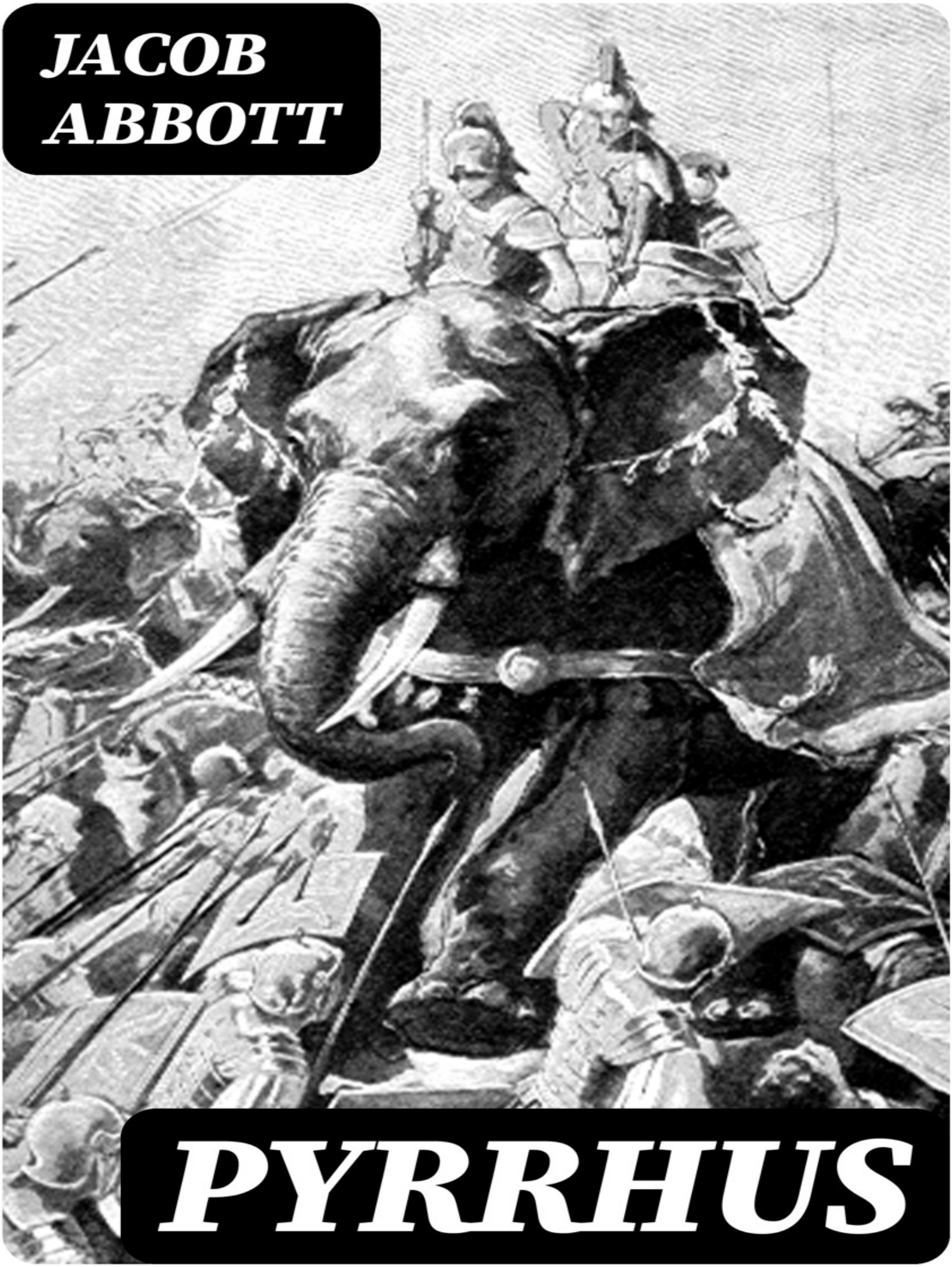
JACOB ABBOTT



PYRRHUS

JACOB ABBOTT

PYRRHUS

Jacob Abbott

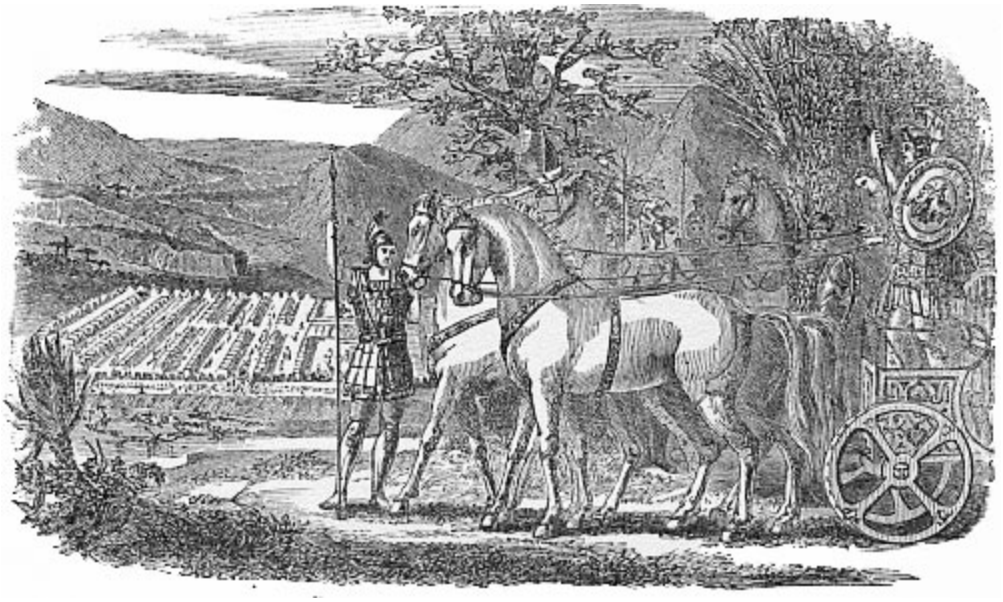
Pyrrhus

Makers of History

EAN 8596547098560

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents



PYRRHUS VIEWING THE ROMAN ENCAMPMENT.

PREFACE.

Table of Contents

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.

ENGRAVINGS.

Table of Contents


ADRIATIC SEA
TUSCAN SEA
THRACE
MACEDONIA
EPIRUS
Pydna
Dyrrachium
Scodra
Beneventum
Asculum
Tarentum
LUCANIA
CORCYRA
Actium
Argos
Sparta
Messana
Syracuse
CARTHAGE
CORSICA
SARDINIA
EMPIRE OF PYRRHUS

PYRRHUS.

Chapter I.

Olympias and Antipater.

Table of Contents

B.C. 336-321

Table of Contents

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 ereption 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, [A] 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 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.[B] 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.

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.[C] 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 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.[D] 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, 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