

# Alexander Tries to send his soldiers back to Europe

Arrian

Anabasis of Alexander

[01]Alexander now sailed round by sea the distance of the shore of the Persian gulf between the Eulaeus and the Tigris, and then sailed up the Tigris to the camp where Hephaestian had encamped with all his force. Thence again he sailed to Opis, a city built on the Tigris. During this voyage upstream he removed the weirs in the river and made the stream level throughout; these weirs had been made by the Persians to prevent anyone sailing up to their country overmastering it by a naval force. All this had been contrived by the Persians, inexpert as they were in maritime matters; and so these weirs, built up at frequent intervals, made the voyage up the Tigris very difficult. Alexander, however, said that contrivances of this kind belonged to those who had no military supremacy; he therefore regarded these safeguards as of no value to himself, and indeed proved them not worth mention by destroying with ease these labours of the Persians.

[02]On reaching Opis, Alexander summoned his Macedonians and announced that those who from old age or from mutilations were unfit for service he there discharged from the army; and he sent them to their own homes. He promised to give them on departure enough to make them objects of greater envy to those at home, and also stir up the rest of the Macedonians to a zeal for sharing his own dangers and toils. Alexander for his part said this, no doubt, to flatter the Macedonians; they, however, feeling that Alexander rather despised them, by this time, and regarded them as altogether useless for warfare, quite naturally, for their part, were annoyed at his remarks, having been annoyed during this whole campaign with a great deal else, since he caused them indignation frequently by his Persian dress which seemed to pint the same way, and the Macedonian equipment of the Oriental "Successors," and the importation of cavalry of foreign tribes into the ranks of the Companions. They did not, then, restrain themselves and keep silence but called upon him to release them all from the army, and bade him carry on war with the help of his sire (by which title they hinted slightly at Ammon). When, then, Alexander heard this--for he had grown worse-tempered at that time, and Oriental subservience had rendered him less disposed than before to the Macedonians--he leapt down from the platform with the officers that

were about him, and bade them arrest the foremost of those who had disturbed the multitude, himself with his finger pointing out to the guards whom they were to arrest; they were in number thirteen. These he ordered to be marched off to die; but as the others, amazed, remained in dead silence, he remounted the platform and spoke thus.

[03]"I now propose to speak, Macedonians, not with a view to checking your homeward impulse; so far as I am concerned, you may go where you will; but that you may know, if you do so go away, how you have behaved to us, and how we have behaved to you. First then I shall begin my speech with my father Philip, as is right and proper. For Philip found you vagabonds and helpless, most of you clothed with sheepskins, pasturing a few sheep on the mountain sides, and fighting for these, with ill success, against Illyrians and Triballians, and the Thracians on your borders; Philip taught you to wear cloaks, in place of sheepskins, brought you down from the hills to the plains, made you doughty opponents of your neighbouring enemies, so that you trusted now not so much to the natural strength of your villages as to your own courage. Nay, he made you dwellers of cities, and civilized you with good laws and customs. Then of those very tribes to whom you submitted, and by whom you and your goods were harried, he made you masters, no longer slaves and subjects; and he added most of Thrace to Macedonia, and seizing the most convenient coast towns, opened up commerce to your country, and enabled you to work your mines in peace. Then he made you overlords of the Thracians, before whom you had long died of terror, and humbling the Phocians, made the high road to Greece broad and easy for you, whereas it had been narrow and difficult. Athens and Thebes, always watching their chance to destroy Macedon, he so completely humbled--ourselves by this time sharing these his labours--that instead of our paying tribute to Athens and obeying Thebes, they had to win from us in turn their right to exist. then he passed into the Peloponnese, and put all in due order there; and now being declared overlord of all the rest of Greece for the expedition against Persia, he won this new prestige not so much for himself as for all Macedonia.

[04]"All these noble deeds of my father towards you are great indeed, if looked at by themselves, and yet small, if compared with ours. I inherited from my father a few gold and silver cups, and not so much as sixty talents in his treasure; and of debts owed by Philip as much as five hundred talents, and yet having myself borrowed over and above these another dight hundred, I set forth from that country which hardly maintained you in comfort and at once opened to you the strait of the Hellespont, though the Persians were then masters of the sea; then, crushing with my cavalry Dareius' satraps, I added to your empire all Ionia, all Acolia, Upper and Lower

Phrygia, and Lydia; Miletus I took by siege; all else I took by surrender and gave to you to reap the fruits thereof. All good things from Egypt and Cyrene, which I took without striking a blow, come to you; the Syrian Valley and Palestine and Mesopotamia are your own possessions; Babylon is yours, Bactria and Susa; the wealth of Lydia, the treasures of Persia, the good things of India, the outer ocean, all are yours; you are satraps, you guards, you captains. So what is left for myself from all these toils save the purple and this diadem? I have taken nothing to myself, nor can anyone show treasures of mine, save those possessions of yours, or what is being safeguarded for you. For there is nothing as concerns myself for which I should reserve them, since I eat the same food that you eat, and have such sleep as you have--and yet I hardly think that I do eat the same food as some of you, who live delicately; I know, moreover, that I wake before you, that you may sleep quietly in your beds.

