrender of his power.

⁶ See map.

The arrangements made by him

Antipater's arrangements for the succession

Polysperchon

It will be recollected that when Craterus came from Asia to Macedon, about the time of Alexander's death, he brought with him a general named Polysperchon, who, though nominally second in command, really had charge of the army on the march, Craterus himself being at the time an invalid. When, some time afterward, Antipater and Craterus set out on their expedition to Asia, in the war against Perdiccas, Polysperchon was left in charge of the kingdom of Macedon, to govern it as regent until Antipater should return. Antipater had a son named Cassander, who was a general in his army. Cassander naturally expected that, during the absence of his father, the kingdom would be committed to his charge. For some reason or other, however, Antipater had preferred Polysperchon, and had intrusted the government to him. Polysperchon had, of course, become acquainted with the duties of government, and had acquired an extensive knowledge of Macedonian affairs. He had governed well, too, and the people were accustomed to his sway. Antipater concluded, therefore, that it would be better to continue Polysperchon in power after his death, rather than to displace Polysperchon for the sake of advancing his son Cassander. He therefore made provision for giving to Cassander a very high command in the army, but he gave Polysperchon the kingdom. This act, though Cassander himself never forgave it, raised Antipater to a higher place than ever in the estimation of mankind. They said that he did what no monarch ever did before; in determining the great question of the succession, he made the aggrandizement of his own family give place to the welfare of the realm.

Antipater on his death-bed, among other councils which he gave to Polysperchon, warned him very earnestly against the danger of yielding to any woman whatever a share in the control of public affairs. Woman, he said, was, from her very nature, the creature of impulse, and was swayed in all her conduct by the emotions and passions of her heart. She possessed none of the calm, considerate, and self-controlling principles of wisdom and prudence, so essential for the proper administration of the affairs of states and nations. These cautions, as Antipater uttered them, were expressed in general terms, but they were understood to refer to Olympias and Eurydice, whom it had always been very difficult to control, and who, of course, when Antipater should be removed from the scene, might be expected to come forward with a spirit more obtrusive and unmanageable than ever.

Polysperchon invites Olympias to return to Macedon

These counsels, however, of the dying king seemed to have had very little effect upon Polysperchon; for one of the first measures of his government, after Antipater was dead, was to send to Epirus to invite Olympias to return to Macedon. This measure was decided upon in a grand council which Polysperchon convened to deliberate on the state of public affairs as soon as the government came into his hands. Polysperchon thought that he should greatly strengthen his administration by enlisting Olympias on his side. She was held in great veneration by all the people of Macedon; not on account of any personal qualities which she possessed to entitle her to such regard, but because she was the mother of Alexander. Polysperchon, therefore, considered it very important to secure her influence, and the prestige of her name in his favor. At the same time, while he thus sought to propitiate Olympias, he neglected Cassander and all the other members of Antipater's family. He

considered them, doubtless, as rivals and antagonists, whom he was to keep down by every means in his power.

Cassander plans a rebellion

His pretended hunting party

Cassander, who was a man of a very bold, determined, and ambitious spirit, remained quietly in Polysperchon's court for a little time, watching attentively all that was done, and revolving silently in his mind the question what course he himself should pursue. At length he formed a small party of his friends to go away on a hunting excursion. When he reached a safe distance from the court of Polysperchon, he called his friends around him, and informed them that he had resolved not to submit to the usurpation of Polysperchon, who, in assuming the throne of Macedon, had seized what rightfully belonged, he said, to him, Cassander, as his father's son and heir. He invited his friends to join him in the enterprise of deposing Polysperchon, and assuming the crown.

Cassander explains his designs to his friends

He urged this undertaking upon them with very specious arguments. It was the only course of safety for them, as well as for him, since they – that is, the friends to whom Cassander was making these proposals – had all been friends of Antipater; and Olympias, whom Polysperchon was about to take into his counsels, hated the very name of Antipater, and would evince, undoubtedly, the most unrelenting hostility to all whom she should consider as having been his friends. He was confident, he said, that the Asiatic princes and generals would espouse his cause. They had been warmly attached to Antipater, and would not willingly see his son and rightful successor deprived of his legitimate rights. Besides, Philip and Eurydice would join him. They had every thing to fear from Olympias, and would, of course, oppose the power of Polysperchon, now that he had determined to ally himself to her.

