Plutarch (c. 46-120), a Greek writer living under Roman rule in the city of Chaeronea, is best known for writing a series of Lives of the Greeks and Romans. The work is made up of paired biographies of Greeks and Romans, each pair designed to highlight the moral value and danger of some character trait or activity. The biography of Alexander the Great (336-323 BC) which appears below is taken from this larger work. Alexander’s father, King Philip II of Macedon (359-336 BC), a kingdom to the north of Greece, had brought the city states of the Greek mainland under his rule before his death, when he had laid plans for an attack on the enormous Persian empire to the east. Aside from the occasional inscription, nothing in the way of written evidence for Alexander’s career survives from Alexander’s own time.

It being my purpose to write the lives of Alexander the king and of Caesær,¹ by whom Pompey was destroyed, the multitude of their great actions affords so large a field that I would be to blame if I should not by way of apology forewarn my reader that I have chosen rather to epitomize the most celebrated parts of their story than to insist at large on every particular circumstance of it. It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write histories, but lives. And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men; sometimes a matter of less importance, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations than do the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles whatsoever. Therefore, just as portrait painters are more exact in the lines and features of the face, in which the character is seen, than in the other parts of the body, so I must be allowed to give my more particular attention to the marks and indications of the souls of men, and while I endeavor by these to portray their lives, may I be free to leave more weighty matters and great battles to be treated of by others.

It is agreed on by all hands that, on his father’s side, Alexander descended from Hercules by Caranus, and from Aeacus² by Neoptolemus³ on his mother’s side. His father Philip, being in Samothrace, when he was quite young, fell in love there with Olympias, in company with whom he was initiated in the religious ceremonies of the country, and her father and mother being both dead, soon after, with the consent of her brother, Arymbas, he married her. The night before the

1 Julius Caesar (first century BC), with whom Plutarch paired his life of Alexander.
2 Son of Zeus.
3 Son of Achilles.
consummation of their marriage, she dreamed that a thunderbolt fell upon her body, which kindled a great fire, whose divided flames dispersed themselves all around, and then were extinguished. And Philip, some time after he was married, dreamed that he sealed up his wife’s body with a seal, whose impression, as he fancied, was the figure of a lion. Some of the diviners interpreted this as a warning to Philip to watch his wife closely; but Aristander of Telmessus, considering how unusual it was to seal up anything that was empty, assured him the meaning of his dream was that the queen was with a boy child, who would one day prove as stout and courageous as a lion. Once, moreover, a serpent was found lying by Olympias as she slept, which more than anything else, it is said, abated Philip’s passion for her. Whether he feared her as an enchantress, or thought she was the partner of some god, and so looked on himself as excluded, he was ever after less fond of sleeping with her. Others say that the women of this country having always been extremely addicted to the enthusiastic Orphic rites, and the wild worship of Dionysius⁴ (upon which account they were called Clodones, and Mimallones⁵), imitated in many things the practices of the Edonian and Thracian women about Mount Haemus, from whom the word *threskeutin* seems to have been derived, as a special term for superfluous and superstitious ceremonies; and that Olympias, zealously affecting these fanatical and enthusiastic inspirations, to perform them with more barbaric dread, was accustomed in the dances proper to these ceremonies to have great tame serpents proper about her, which sometimes creeping out of the ivy in the mystic winnowing baskets, sometimes wind ing themselves around the women’s wands and garlands, made a spectacle which men could not look upon without terror.

Philip, after this vision, sent Chaeron of Megalopolis to consult the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, by which he was commanded to perform sacrifice, and henceforth pay particular honor, above all other gods, to Ammon,⁶ and was told he would one day lose that eye with which he presumed to peep through that chink of the door, when he saw the god, in the form of a serpent, in the company of his wife. Eratosthenes⁷ says that Olympias, when she attended Alexander on his way to the army in his first expedition, told him the secret of his birth, and bade him behave himself with courage suitable to his divine extraction. Others again affirm that she wholly disclaimed any pretensions of the kind, and was accustomed to say, “When will Alexander leave off slandering me to Hera?”⁸

Alexander was born the sixth of Hecatombaeon,⁹ which month the Macedonians call Lous, the same day that the temple of Artemis at Ephesus was burned, which Hagesias of Magnesia¹⁰ makes the occasion of a conceit frigid enough to have stopped the conflagration. The temple, he says, caught fire and was burned while its mistress was absent, assisting at the birth of Alexander. And all the Eastern soothsayers who happened to be then at Ephesus, looking upon the ruin of this temple to be the forerunner of some other calamity, ran around the town, beating their faces, and crying that this day had brought forth something that would prove fatal and destructive to all Asia.

