

the youth who; at the age of twenty-four, had, in three battles, won the empire of Persia; who was master of Greece, of Asia, and of Egypt; and who, in the course of a few years, built more cities than any other conqueror is recorded to have destroyed, merited no other treatment than to be confined as a madman.* A judgment of this kind may be allowed to pass in a satire of Boileau, but has no weight in the balance of sober reflection. Guided by a spirit of just criticism in the perusal of the history of this great man, of which we have here exhibited some general outlines, we shall discern the characteristics of a singular genius taking its direction from unbounded ambition: an excellent and ingenuous nature corrupted at length by an unvarying current of success; and a shocking example of the violence of the passions, when eminence of fortune removes all restraint, or flattery stimulates to their uncontrolled indulgence.

The extent of the views of Alexander, and the reach of his genius, may be estimated from those *five* schemes which he had entered in his table-book as enterprises which he still purposed to accomplish for establishing and securing the empire he had founded. These were, 1. That 1000 ships of war should be built in Phœnicia and Cyprus, for the conquest of the Carthaginian empire, and of all the states on the African and European coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. 2. That a high road should be made from Egypt along the African coast to the Pillars of Hercules, and garrisons and cities built along it at convenient stations:—a facility of communication between the distant parts of an empire so extended, he judged to be absolutely essential to its preservation. 3. That six magnificent temples should be built in various parts of the empire, to promote an amicable consonance in the great principles of religion, and reliance on the divine government; without which, as a fundamental persuasion, independent of all the various modes of worship, no empire can long exist or flourish. 4. That sea-ports, harbors, and arsenals, should be constructed in every convenient situation, for the reception and security of the fleets. 5. That all the new cities he had founded should be planted with colonies, and interchanges made by transporting the Asiatics into Europe and Africa, the Europeans and Africans into Asia. This, which tended to the union and consolidation of all the different parts of his empire, was the main end and centre of all the projects of this extraordinary man. His object, in short, was *universal empire*. Whether that object was practicable or attainable need not be inquired; it was so in his opinion, and all his designs and measures tended to that end. This object is the

* *Heureux, si de son tems pour des bonnes raisons,
La Macedoine eut eu des petites maisons.*

BOILEAU.

key to his whole conduct, and reconciles every apparent anomaly of his character: it accounts for his desire to be held of divine origin, while his mind had no tincture of credulity; for his gentle and conciliating manners opposed to the arrogance of his temper, impatient of control or opposition; for his generosity, clemency, and munificence; for his frantic resentment of every thing that tended to mortify his pride; for the assumption of the Eastern dress, and imitation of the Eastern manners, and the studied abolition of all distinctions between his native subjects, and the nations whom he subdued.

Alexander on his death-bed had appointed no successor, but had given his ring to Perdiccas, one of his officers, and his principal favorite after the death of Hephæstion. When his courtiers asked him to whom he wished the empire to devolve upon his death, he replied, *To the most worthy*; and he is said to have added, that he foresaw this bequest would prepare for him very extraordinary funeral rites. He left by Barsine, the widow of Memnon of Rhodes, a son named Hercules; he had a brother, Aridæus, a weak prince, whom he carried along with him in his expeditions; and his Queen Roxana, the daughter of Oxyartes, a Bactrian, was with child at his death. By Statira, the daughter of Darius Codomannus, he had no children, nor by Parisatis, the daughter of Ochus. His principal officers having held a council upon his death, it was agreed that the crown should be conferred on Aridæus, who took the name of Philip; and it was resolved that the child of Roxana, if a son, should share the empire with him. She was soon after delivered of a son, who was named Alexander, and whose right was accordingly acknowledged.

This settlement of the empire jointly upon a weak man and an infant was the result of the jealousy of the principal officers, who could not agree upon the choice of any one of themselves, while each thought he had an equal claim with his competitors. Those of the most moderate ambition would have been contented with the sovereignty of some of the provinces; while others aimed at an undivided empire. Among the latter was Perdiccas, who, from the circumstance of receiving the ring of Alexander, was considered as tutor of the princes, and as such had a share of the regency; but this ambitious man interpreted the king's gift as a designation of him for his successor.

His policy was singular; he brought about a division of the whole empire into thirty-three different governments, among the chief officers of Alexander; men of very different measure of abilities, and who he foresaw would be for ever at variance. His aid must, therefore, probably be courted, and he proposed by an artful management to weaken all, and thus reduce them by degrees under his own authority. In this division of the empire, the original monarchy of Macedon, with all the provinces gained by Philip, together with Greece, were allotted to Antipater and Craterus. Paphlagonia and

Cappadocia were assigned to Eumenes; Egypt to Ptolemy; and to Antigonus, Phrygia, Lycia, and Pamphylia. Lysimachus had Thrace with the adjacent countries upon the Euxine. To Perdicas himself, no distinct share of the empire was assigned in government; he contented himself with his influence in the regency and the command of the household troops.