They agree to join him

The friends of Cassander very readily agreed to his proposal, and the result proved the truth of his predictions. The Asiatic princes furnished Cassander with very efficient aid in his attempt to depose his rival. Olympias adhered to Polysperchon, while Eurydice favored Cassander's cause. A terrible conflict ensued. It was waged for some time in Greece, and in other countries more or less remote from Macedon, the advantage in the combats being sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other. It is not necessary to detail here the events which occurred in the contest so long as the theatre of war was beyond the frontiers of Macedon, for the parties with whom we are now particularly dealing were not directly affected by the conflict until it came nearer home.

Olympias is afraid to return to Macedon

It ought here to be stated that Olympias did not at first accept the invitation to return to Macedon which Polysperchon sent to her. She hesitated. She consulted with her friends, and they were not decided in respect to the course which it would be best for her to pursue. She had made a great many enemies in Macedon during her former residence there, and she knew well that she would have a great deal to fear from their hostility in case she should return, and thus put herself again, as it were, into their power. Then, besides, it was quite uncertain what course affairs in Macedon would finally

take. Antipater had bequeathed the kingdom to Polysperchon, it was true; but there might be great doubt whether the people would acquiesce in this decision, and allow the supreme power to remain quietly in Polysperchon's hands. She concluded, therefore, to remain a short time where she was, till she could see how the case would finally turn. She accordingly continued to reside in Epirus, keeping up, however, a continual correspondence with Polysperchon in respect to the measures of his government, and watching the progress of the war between him and Cassander in Greece, when that war broke out, with the utmost solicitude and anxiety.

War between Cassander and Polysperchon

Curious incident

Cassander proved to be too strong for Polysperchon in Greece. He had obtained large bodies of troops from his Asiatic allies, and he maneuvered and managed these forces with so much bravery and skill, that Polysperchon could not dislodge him from the country. A somewhat curious incident occurred on one occasion during the campaign, which illustrates the modes of warfare practiced in those days. It seems that one of the cities of Peloponnesus, named Megalopolis, was on the side of Cassander, and when Polysperchon sent them a summons to surrender to him and acknowledge his authority, they withdrew all their property and the whole of their population within the walls, and bid him defiance. Polysperchon then advanced and laid siege to the city.

Polysperchon's mine

Success of it

After fully investing the city and commencing operations on various sides, to occupy the attention of the garrison, he employed a corps of sappers and miners in secretly undermining a portion of the wall. The mode of procedure, in operations like this, was to dig a subterranean passage leading to the foundations of the wall, and then, as fast as these foundations were removed, to substitute props to support the superincumbent mass until all was ready for the springing of the mine. When the excavations were completed, the props were suddenly pulled away, and the wall would cave in, to the great astonishment of the besieged, who, if the operation had been skillfully performed, knew nothing of the danger until the final consummation of it opened suddenly before their eyes a great breach in their defenses. Polysperchon's mine was so successful, that three towers fell into it, with all the wall connecting them. These towers came down with a terrific crash, the materials of which they had been composed lying, after the fall, half buried in the ground, a mass of ruins.

The conflict

Consternation produced by the elephants

The garrison of the city immediately repaired in great numbers to the spot, to prevent the ingress of the enemy; while, on the other hand, a strong detachment of troops rushed forward from the camp of Polysperchon to force their way through the breach into the city. A very desperate conflict ensued,

and while the men of the city were thus engaged in keeping back the invaders, the women and children were employed in throwing up a line of intrenchments further within, to cover the opening which had been made in the wall. The people of the city gained the victory in the combat. The storming party were driven back, and the besieged were beginning to congratulate themselves on their escape from the danger which had threatened them, when they were suddenly terrified beyond measure by the tidings that the besiegers were arranging a train of elephants to bring in through the breach. Elephants were often used for war in those days in Asiatic countries, but they had seldom appeared in Greece. Polysperchon, however, had a number of them in the train of his army, and the soldiers of Megalopolis were overwhelmed with consternation at the prospect of being trampled under foot by these huge beasts, wholly ignorant as they were of the means of contending against them.

Plan of defense against them

The iron spikes

It happened, however, that there was in the city of Megalopolis at this time a soldier named Damides, who had served in former years under Alexander the Great, in Asia. He went to the officers who had command within the city and offered his aid. "Fear nothing," said he, "but go on with your preparations of defense, and leave the elephants to me. I will answer for them, if you will do as I say." The officers agreed to follow his instructions. He immediately caused a great number of sharp iron spikes to be made. These spikes he set firmly in the ends of short stakes of wood, and then planted the stakes in the ground all about the intrenchments and in the breach, in such a manner that the spikes themselves, points upward, protruded from the ground. The spikes were then concealed from view by covering the ground with straw and other similar rubbish.