Just after Philip had taken Potidæa,¹¹ he received these three messages at one time: that Parmenio¹² had overthrown the Illyrians in a great battle, that his racehorse had won the course at the Olympic games, and that his wife had given birth to Alexander; with which being naturally well pleased, as an addition to his satisfaction, he was assured by the diviners that a

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4 Both of which involved women having wild revels; Dionysius was the god of wine.
5 Macedonian names for ecstatic worshippers of Dionysius.
6 I.e., Zeus, identified with the chief Egyptian god, Ammon.
7 A scholar at Alexandria (second century BC).
8 Wife of Zeus.
9 A festival in honor of Hera.
10 A Greek historian (fourth century BC).
11 In 356 BC. The city had been in Athens’s sphere of influence.
12 A general of Philip, and later of Alexander.
son whose birth was accompanied with three such successes could not fail to be invincible.

The statues that gave the best representation of Alexander's person were those of Lysippus (by whom alone he would suffer his image to be made), those peculiarities which many of his successors afterwards and his friends used to affect to imitate, the inclination of his head a little on one side towards his left shoulder, and his melting gaze, having been expressed by this artist with great exactness. But Apelles, who drew him with thunderbolts in his hand, made his complexion browner and darker than it was naturally, for he was fair and of a light color, passing into ruddiness in his face and upon his breast. Aristozenus in his Memoirs tells us that a most agreeable odor exhaled from his skin, and that his breath and body all over was so fragrant as to perfume the clothes which he wore next to him, the cause of which might probably be the hot and dry temperament of his body. For sweet smells, Theophrastus believes, are produced by the concoction of moist humors by heat, which is the reason that those parts of the world which are driest and most burned up afford spices of the best kind and in the greatest quantity; for the heat of the sun exhausts all the superfluous moisture which lies on the surface of bodies ready to generate putrefaction. It may be that this hot constitution rendered Alexander so addicted to drinking and so choleric. His temperament as to the pleasures of the body was apparent in him in his very childhood, as he was with much difficulty incited to them, and always used them with great moderation; though in other things he was extremely eager and vehement, and in his love of glory, and the pursuit of it, he showed a solidity of high spirit and magnanimity far above his age. For he neither sought nor valued it upon every occasion, as his father Philip did (who affected to show his eloquence almost to a degree of pedantry, and took care to have the victories of his racing chariots at the Olympic games engraved on his coins), but when he was asked by some around him whether he would run a race in the Olympic games, as he was very swift-footed, he answered, he would, if he might have kings to run with him. Indeed, he seems in general to have looked with indifference, if not with dislike, upon the whole race of athletes. He often appointed prizes, for which not only tragedians and musicians, pipers and harpers, but rhapsodists also, strove to outvie one another; and delighted in all manner of hunting and in fighting with staves; but never gave any encouragement to contests either of boxing or of the pancration.

While he was yet very young, he entertained ambassadors from the king of Persia, in the absence of his father, and entering into much conversation with them, gained so much upon them by his affability, and the questions he asked them, which were far from being childish or trifling (for he inquired of them the length of the ways, the nature of the road into inner Asia, the character of their king, how he carried himself to his enemies, and what forces he was able to bring into the field), that they were struck with admiration of him, and looked upon the ability so much famed of Philip to be nothing in comparison with the forwardness and high purpose that appeared thus early in his son. Whenever he heard Philip had taken any town of importance, or won any signal victory, instead of rejoicing at it altogether, he would tell his companions that his father would anticipate everything, and leave him and them no opportunities of performing great and illustrious actions. For being more bent upon action and glory than upon either pleasure or riches, he esteemed all that he would receive from his father as a diminution and prevention of his own future achievements. He would have chosen to succeed to a kingdom involved in troubles and wars, which would have afforded him frequent exercise of his courage, and a large field of honor, rather than to one already flourishing and settled, where his inheritance would be an inactive life, and the mere enjoyment of wealth and luxury.