On the history of the successors of Alexander, the Abbé Condilliar has made a very just reflection: "We are interested," says he "in the revolutions of the Grecian states; our admiration is excited by the conquests of Alexander; but we can scarcely fix our attention on the history of his successors. Yet a vast theatre is opened to our view—a variety of scenes and multiplied catastrophes. How then does it happen that the history of those transactions is less interesting than the fate of Lacedæmon? It is not the magnitude of an object that renders it truly interesting. A large picture is often displeasing from the very circumstance of its greatness. We lose the connection of its parts, because the eye cannot take them in at once. Still less will a large picture give us pleasure, if every portion of it presents a different scene or action, each unconnected with the other." Such is the case with the history of the successors of Alexander. The multitude of subordinate governors who share and dismember this vast empire, every one of whom we behold pursuing separate schemes of ambition, throws a confusion upon the whole picture, which it requires the most laborious attention to dissipate; and even when that is accomplished, at the expense of much fatigue and trouble, the end to be gained, either in instruction or pleasure, is not adequate to the cost. In the revolutions of Greece, our views are continually fixed upon the most striking and interesting objects; the development of the human mind, in its advances from rudeness to refinement; the progress of government and legislation; the gradual changes of national manners; the exercise of the noblest passions, the love of country and of ingenuous freedom; the display of eminent virtues and great abilities. But in this motley and confused drama of the dismembered empire of Alexander, there is neither a people nor a country for whom our interest is excited: there is neither a display of talents nor of virtues. At the head of the empire we behold two sovereigns, the one a fool, the other an infant; an unprincipled and ambitious regent with no defined or legal authority; a multitude of inferior governors, each aiming at an extension of his own power by the overthrow of his rivals; and, finally, the consequence of their contentions and intrigues, in the extinction of all the family and kindred of Alexander.

There is, however, one exception to these barbarous and disgusting scenes. Among the numerous governors, Ptolemy, surnamed Soter, a Macedonian of mean extraction, had Egypt, as we have remarked, for his share of the empire. He owed his elevation to his merit, and had served as a general under Alexander

from the commencement of the Persian war. While he aimed at independence as a sovereign, he had too much good sense to embroil himself with the disputes of the other governors, but applied himself with earnestness and success to the establishment of his own authority, and the advancement of the happiness of his people. Perdicas judged that he would find in Ptolemy the chief obstacle to his ambitious views; and he therefore turned his attention first to the reduction of Egypt. In this enterprise he had the authority of the kings, on the plausible pretext, that Ptolemy had revolted from their sovereignty, and made himself an independent monarch. But the attempt was unsuccessful; he found it impracticable to make impression on the Egyptian frontier, which Ptolemy defended with a powerful army; his troops, disgusted with the severe and haughty manner of their leader, and exasperated with their ill success, mutinied, and assassinated him; and transferred their services and allegiance to the governor of Egypt.

Ptolemy, whose reputation was enhanced by the defeat of this enterprise, might now have succeeded to the power and authority of Perdicas, as regent, under Aridæus and the infant prince; but he wisely declined that dangerous dignity, which could add nothing to his real power; and, on his refusal, it fell to Antipater, the governor of Macedonia. A new division was now made of the empire; and Babylon and Assyria were assigned to Seleucus. But Egypt still remained under Ptolemy, who had established his authority in that quarter upon a solid basis.

Eumenes, the governor of Cappadocia, a man of great merit, and firmly attached to the family of Alexander, was, from those circumstances, regarded with a jealous eye by the rest of his colleagues. Antipater, in the quality of Regent, proclaimed war against him, and he was betrayed and delivered up to Antigonus, the governor of Phrygia and Lydia, who put him to death, and seized upon his states. Antigonus, thus acquiring the command of a great part of the Asiatic provinces, began to aspire to the universal empire of Asia. He attacked and ravaged the dominions of the conterminous governors. Seleucus, the governor of Babylon, unable to make head against him in the field, fled into Egypt, and humbly sought the aid and protection of Ptolemy; who, alarmed at the designs of Antigonus, supported the fugitive with a powerful army, and reinstated him in his government of Babylon.

Seleucus was beloved by his subjects, and the time of his return to Babylon became a common epoch through all the Asiatic nations. It is called the era of the *Seleucida*, and is fixed 312 years before the birth of Christ. It is made use of all over the East, by Jews, Christians, and Mahometans. The Jews call it the *era of contracts*; because, when subject to the Syro-Macedonian princes, they were obliged to employ it in all contracts and civil deeds. The Arabians term it the *era of the two-horned*; a denomination taken from the coins or medals of Seleucus, in

which he is represented with horns, like those of a ram. In the book of the Maccabees it is called the *era of the kingdom of the Greeks*.