The consequence of this arrangement was, that when the elephants advanced to enter the breach, they trod upon these spikes, and the whole column of them was soon disabled and thrown into confusion. Some of the elephants were wounded so severely that they fell where they stood, and were unable to rise. Others, maddened with the pain which they endured, turned back and trampled their own keepers under foot in their attempts to escape from the scene. The breach, in short, soon became so choked up with the bodies of beasts and men, that the assailants were compelled to give up the contest and withdraw. A short time afterward, Polysperchon raised the siege and abandoned the city altogether.

In fact, the party of Cassander was in the end triumphant in Greece, and Polysperchon determined to return to Macedon.

Olympias finally concludes to go to Macedon

In the mean time, Olympias had determined to come to Macedon, and aid Polysperchon in his contest with Cassander. She accordingly left Epirus, and with a small body of troops, with which her brother Alexander, who was then King of Epirus, furnished her, went on and joined Polysperchon on his return. Eurydice was alarmed at this; for, since she considered Olympias as her great political rival and enemy, she knew very well that there could be no safety for her or her husband if Olympias should obtain the ascendancy in the court of Polysperchon. She accordingly began to call upon those around her, in the city where she was then residing, to arm themselves for her defense. They did so, and a considerable force was thus collected. Eurydice placed herself at the head of it. She sent messengers off to Cassander, urging him to come immediately and join her. She also sent an embassy to Polysperchon, commanding him, in the name of Philip the king, to deliver up his army to Cassander.

Of course this was only a form, as she could not have expected that such a command would have been obeyed; and, accordingly, after having sent off these orders, she placed herself at the head of the troops that she had raised, and marched out to meet Polysperchon on his return, intending, if he would not submit, to give him battle.

Eurydice's troops desert her

Olympias in her chariot

Her designs, however, were all frustrated in the end in a very unexpected manner. For when the two armies approached each other, the soldiers who were on Eurydice's side, instead of fighting in her cause as she expected, failed her entirely at the time of trial. For when they saw Olympias, whom they had long been accustomed almost to adore as the wife of old King Philip, and the mother of Alexander, and who was now advancing to meet them on her return to Macedon, splendidly attended, and riding in her chariot, at the head of Polysperchon's army, with the air and majesty of a queen, they were so overpowered with the excitement of the spectacle, that they abandoned Eurydice in a body, and went over, by common consent, to Polysperchon's side.

Eurydice is captured

She is sent to a dungeon

Death of Philip

Eurydice's despair

The cell

Eurydice's dreadful end

Of course Eurydice herself and her husband Philip, who was with her at this time, fell into Polysperchon's hands as prisoners. Olympias was almost beside herself with exultation and joy at having her hated rival thus put into her power. She imprisoned Eurydice and her husband in a dungeon, so small that there was scarcely room for them to turn themselves in it; and while they were thus confined, the only attention which the wretched prisoners received was to be fed, from time to time, with coarse provisions, thrust in to them through a hole in the wall. Having thus made Eurydice secure, Olympias proceeded to wreak her vengeance on all the members of the family of Antipater whom she could get within her power. Cassander, it is true, was beyond her reach for the present; he was gradually advancing through Thessaly into Macedonia, at the head of a powerful and victorious army. There was another son of Antipater, however, named Nicanor, who was then in Macedon. Him she seized and put to death, together with about a hundred of his relatives and

friends. In fact, so violent and insane was her rage against the house of Antipater, that she opened a tomb where the body of another of his sons had been interred, and caused the remains to be brought out and thrown into the street. The people around her began to remonstrate against such atrocities; but these remonstrances, instead of moderating her rage, only excited it still more. She sent to the dungeon where her prisoners, Philip and Eurydice, were confined, and caused Philip to be stabbed to death with daggers; and then, when this horrid scene was scarcely over, an executioner came in to Eurydice with a dagger, a rope, and a cup of poison, saying that Olympias sent them to her, that she might choose herself by what she would die. Eurydice, on receiving this message, replied, saying, "I pray Heaven that Olympias herself may one day have the like alternative presented to her." She then proceeded to tear the linen dress which she wore into bandages, and to bind up with these bandages the wounds in the dead body of her husband. This dreadful though useless duty being performed, she then, rejecting all three of the means of self-destruction which Olympias had offered her, strangled herself by tying tight about her neck a band which she obtained from her own attire.