The care of his education, as it might be presumed, was committed to a great many attendants, precep-

13 A Student of Aristotle.
14 Student of Plato and Aristotle.
15 Professional reciters of poetry.
16 A sporting contest in which two men fought without weapons, and without rules, except for a ban on bites and gouges.
tors, and teachers, over the whole of whom Leonidas, a near kinsman of Olympias, a man of an austere temper, presided; he did not indeed himself decline the name of what in reality is a noble and honorable office, but in general his dignity, and his near relationship, obtained for him from other people the title of Alexander's foster father and governor. But he who took upon himself the actual place and title of his tutor was Lysimachus the Acarnanian, who, though he had nothing specially to recommend him but his lucky fancy of calling himself Phoenix, Alexander Achilles, and Philip Peleus, was therefore well enough esteemed, and ranked in the next degree after Leonidas.

Philonicus the Thessalian brought the horse Bucephalus to Philip, offering to sell him for 13 talents; but when they went into the field to try him, they found him so very vicious and unmanageable that he reared up when they endeavored to mount him, and would not endure so much as the voice of any of Philip's attendants. Upon which, as they were leading him away as wholly useless and untractable, Alexander, who stood by, said, "What an excellent horse do they lose for want of skill and boldness to manage him!" Philip at first took no notice of what he said; but when he heard him repeat the same thing several times, and saw he was much vexed to see the horse sent away, he said, "Do you reproach those who are older than yourself, as if you knew more, and were better able to manage him than they?" "I could manage this horse," Alexander replied, "better than others do." "And if you do not," Philip said, "what will you forfeit for your rashness?" "I will pay," answered Alexander, "the whole price of the horse." At this the whole company broke out laughing. As soon as the wager was settled amongst them, he immediately ran to the horse, and taking hold of the bridle, turned him directly towards the, sun, having, it seems, observed that he was disturbed at and afraid of the motion of his own shadow; then letting him go forward a little, still keeping the reins in his hands, and stroking him gently when he found him beginning to grow eager and fiery, he let fall his upper garment softly, and with one nimble leap securely mounted him, and when he was seated, little by little drew in the bridle, and curbed him without either striking or spurring him. Presently, when he found him free from all rebelliousness, and impatient only for the course, he let him go at full speed, inciting him now with a commanding voice, and urging him also with his heel. Philip and his friends looked on at first in silence and anxiety for the result, till seeing him make his turn in proper fashion, and come back rejoicing and in triumph about what he had performed, they all burst out into acclamations of applause. His father shedding tears, it is said, for joy, kissed him as he came down from his horse, and said, "O my son, look for a kingdom equal to and worthy of yourself, for Macedonia is too little for you."

After this, considering him to be of a temper easy to be led to his duty by reason, but by no means to be compelled, he always endeavored to persuade rather than to command or force him to anything; and now looking upon the instruction and education of his youth to be of greater difficulty and importance than to be wholly trusted to the ordinary masters in music and poetry, and the common school subjects, and to require, as Sophocles says,

The bridle and the rudder too,

he sent for Aristotle, the most learned and most celebrated philosopher of his time, and rewarded him with a munificence proportionate to and becoming the care he took to instruct his son. For he repeopled Aristotle's native city Stagira, which he had caused to be demolished a little before, and restored all the citizens, who were in exile or slavery, to their habitations. As a place for the pursuit of their studies and exercise, he assigned the temple of the Nymphs, near Mieza, where, to this very day, they show you Aristotle's stone seats, and the shady walks which he was accustomed to frequent. It would appear that Alexander received from him not only his doctrines of morals

17 Teacher of Achilles.
18 Father of Achilles.
19 Playwright (fifth century BC).
and of politics, but also something of those more abstruse and profound theories which these philosophers, by the very names they gave them, professed to reserve for oral communication to the initiated, and did not allow many to become acquainted with. For when he was in Asia, and heard Aristotle had published some treatises of that kind, he wrote to him, using very plain language to him in behalf of philosophy, the following letter. "Alexander to Aristotle, greeting. You have not done well to publish your books of oral doctrine; for what is there now that we excel others in, if those things which we have been particularly instructed in be laid open to all? For my part, I assure you, I would rather excel others in the knowledge of what is excellent, than in the extent of my power and dominion. Farewell." And Aristotle, soothing this passion for preeminence, speaks, in his excuse for himself, of these doctrines as in fact both published and not published: as indeed, to say the truth, his books on metaphysics are written in a style which makes them useless for ordinary teaching, and instructive only in the way of aids to the memory for those who are already conversant in that sort of learning.