Antigonus, however, persisted in his schemes of ambition. He sent his son, Demetrius, with a fleet against Ptolemy, which was victorious in an engagement with that of the Egyptians. It was on this occasion that Antigonus and Demetrius assumed to themselves the title of kings, in which they were imitated by all the other governors. A league was now formed against Antigonus and Demetrius, by Ptolemy and Seleucus, in which they were joined by Cassander, the son of Antipater, and Lysimachus; the former, governor of Macedonia, and the latter of Thrace. The battle of Ipsus, in Phrygia, decided the contest. Antigonus was killed, Demetrius fled with the shattered remains of his army, and the conquerors made a partition of their dominions. Ptolemy, in addition to Egypt and Lybia, had Arabia, Cœlosyria, and Palestine; and Cassander had Macedonia and Greece. The share of Lysimachus was Thrace, Bithynia, and some other provinces beyond the Hellespont. Seleucus had all the rest of Asia, to the river Indus. This last kingdom, the most powerful and splendid of the whole, was called the kingdom of Syria; of which the capital, Antioch, was built by Seleucus, and was the residence of the line of monarchs descended from him.

CHAPTER V.

Flourishing state of Egypt under the Ptolemies—Greece after the death of Alexander—Achaian league—Revolution at Lacedæmon—Ambitious designs of Philip II. of Macedon draw on him the vengeance of the Romans—Their aid solicited by the Ætolians—Macedon conquered—Greece becomes a Roman province.

WE have remarked, that under the first Ptolemy, surnamed Soter, the kingdom of Egypt was extremely flourishing. This prince, a true patriot and wise politician, considered the happiness of his people as the first object of government. A lover himself of the arts and sciences, they attained, during his reign, to a degree of splendor which rivalled their state in the most illuminated days of Greece. It is remarkable that Greece, which owed her first dawning of literature and the arts to the Egyptians, should

now contribute to polish and instruct her ancient masters. Ptolemy Soter founded the famous library of Alexandria,* that immense treasury of literature, which, in the time of his son Ptolemy Philadelphus,† contained above 100,000 volumes. It was still enlarged by the succeeding monarchs of the same race, till it amounted, at length, as Strabo informs us, to 700,000 volumes; a collection quite prodigious, when we consider the comparative labor and expense of amassing books before the invention of printing, and since that era. This immense library was burnt to ashes in the war which Julius Cæsar waged with the inhabitants of Alexandria. Adjoining to this was a smaller library, which escaped the conflagration at that time, and which became, in the course of ages, very considerable; but, as if fate had opposed the progress and continuance of Egyptian literature, this second library of Alexandria was burnt, about 800 years afterwards, when the Saracens took possession of Egypt. The books were taken out by order of the Caliph Omar, and used, for six months, in supplying the fires of the public baths. "If these books," said Omar, "contain nothing but what is in the Alcoran, they are of no use; if they contain any thing not in it, they are of no consequence to salvation; and if any thing contrary to it, they are damnable, and ought not to be suffered."

Ptolemy Philadelphus, the son of Soter, inherited the talents and many of the good qualities of his father, though stained with considerable blemishes; it was by the orders of this prince, who wished to understand the laws and the history of the Jews, and enrich his library with a copy of the Books of Moses, that that translation called the *Septuagint*, as being the work of seventy-two interpreters, was made from the Hebrew into Greek.‡ Egypt

* Ptolemy Soter was, himself, a man of letters, and wrote a history of the wars of Alexander, which was greatly esteemed, but has not come down to posterity.

† He was so named, ironically, for having put two of his brothers to death, from a jealousy of their popularity with his subjects.

‡ These seventy-two interpreters are said to have been native Jews, six of the most learned men being chosen from each of the twelve tribes, and sent to Egypt by Eleazar, the high priest, at the request of Ptolemy, who had conciliated his good will, by releasing all the Jewish captives in Egypt. This account has been disputed upon no better ground than that a smaller number would have served the purpose as well as the larger.—See Prideaux. For four hundred years the Septuagint translation was held in such esteem by the Jews themselves, that it was read in many of the synagogues of Judæ in preference to the original. But when they saw that the Christians esteemed it equally, they then became desirous of exploding its credit; and in the second century, Aquila, an apostate Christian, was employed to make a new Greek version, in which he designedly perverted the sense of all the passages most directly applicable to our Saviour. Other translations were likewise made by Symmachus and Theodotion. The original version, by the carelessness of transcribers, also became very erroneous; so that, in the third century, Origen, in the view of forming a correct copy of the Scriptures, published first one edition in four columns (thence called the *Tetrapla*), containing the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, along with the Hebrew text; and afterwards a second edition, called *Hexapla*, in which two