Cassander's movements

Of course, the tidings of these proceedings were not long in reaching Cassander. He was at this time in Greece, advancing, however, slowly to the northward, toward Macedon. In coming from Greece into Thessaly, his route lay through the celebrated Pass of Thermopylæ. He found this pass guarded by a large body of troops, which had been posted there to oppose his passage. He immediately got together all the ships, boats, galleys, and vessels of every kind which he could procure, and, embarking his army on board of them, he sailed past the defile, and landed in Thessaly. Thence he marched into Macedon.

Olympias acts in the most energetic manner

While Cassander had thus been slowly approaching, Polysperchon and Olympias had been very vigorously employed in making preparations to receive him. Olympias, with Roxana and the young Alexander, who was now about five years old, in her train, traveled to and fro among the cities of Macedonia, summoning the people to arms, enlisting all who would enter her service, and collecting money and military stores. She also sent to Epirus, to Æacides the king, the father of Pyrrhus, imploring him to come to her aid with all the force he could bring. Polysperchon, too, though separate from Olympias, made every effort to strengthen himself against his coming enemy. Things were in this state when Cassander entered Macedon.

The siege of Pydna

Cassander immediately divided his troops into two distinct bodies, and sending one, under the command of an able general, to attack Polysperchon, he himself went in pursuit of Olympias. Olympias retreated before him, until at length she reached the city of Pydna, a city situated in the southeastern part of Macedon, on the shore of the Ægean Sea.⁷ She knew that the force under her command was not sufficient to enable her to offer her enemy battle, and she accordingly went into the city, and fortified herself there. Cassander advanced immediately to the place, and, finding the city too strongly fortified to be carried by assault, he surrounded it with his army, and invested it closely both by land and sea.

⁷ See map.

Movement of Cassander

The carrying away of Pyrrhus

The city was not well provided for a siege, and the people within very soon began to suffer for want of provisions. Olympias, however, urged them to hold out, representing to them that she had sent to Epirus for assistance, and that Æacides, the king, was already on his way, with a large force, to succor her. This was very true; but, unfortunately for Olympias, Cassander was aware of this fact as well as she, and, instead of waiting for the troops of Æacides to come and attack him, he had sent a large armed force to the confines between Epirus and Macedon, to intercept these expected allies in the passes of the mountains. This movement was successful. The army of Æacides found, when they reached the frontier, that the passages leading into Macedonia were all blocked up by the troops of the enemy. They made some ineffectual attempts to break through; and then the leading officers of the army, who had never been really willing to embark in the war, revolted against Æacides, and returned home. And as, in the case of deeds of violence and revolution, it is always safest to go through and finish the work when it is once begun, they deposed Æacides entirely, and raised the other branch of the royal family to the throne in his stead. It was on this occasion that the infant Pyrrhus was seized and carried away by his friends, to save his life, as mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this history. The particulars of this revolution, and of the flight of Pyrrhus, will be given more fully in the next chapter. It is sufficient here to say, that the attempt of Æacides to come to the rescue of Olympias in her peril wholly failed, and there was nothing now left but the wall of the city to defend her from her terrible foe.

Olympias resorts to a stratagem

In the mean time, the distress in the city for want of food had become horrible. Olympias herself, with Roxana and the boy, and the other ladies of the court, lived on the flesh of horses. The soldiers devoured the bodies of their comrades as they were slain upon the wall. They fed the elephants, it was said, on saw-dust. The soldiers and the people of the city, who found this state of things intolerable, deserted continually to Cassander, letting themselves down by stealth in the night from the wall. Still Olympias would not surrender; there was one more hope remaining for her. She contrived to dispatch a messenger to Polysperchon with a letter, asking him to send a galley round into the harbor at a certain time in the night, in order that she might get on board of it, and thus escape. Cassander intercepted this messenger. After reading the letter, he returned it to the messenger again, and directed him to go on and deliver it. The messenger did so, and Polysperchon sent the galley. Cassander, of course, watched for it, and seized it himself when it came. The last hope of the unhappy Olympias was thus extinguished, and she opened the gates and gave herself up to Cassander. The whole country immediately afterward fell into Cassander's hands.