Doubtless also it was to Aristotle that he owed the inclination he had, not to the theory only, but likewise to the practice of the art of medicine. For when any of his friends were sick, he would often prescribe them their course of diet, and medicines proper to their disease, as we may find in his epistles. He was naturally a great lover of all kinds of learning and reading, and Onesicritus informs us that he constantly laid Homer’s Iliad, according to the copy corrected by Aristotle, called the casket copy, with his dagger under his pillow, declaring that he esteemed it a perfect portable treasure of all military virtue and knowledge. When he was in upper Asia, being destitute of other books, he ordered Harpalus to send some, who furnished him with Philistus’s History, a great many of the plays of Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus, and some dithyrambic odes, composed by Telestes and Philoxenus. For a while he loved and cherished Aristotle no less, as he was wont to say himself, than if he had been his father, giving this reason for it: that as he had received life from the one, so the other had taught him to live well. But afterwards, upon some mistrust of him, yet not so great as to make him do him any harm, his familiarity and friendly kindness to him lost so much of its former force and affection as to make it evident he was alienated from him. However, his violent thirst and passion for learning, once implanted, still grew up with him, and never decayed, as appears by his veneration of Anaxarchus, by the present of 50 talents which he sent to Xenocrates, and his particular care and esteem of Dandamis and Calanus.

While Philip went on his expedition against the Byzantines, he left Alexander, then 16 years old, his lieutenant in Macedonia, committing the charge of his seal to him. Alexander, so as not to sit idle, reduced the rebellious Maedi, and having taken their chief town by storm, drove out the barbarous inhabitants, and planting a colony of several nations in their place, called the place after his own name, Alexandropolis.

At the battle of Chaeronea, which his father fought against the Greeks, he is said to have been the first man that charged the Theban’s sacred band. And even in my remembrance there stood an old oak near the river Cephissus, which people called Alexander’s oak because his tent was pitched under it. And not far off are to be seen the graves of the Macedonians who fell in that battle. This early bravery made Philip so fond of him that nothing pleased him more than to hear his subjects call himself their general and Alexander their king.

20 A contemporary of Alexander, who knew him and wrote his biography which, however, had a reputation in the ancient world for romantic exaggeration.
21 A history of Sicily (fourth century BC).
22 Three leading writers of tragedy in fifth-century BC Athens.
23 A philosopher and companion of Alexander.
24 Master of Plato’s school, the Academy, in Alexander’s time.
25 I.e., “Alexander city.”
26 And which sealed Philip’s dominance over the Greek mainland.
But the disorders of his family, chiefly caused by his new marriages and attachments (the troubles that began in the women’s chambers spreading, so to speak, to the whole kingdom), raised various complaints and differences between them, which the violence of Olympias, a woman of a jealous and implacable temper, made wider by exasperating Alexander against his father. Among the rest, this accident contributed most to their falling out. At the wedding of Cleopatra, whom Philip fell in love with and married, she being much too young for him, her uncle Attalus in his cups desired that the Macedonians would implore the gods to give them a lawful successor to the kingdom by his niece. This so irritated Alexander that, throwing one of the cups at his head, he said, “You villain, what am I then, a bastard?” Then Philip, taking Attalus’s part, rose up and would have run his son through; but by good fortune for them both, either his over hasty rage, or the wine he had drunk, made his foot slip, so that he fell down on the floor. At this Alexander reproachfully insulted him: “See there,” he said, “the man who makes preparations to pass out of Europe into Asia, overturned in passing from one seat to another.” After this debauch, he and his mother Olympias withdrew from Philip’s company, and when he had placed her in Epirus, he himself retired into Illyria.

At about this time, Demaratus the Corinthian, an old friend of the family, who had the freedom to say anything among them without offense, coming to visit Philip, after the first compliments and embraces were over, Philip asked him whether the Greeks were in agreement with one another. “It ill becomes you,” replied Demaratus, “to be so solicitous about Greece, when you have involved your own house in so many dissensions and calamities.” He was so convinced by this seasonable reproach that he immediately recalled his son home, and by Demaratus’s mediation prevailed with him to return. But this reconciliation did not last not long....

Not long after this, Pausanias,27 having had an outrage done to him at the instance of Attalus and Cleopatra, when he found he could get no reparation at Philip’s hands for his disgrace, murdered him. The guilt of which fact was laid for the most part upon Olympias, who was said to have encouraged and exasperated the enraged youth to revenge. Some sort of suspicion attached even to Alexander himself, who, it was said, when Pausanias came and complained to him of the injury he had received, repeated the verse from Euripides’s Medea,

On husband, and on father, and on bride.28

However, he took care to find out and punish the accomplices of the conspiracy severely, and was very angry with Olympias for treating Cleopatra inhumanly in his absence.