[05]"Yet you may feel that while you were enduring the toils and distresses, I have acquire all this without toil and without distress. But who of you is conscious of having endured more toil for me than I for him? Or see here, let any who carries wounds strip himself and show them; I too will show mine. For I have no part of my body, in front at least, that is left without scars; there is no weapon, used at close quarters, or hurled from afar, of which I do not carry the mark. Nay, I have been wounded by the sword, hand to hand; I have been shot with arrows, I have been struck from a catapult, smitten many a time with stones and clubs, for you, for your glory, for your wealth; I lead you conquerors through every land, every sea, every river, mountain, plain. I married as you married; the children of many of you will be blood-relations of my children. Moreover, if any had debts, I, being no busybody to enquire how they were made, when you were winning so much pay, and acquiring so much plunder, whenever there was plunder after a siege--I have cancelled them all. And further, golden coronals are reminders to the most part of you, both of your bravery and of my high regard--reminders that will never perish. Whosoever has died, his death has been glorious; and splendid has been his burial. To most of them there stand at home brazen statues; their parents are held in esteem, and have been freed from all services and taxes. For while I have led you, not one of you has fallen in flight.

[06]"And now I had in mind to send away those of you who are no longer equal to campaigning, to be the envy of all at home; but since you all wish to go home, depart, all of you; and when you reach home, tell them there that this your King, Alexander, victor over the Persians, Medes, Bactrians, Sacaeans, conqueror of Uxians, Arachotians, Drangave, master of Parthyaea, Chorasmia, Hyrcania to the Caspian Sea; who crossed the Caucasus beyond the Caspian

gates, who crossed the rivers Oxus and Tanais, yes, and the Indus too, that none but Dionysus had crossed, the Hydaspes, Acesines, Hydraotes; and who would further have crossed the Hyphasis, had not you shrunk back; who broke into the Indian Ocean by both mouths of the Indus; who traversed the Gadrosian desert--where none other had passed with an armed force; who in the line of march captured Carmania and the country of the Oreitians; whom, when his fleet had sailed from India to the Persian Sea, you led back again to Susa--tell them, I say, that you deserted him, that you took yourselves off, leaving him to the care of the wild tribes you had conquered. this, when you declare it, will be, no doubt, glorious among men, and pious in the sight of heaven. Begone!"

[07]When Alexander had finished, he leapt down swiftly from his platform and passed into the palace and paid no attention to his bodily needs, nor was seen by any of the Companions; and, indeed, not even on the day following. But on the third day he summoned within the picked men among the Persians, and divided among them the command of the different brigades; and permitted only those who were now his relatives to give him the customary kiss. The Macedonians, however, were at the time much moved on hearing his speech; and remained in silence there, around the platform; yet no one followed the King when he departed save his personal Companions and the bodyguards; but the mass neither while remaining there had anything to do or say, nor were willing to depart. But when they heard about the Persians and the Medes, and the handing of commands to the Persians, and the Oriental force being drafted into the various ranks, and a Persian squadron called by a Macedonian name, and of Persian "infantry Companions," and others too, and a Persian company of "silver-shields," and "cavalry of the Companions," and a new royal squadron even of this, they could no longer contain, but running all together to the palace they threw their arms before the doors as signs of supplication to the King; they themselves standing shouting before the doors begging to be let in. The instigators of the late disturbance, and those who began the cry, they said they would give up; in fact they would depart from the doors neither day nor night unless Alexander would have some pity on them.

[08]When this was reported to Alexander, he at once came out; and seeing them so humble, and hearing most of the number crying and lamenting, he also shed tears. Then he came forward as if to speak, and they continued beseeching. and once of them, a notable officer of the Companions' cavalry both by age and rank, called Callines, said thus: "This, O King, is what grieves the Macedonians, that you have made Persians your kinsmen and Persians are called 'Alexander's kinsmen,' and they are permitted to kiss you; but no Macedonian has tasted this privilege." On this Alexander broke in:

"But all of you I regard as my kinsmen, and so from henceforth I call you." When thus he had spoken, Callines approached and kissed him, and any other who desired to kiss him. And thus they took up their arms again and returned shouting and singing their victory song to the camp. But Alexander in gratitude for this sacrificed to the gods to whom he was wont to sacrifice, and gave a general feast, sitting himself there, and all the Macedonians sitting round him; and then next to them Persians, and next any of the other tribes who had precedence in reputation or any other quality, and he himself and his comrades drank from the same bowl and poured the same libations, while the Greek seers and Magians began the ceremony. And Alexander prayed for all sorts of blessings, and especially for harmony and fellowship in the empire between Macedonians and Persians. they say that those who shared the feast were nine thousand, and that they all poured the same libation and thereat sang the one song of victory.