Olympias in prison

The friends of the family of Antipater were now clamorous in their demands that Olympias should be brought to punishment for having so atrociously murdered the sons and relatives of Antipater while she was in power. Olympias professed herself willing to be tried, and appealed to the Macedonian senate to be her judges. She relied on the ascendancy which she had so long exercised over the minds of the Macedonians, and did not believe that they would condemn her. Cassander

himself feared that they would not; and although he was unwilling to murder her while she was a defenseless prisoner in his hands, he determined that she should die. He recommended to her secretly not to take the hazard of a trial, but to make her escape and go to Athens, and offered to give her an opportunity to do so. He intended, it was said, if she made the attempt, to intercept and slay her on the way as a fugitive from justice. She refused to accede to this proposal, suspecting, perhaps, Cassander's treachery in making it. Cassander then sent a band of two hundred soldiers to put her to death.

Her end

These soldiers, when they came into the prison, were so impressed by the presence of the queen, to whom, in former years, they had been accustomed to look up with so much awe, that they shrank back from their duty, and for a time it seemed that no one would strike the blow. At length, however, some among the number, who were relatives of those that Olympias had murdered, succeeding in nerving their arms with the resolution of revenge, fell upon her and killed her with their swords.

As for Roxana and the boy, Cassander kept them close prisoners for many years; and finally, feeling more and more that his possession of the throne of Alexander was constantly endangered by the existence of a son of Alexander, caused them to be assassinated too.

Chapter III. Early Life of Pyrrhus

B.C. 332-295

The family of Epirus

Their difficulties

In the two preceding chapters we have related that portion of the history of Macedonia which it is necessary to understand in order rightly to appreciate the nature of the difficulties in which the royal family of Epirus was involved at the time when Pyrrhus first appeared upon the stage. The sources of these difficulties were two: first, the uncertainty of the line of succession, there being two branches of the royal family, each claiming the throne, which state of things was produced, in a great measure, by the interposition of Olympias in the affairs of Epirus some years before; and, secondly, the act of Olympias in inducing Æacides to come to Macedonia, to embark in her quarrel against Cassander there. Of course, since there were two lines of princes, both claiming the throne, no sovereign of either line could hold any thing more than a divided empire over the hearts of his subjects; and consequently, when Æacides left the kingdom to fight the battles of Olympias in Macedon, it was comparatively easy for the party opposed to him to effect a revolution and raise their own prince to the throne.

The two Alexanders

Their different destinies

The prince whom Olympias had originally made king of Epirus, to the exclusion of the claimant belonging to the other branch of the family, was her own brother. His name was Alexander. He was the son of Neoptolemus. The rival branch of the family were the children of Arymbas, the brother of Neoptolemus. This Alexander flourished at the same time as Alexander the Great, and in his character very much resembled his distinguished namesake. He commenced a career of conquest in Italy at the same time that his nephew embarked in his in Asia, and commenced it, too, under very similar circumstances. One went to the East, and another to the West, each determined to make himself master of the world. The Alexander of Macedon succeeded. The Alexander of Epirus failed. The one acquired, consequently, universal and perpetual renown, while the memory of the other has been almost entirely neglected and forgotten.

Adventures of Alexander of Macedon

One reason, unquestionably, for the difference in these results was the difference in the character of the enemies respectively against whom the two adventurers had to contend. Alexander of Epirus went westward into Italy, where he had to encounter the soldiery of the Romans – a soldiery of

the most rugged, determined, and indomitable character. Alexander of Macedon, on the other hand, went to the East, where he found only Asiatic races to contend with, whose troops, though countless in numbers and magnificently appointed in respect to all the purposes of parade and display, were yet enervated with luxury, and wholly unable to stand against any energetic and determined foe. In fact, Alexander of Epirus used to say that the reason why his nephew, Alexander of Macedon, had succeeded, while he himself had failed, was because he himself had invaded countries peopled by *men*, while the Macedonian, in his Asiatic campaign, had encountered only women.