Alexander was but 20 years old when his father was murdered, and succeeded to a kingdom beset on all sides with great dangers and rancorous enemies. For not only the barbarous nations that bordered on Macedonia were impatient of being governed by any but their own native princes, but Philip likewise, though he had been victorious over the Greeks, yet, as the time had not been sufficient for him to complete his conquest and accustom them to his sway, had simply left all things in a general disorder and confusion. It seemed to the Macedonians a very critical time; and some would have persuaded Alexander to give up all thought of keeping the Greeks in subjection by force of arms, and rather to apply himself to win back by gentle means the allegiance of the tribes who were planning revolt, and try the effect of indulgence in arresting the first motions towards revolution. But he rejected this counsel as weak and timorous, and looked upon it to be more prudent to secure himself by resolution and magnanimity than, by seeming to cater to anyone, to encourage all to trample over him. In pursuit of this opinion, he reduced the barbarians to tranquillity, and put an end to all fear of war from them by a rapid expedition into their country as far as the river Danube, where he defeated Syrmos, king of the Triballians, in a great battle. And hearing the Thebans29 were in revolt,

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27 A companion of Philip.
28 In the play Medea exacts her vengeance on her husband, the new bride for whom he left her, and on the bride’s father.
29 Thebes was one of the chief cities of the Greek mainland.
and the Athenians in correspondence with them, he immediately marched through the pass of Thermopylae, saying that to Demosthenes, who had called him a child while he was in Illyria and in the country of the Triballians, and a youth when he was in Thessaly, he would appear a man before the walls of Athens.

When he came to Thebes, to show how willing he was to accept their repentance for what was past, he demanded of them only Phoenix and Prothytes, the authors of the rebellion, and proclaimed a general pardon to those who would come over to him. But when the Thebans merely retorted by demanding Philotas and Antipater to be delivered into their hands, and by a proclamation on their part invited all who would assert the liberty of Greece to come over to them, he presently applied himself to make them feel the last extremities of war. The Thebans indeed defended themselves with a zeal and courage beyond their strength, being much outnumbered by their enemies. But when the Macedonian garrison saluted them in all sides that the greater part of fell in the battle; the city, itself being taken by storm, was sacked and razed. Alexander’s hope was that so severe an example might terrify the rest of Greece into obedience and did this also in order to gratify the hostility of his confederates, the Phocians and Plateaens. So that, except the priests, and some few who had heretofore been the friends and connections of the Macedonians, the family of the poet Pindar, and those who were known to have opposed the public vote for the war, all the rest, to the number of 30,000, were publicly sold as slaves; it is computed that upwards of 6,000 were put to the sword.

Among the other calamities that befell the city, it happened that some Thracian soldiers, having broken into the house of a matron of high character and repute, named Timoclea, their captain, after he had raped her, to satisfy his avarice as well as lust, asked her if she knew of any money concealed there, to which she readily answered she did and bade him follow her into a garden, where she showed him a well into which, she told him, upon the taking of the city, she had thrown what she had of most value. The greedy Thracian presently stooping down to view the place where he thought the treasure lay, she came behind him and pushed him into the well, and then flung great stones in upon him, till she had killed him. Afterward, when the soldiers led her away bound to Alexander, her very manner and gait showed her to be a woman of dignity, and of a mind no less elevated, not betraying the least sign of fear or astonishment. And when the king asked her who she was, she said “I am the sister of Theagenes, who fought the battle of Chaeronea against your father Philip, and fell there in command for the liberty of Greece.” Alexander was so surprised, both at what she had done and what she said, that he could not choose but give her and her children their freedom to go where they pleased.

After this he received the Athenians into favor, although they had shown themselves so much concerned at the calamity of Thebes that out of sorrow they omitted the celebration of the Mysteries, and entertained those who escaped with all possible humanity. Whether because, like the lion, his passion was now satisfied, or, after an example of extreme cruelty, he had a mind to appear merciful, it happened well for the Athenians; for he not only forgave them all past offenses, but made them look to their affairs with vigilance, remembering that if he should miscarried, they were likely to be the arbiters of Greece. Certain it is, too, that in later times he often repented of his severity to the Thebans, and his remorse had such influence on his temper as to make him ever after less rigorous to all others. He imputed also the murder of Cleitus, which he committed in his cups, and the unwillingness of the Macedonians to follow him against the Indians, by which his enterprise and glory were left imperfect, to the wrath and vengeance of Dionysius, the protector of Thebes. And it was observed that whatsoever any Theban, who had the good fortune to survive this victory, asked of him, he was sure to grant without the least difficulty.