The Gulf of Tarentum

However this may be, the campaign of Alexander of Epirus in Italy had a very disastrous termination. The occasion of his going there was a request which he had received from the inhabitants of Tarentum that he would come over and assist them in a war in which they were engaged with some neighboring tribes. Tarentum was a city situated toward the western shore of Italy. It was at the head of the deep bay called the Gulf of Tarentum, which bay occupies the hollow of the foot that the form of Italy presents to the eye as seen upon a map.⁸ Tarentum was, accordingly, across the Adriatic Sea from Epirus. The distance was about two hundred miles. By taking a southerly route, and going up the Gulf of Tarentum, this distance might be traversed wholly by sea. A little to the north the Adriatic is narrow, the passage there being only about fifty miles across. To an expedition, however, taking this course, there would remain, after arriving on the Italian shore, fifty miles or more to be accomplished by land in order to reach Tarentum.

Oracle of Dodona

The equivocal prediction

Before deciding to comply with the request of the Tarentines that he would come to their aid, Alexander sent to a celebrated oracle in Epirus, called the oracle of Dodona, to inquire whether it would be safe for him to undertake the expedition. To his inquiries the oracle gave him this for an answer:

"The waters of Acheron will be the cause of your death, and Pandosia is the place where you will die."

Pandosia

Alexander was greatly rejoiced at receiving this answer. Acheron was a stream of Epirus, and Pandosia was a town upon the banks of it. He understood the response to mean that he was fated to die quietly in his own country at some future period, probably a remote one, and that there was no danger in his undertaking the expedition to which he had been called. He accordingly set sail from Epirus, and landed in Italy; and there, believing that he was fated to die in Epirus, and not in Italy, he fought in every battle with the most desperate and reckless bravery, and achieved prodigies of valor. The possibility that there might be an Acheron and a Pandosia in Italy, as well as in Epirus, did not occur to his mind.

⁸ See map.

The unexpected inundation

Effects of it

Bridge carried away

For a time he was very successful in his career. He fought battles, gained victories, conquered cities, and established his dominion over quite an extended region. In order to hold what he had gained, he sent over a great number of hostages to Epirus, to be kept there as security for the continued submission of those whom he had subdued. These hostages consisted chiefly, as was usual in such cases, of children. At length, in the course of the war, an occasion arose in which it was necessary, for the protection of his troops, to encamp them on three hills which were situated very near to each other. These hills were separated by low interval lands and a small stream; but at the time when Alexander established his encampment, the stream constituted no impediment to free intercommunication between the different divisions of his army. There came on, however, a powerful rain; the stream overflowed its banks; the intervals were inundated. This enabled the enemy to attack two of Alexander's encampments, while it was utterly impossible for Alexander himself to render them any aid. The enemy made the attack, and were successful in it. The two camps were broken up, and the troops stationed in them were put to flight. Those that remained with Alexander, becoming discouraged by the hopeless condition in which they found themselves placed, mutinied, and sent to the camp of the enemy, offering to deliver up Alexander to them, dead or alive, as they should choose, on condition that they themselves might be allowed to return to their native land in peace. This proposal was accepted; but, before it was put in execution, Alexander, having discovered the plot, placed himself at the head of a determined and desperate band of followers, broke through the ranks of the enemies that surrounded him, and made his escape to a neighboring wood. From this wood he took a route which led him to a river, intending to pass the river by a bridge which he expected to find there, and then to destroy the bridge as soon as he had crossed it, so as to prevent his enemies from following him. By this means he hoped to make his way to some place of safety. He found, on arriving at the brink of the stream, that the bridge had been carried away by the inundation. He, however, pressed forward into the water on horseback, intending to ford the stream. The torrent was wild, and the danger was imminent, but Alexander pressed on. At length one of the attendants, seeing his master in imminent danger of being drowned, exclaimed aloud, "This cursed river! well is it named Acheron." The word Acheron, in the original language, signifies River of Sorrow.

The River of Sorrow

Alexander killed

His body falls into the river

By this exclamation Alexander learned, for the first time, that the river he was crossing bore the same name with the one in Epirus, which he supposed had been referred to in the warning of the

oracle. He was at once overwhelmed with consternation. He did not know whether to go forward or to return. The moment of indecision was suddenly ended by a loud outcry from his attendants, giving the alarm that the traitors were close upon him. Alexander then pushed forward across the water. He succeeded in gaining the bank; but as soon as he did so, a dart from one of his enemies reached him and killed him on the spot. His lifeless body fell back into the river, and was floated down the stream, until at length it reached the camp of the enemy, which happened to be on the bank of the stream below. Here it was drawn out of the water, and subjected to every possible indignity. The soldiers cut the body in two, and, sending one part to one of the cities as a trophy of their victory, they set up the other part in the camp as a target for the soldiers to shoot at with darts and javelins.

A woman rescues the remains

At length a woman came into the camp, and, with earnest entreaties and many tears, begged the soldiers to give the mutilated corpse to her. Her object in wishing to obtain possession of it was, that she might send it home to Epirus, to the family of Alexander, and buy with it the liberty of her husband and her children, who were among the hostages which had been sent there. The soldiers acceded to this request, and the parts of the body having been brought together again, were taken to Epirus, and delivered to Olympias, by whom the remains were honorably interred. We must presume that the woman who sent them obtained the expected reward, in the return of her husband and children, though of this we are not expressly informed.

Olympias

Of course, the disastrous result of this most unfortunate expedition had the effect, in Epirus, of diminishing very much the popularity and the strength of that branch of the royal family – namely, the line of Neoptolemus – to which Alexander had belonged. Accordingly, instead of being succeeded by one of his brothers, Æacides, the father of Pyrrhus, who was the representative of the other line, was permitted quietly to assume the crown. It might have been expected that Olympias would have opposed his accession, as she was herself a princess of the rival line. She did not, however, do so. On the contrary, she gave him her support, and allied herself to him very closely; and he, on his part, became in subsequent years one of her most devoted adherents and friends.

Æacides marches to relieve Pydna

When Olympias was shut up in Pydna by the army of Cassander, as was related in the last chapter, and sent for Æacides to come to her aid, he immediately raised an army and marched to the frontier. He found the passes in the mountains which led from Epirus to Macedonia all strongly guarded, but he still determined to force his way through. He soon, however, began to observe marks of discontent and dissatisfaction among the officers of his army. These indications increased, until at length the disaffection broke out into open mutiny, as stated in the last chapter. Æacides then called his forces together, and gave orders that all who were unwilling to follow him into Macedon should be allowed freely to return. He did not wish, he said, that any should accompany him on such an expedition excepting those who went of their own free will. A considerable part of the army then returned, but, instead of repairing peaceably to their homes, they raised a general insurrection in Epirus, and brought the family of Neoptolemus again to the throne. A solemn decree of the state was passed, declaring that Æacides, in withdrawing from the kingdom, had forfeited his crown, and banishing him forever from the country. And as this revolution was intended to operate, not merely against Æacides personally, but against the branch of the royal family to which he belonged, the new

government deemed it necessary, in order to finish their work and make it sure, that many of his relatives and friends, and especially his infant son and heir, should die. Several of the members of Æacides' family were accordingly killed, though the attendants in charge succeeded in saving the life of the child by a sudden flight.

The flight of the family with Pyrrhus

The party meet with a narrow escape

The escape was effected by the instrumentality of two of the officers of Æacides' household, named Androclides and Angelus. These men, as soon as the alarm was given, hurried the babe away, with only such nurses and other attendants as it was necessary to take with them. The child was still unweaned; and though those in charge made the number of attendants as small as possible, still the party were necessarily of such a character as to forbid any great rapidity of flight. A troop was sent in pursuit of them, and soon began to draw near. When Androclides found that his party would be overtaken by the troop, he committed the child to the care of three young men, bidding them to ride on with him, at their utmost speed, to a certain town in Macedon, called Megaræ, where they thought he would be safe; and then he himself, and the rest of his company, turned back to meet the pursuers. They succeeded, partly by their representations and entreaties, and partly by such resistance and obstruction as it was in their power to make, in stopping the soldiers where they were. At length, having, though with some difficulty, succeeded in getting away from the soldiers, Androclides and Angelus rode on by secret ways till they overtook the three young men. They now began to think that the danger was over. At length, a little after sunset, they approached the town of Megaræ. There was a river just before the town, which looked too rough and dreadful to be crossed. The party, however, advanced to the brink, and attempted to ford the stream, but they found it impossible. It was growing dark; the water of the river, having been swelled by rains, was very high and boisterous, and they found that they could not get over. At length they saw some of the people of the town coming down to the bank on the opposite side. They were in hopes that these people could render them some assistance in crossing the stream, and they began to call out to them for this purpose; but the stream ran so rapidly, and the roaring of the torrent was so great, that they could not make themselves heard. The distance was very inconsiderable, for the stream was not wide; but, though the party with Pyrrhus called aloud and earnestly, and made signs, holding up the child in their arms to let the people see him, they could not make themselves understood.