Soon after, the Greeks, being assembled at the Isthmus, declared their resolution of joining with Alexan-

30 An Athenian orator and politician who had tried to rally the Athenians to resist Macedonian influence in the Greek world.
31 Phocis and Platea were two Greek cities.
32 I.e., the annual religious rites at Eleusis in Attica.
der in the war against the Persians, and proclaimed
him their general. While he stayed here, many public
ministers and philosophers came from all parts to visit
him and congratulated him, but contrary to his expec-
tations, Diogenes of Sinope,33 who then was living at
Corinth, thought so little of him that instead of coming
to compliment him, he never so much as stirred out of
the suburb called the Craneion, where Alexander
found him lying in the sun. When he saw so much
company near him, he raised himself a little, and
vouchsafed to look upon Alexander. When Alexander
kindly asked him whether he wanted anything, "Yes,"
he said, "I would have you not stand between me and
the sun." Alexander was so struck at this answer, and
surprised at the greatness of the man, who had taken
so little notice of him, that as he went away he told his
followers, who were laughing at the moroseness of the
philosopher, that if he were not Alexander, he would
choose to be Diogenes.

Then he went to Delphi in order to consult Apollo
concerning the success of the war he had undertaken,
and happening to come on one of the forbidden days,
when it was esteemed improper to give any answer
from the oracle, he sent messengers to desire the
priestess to do her office. When she refused, on the
plea of a law to the contrary, he went up himself, and
began to draw her by force into the temple, until tired
and overcome with his importunity, she said, "My
son, you are invincible." Alexander, taking hold of
what she said, declared he had received such an
answer as he wished for, and that it was needless to
consult the god any further. Among other prodigies
that attended the departure of his army, the image of
Orpheus34 at Libethra, made of cypress wood, was
seen to sweat in great abundance, to the discouragement
of many. But Aristander told him that, far from
presaging any ill to him, it signified he would perform
acts so important and glorious as would make the
poets and musicians of future ages labor and sweat to
describe and celebrate them.

His army, by the computation who think it the
smallest, consisted of 30,000 foot and 4,000 horse; and
those who make the most of it, speak but of 43,000 foot
and 3,000 horse. Aristobulus35 says he did not have a
fund of above 70 talents for their pay, nor had he more
than 30 days' provision, if we may believe Duris;36
Onesicritus tells us he was 200 talents in debt. Howev-
er narrow and disproportionate the beginnings of so
vast an undertaking might seem to be, yet he would
not embark his army until he had informed himself
particularly what means his friends had to enable them
to follow him, and supplied what they wanted by giv-
ing good farms to some, a village to one, and the rev-
ene of some hamlet or harbor town to another. So that
at last he had portioned out or engaged almost all the
royal property. When this gave Perdiccas an occasion
to ask him what he would leave himself, he replied, his
hopes. "Your soldiers," replied Perdiccas, "will be your
partners in those," and refused to accept any of the
estate he had assigned him. Some others of his friends
did the like, but to those who willingly received or
desired assistance from him, he liberally granted it, as
far as his patrimony in Macedonia would reach, the
most part of which was spent in these donations.

With such vigorous resolutions, and his mind thus
disposed, he passed the Hellespont,37 and at Troy sac-
rificed to Athena, and honored the memory of the
heroes who were buried there with solemn libations,
especially Achilles, whose gravestone he anointed,
and with his friends, as the ancient custom is, ran
naked about Achilles's sepulcher, and crowned it with
garlands, declaring how happy he esteemed him, in
having while he lived so faithful a friend, and when he
was dead, so famous a poet to proclaim his actions.
While he was viewing the rest of the antiquities and
curiosities of the place, being told he might see
Paris's38 harp, if he pleased, he said he thought it not
worth looking on, but he would be glad to see that of
Achilles, with which he used to sing the stories and
great actions of brave men....

33 A philosopher of the Cynic school.
34 A celebrated musician in myth; there was an ancient tradition that he became a god after his death.
35 A follower of Alexander who later wrote about him, and one known for his exaggeration.
36 An historian (mid-third century BC).
37 Which separates Europe from Asia Minor.
38 Paris brought Helen to Troy. Like other characters in Homer's Iliad, he was also known by another name: Alexander.