Ingenious mode of sending a letter

At last, after spending some time in these fruitless efforts, one of the party who were with Pyrrhus thought of the plan of writing what they wished to say upon a piece of bark, and throwing it across the stream to those on the other side. They accordingly pulled off some bark from a young oak which was growing on a bank of the river, and succeeded in making characters upon it by means of the tongue of a buckle, sufficient to say that they had with them Pyrrhus, the young prince of Epirus, and that they were flying with him to save his life, and to implore the people on the other side to contrive some way to get them over the river. This piece of bark they then managed to throw across the stream. Some say that they rolled it around a javelin, and then gave the javelin to the strongest of their party to throw; others say that they attached it to a stone. In some way or other they contrived to give it a sufficient momentum to carry it across the water; and the people on the other side, when

they obtained it, and read what was written upon it, were greatly excited by the tidings, and engaged at once with ardor and enthusiasm in efforts to save the child.

The raft

They brought axes and began to cut down trees to make a raft. In due time the raft was completed; and, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, and the force and swiftness of the current of the stream, the party of fugitives succeeded in crossing upon it, and thus brought the child and all the attendants accompanying him safely over.

The party with Pyrrhus did not intend to stop at Megaræ. They did not consider it safe, in fact, for them to remain in any part of Macedon, not knowing what course the war between Polysperchon and Cassander would take there, or how the parties engaged in the contest might stand affected toward Pyrrhus. They determined, therefore, to press forward in their flight till they had passed through Macedon, and reached the country beyond.

Pyrrhus is carried to Illyria

The country north of Macedon, on the western coast, the one in which they determined to seek refuge, was Illyria. The name of the King of Illyria was Glaucias. They had reason to believe that Glaucias would receive and protect the child, for he was connected by marriage with the royal family of Epirus, his wife, Beroa, being a princess of the line of Æacides. When the fugitives arrived at the court of Glaucias, they went to the palace, where they found Glaucias and Beroa; and, after telling the story of their danger and escape, they laid the child down as a suppliant at the feet of the king.

Little Pyrrhus at the court of Glaucias

Glaucias felt not a little embarrassed at the situation in which he was placed, and did not know what to do. He remained for a long time silent. At length, little Pyrrhus, who was all the while lying at his feet, began to creep closer toward him; and, finally, taking hold of the king's robe, he began to climb up by it, and attempted to get into his lap, looking up into the king's face, at the same time, with a countenance in which the expression of confidence and hope was mingled with a certain instinctive infantile fear. The heart of the king was so touched by this mute appeal, that he took the child up in his arms, dismissed at once all prudential considerations from his mind, and, in the end, delivered the boy to the queen, Beroa, directing her to bring him up with her own children.

Cassander soon discovered the place of Pyrrhus's retreat, and he made great efforts to induce Glaucias to give him up. He offered Glaucias a very large sum of money if he would deliver Pyrrhus into his hands; but Glaucias refused to do it. Cassander would, perhaps, have made war upon Glaucias to compel him to comply with this requisition, but he was then fully occupied with the enemies that threatened him in Greece and Macedon. He did, subsequently, make an attempt to invade the dominions of Glaucias, and to get possession of the person of Pyrrhus, but the expedition failed, and after that the boy was allowed to remain in Illyria without any further molestation.

Pyrrhus becomes a large boy

Cassander's plans

Glaucias establishes Pyrrhus on his throne

Time passed on, until at length Pyrrhus was twelve years old. During this interval great changes took place in the affairs of Cassander in Macedon. At first he was very successful in his plans. He succeeded in expelling Polysperchon from the country, and in establishing himself as king. He caused Roxana and the young Alexander to be assassinated, as was stated in the last chapter, so as to remove out of the way the only persons who he supposed could ever advance any rival claims to the throne. For a time every thing went well and prosperously with him, but at length the tide of his affairs seemed to turn. A new enemy appeared against him in Asia – a certain distinguished commander, named Demetrius, who afterward became one of the most illustrious personages of his age. Just at this time, too, the King of Epirus, Alcetus, the prince of the family of Neoptolemus, who had reigned during Pyrrhus's exile in Illyria, died. Glaucias deemed this a favorable opportunity for restoring Pyrrhus to the throne. He accordingly placed himself at the head of an army, and marched into Epirus, taking the young prince with him. No effectual resistance was made, and Pyrrhus was crowned king. He was, of course, too young actually to reign, and a sort of regent was accordingly established in power, with authority to govern the country in the young king's name until he should come of age.

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