

and struck them down. A multitude on either side fell in that battle. The two sides fought continuously for twenty days before the Medes and Persians began to give way in the battle. Seeing them give way, Alexander was infuriated and mounted on his horse Bucephalus, he entered the battle and fought manfully, as did the Macedonians and Greeks that he had with him. His horse, too, gave him wonderful support. At once, a multitude of the Indians began to fall. When he saw his men give way in battle, Porus turned and fled and the Indians who had survived the battle began to follow him in flight. But Alexander encamped there and offered sacrifices to his gods. He also gave orders that the Indians killed in the battle should be buried as well as his own men.

Alexander's Victory Over Porus, and How Alexander Seized Porus' City and Found Inside Incredible Things

81. The next day, Alexander stormed and seized Porus' city itself. Entering the king's palace, he found inside things that seemed to be beyond a man's comprehension. There were four hundred columns of gold with golden chapters and in between the columns there hung a vine with leaves of gold. Some of the clusters of grapes on it were of crystal, others of pearl, including large single pearls, and yet others of emerald and onyx. The walls of the palace were covered with strips of gold and, when the Macedonians cut them out, those strips were found to be as fat as a finger on a man's hand. The walls, too, were adorned with pearls, including large single ones, carbuncles, emeralds and amethysts. The gates of the aforementioned palace were of ivory, its panelled ceilings of ebony, and its rooms of cypress wood. In the entrance hall of the palace golden statues had been placed, and in between them stood plane-trees of gold. Perched on their branches were many kinds of birds and Alexander found each bird coloured in its own particular colour. These birds had claws and beaks of gold and from their ears hung pearls, including large single ones. When King Porus so wished, they all made

melody, each according to its nature. Alexander also found in that palace many vessels of gold, jewels and crystals of every kind designed for the convenience of men. A few of these were also of silver.

Alexander's First Letter to Talistis, Queen of the Amazons

82. Then Alexander led away his army and, coming to the Caspian Gates, he encamped there. The land here was very good, but there were also certain things that appeared hostile to him such as the different kinds of snakes and wild beasts.

From there Alexander wrote a letter to this effect to Talistis, queen of the Amazons: "Alexander, king of kings, son of the god Hammon and Queen Olympias, sends greetings to Talistis, queen of the Amazons. I believe that you know about my battle with Darius and how I subjugated all his realms. I also believe that you know how I fought with Porus, the Indian king, and captured his very city, and likewise with other nations that in no way could resist me. I therefore command you to pay me tribute if you do not wish me to come against you and inflict some harm upon you."

83. Talistis, queen of the Amazons, replied in this fashion:

Queen Talistis' Letter to Alexander, and How the Said Queen Lived Alone With Other Women Without Men

"Along with her Amazons, who are very powerful and stronger than all the armies under heaven, Talistis, queen of the Amazons, sends greetings to Alexander, king of kings. We write to point out to you that, before you come to our territory, you should consider how you should come in case we cause you shame and hardship such as no one has ever inflicted upon you before. If you wish to know where and how we live, we make use of this letter to inform you. Know that we live on an island beyond a certain river. That river encircles the island and has neither beginning nor end. But on one side

we do have a narrow entrance. In inhabitants, we number two hundred and fourteen thousand women, all undefiled by men. Our menfolk do not live with us but beyond the river in another part. Each year we celebrate the festival of Jupiter over thirty days and so we cross over to have intercourse with our menfolk, remaining with them another thirty days. He who wishes to stay happily with his wife keeps her for a year. If the woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a male, the mother of the child keeps the boy up to the age of seven, but after those seven years she will return him to his father. But if she gives birth to a female, the girl's mother keeps her with her. When we come to fight on horseback with our arrows and lances against one of our foes, we number one hundred thousand. The rest guard our island. We go out to meet our foes as far as the mountains. Our menfolk follow us and when we return victorious from battle, they pay homage to us. If one of us falls in battle, the surviving ones among us inherit. And so we are bound to fight bravely against you and to display our valour at your expense. But if you conquer us, you will gain no glory, because you will have conquered women, and there is nothing for you to find to steal from us. Take care, therefore, supreme ruler, in case shame may be your lot. We have by this letter informed you of the custom that we observe year by year. It is up to you now to consider and to write back quickly what you should do. For if you come to fight, be assured that we shall go out to meet you as far as those very mountains."

84. And so, having read through the letter, Alexander began to laugh and promptly wrote them a reply to this effect:

*Alexander's Second Letter to the Queen of the Amazons,
and How the Queen and the Other Women Submitted*

"Alexander, king of kings, son of the god Hammon and Queen Olympias sends greetings to Talistris, queen of the Amazons, and to the other Amazons. We have subjugated the three parts of the world—Asia, Europe and Africa—and have

triumphed over them. Not to fight with you involves shame for us. Nevertheless, we shall give you this advice: if it is your wish to perish and give up your land that it may be uninhabited, then come out to meet us as far as those very mountains, just as you said. But if you do not wish to perish, stay fast on your island, and enter the river, and there let us converse together. Let your menfolk, too, come out to meet us on the plain, and so converse with us. I swear to you by my father Hammon, and by our goddesses, Juno and Minerva, that no harm will come to you from us. Give us as much tribute as you wish. Send us by your Amazons as many of your riders as you wish. We shall receive them with honour and grant them the finest gifts. Then, when they so wish, we shall allow them to return to you. Consider what action you should then take, and write back to us." After reflection, the Amazons sent him ten fine untamed colts and another ten fine white horses. Then, with peace established, Alexander began to move on.

*The Great Thirst and the Hardship Inflicted
by Wild Animals That Alexander and His Entire
Army Suffered in the Regions of India*

85. At that very same time word reached Alexander that the Indian king Porus who had fled was in Bactra assembling an army to fight yet another battle with him. Hearing this, Alexander led away his army and, selecting one hundred and fifty guides who knew the way, began his advance in the month of August despite the sun's fierce heat across sandy, arid regions, where large numbers of snakes, wild beasts and monsters were to be found. At once Alexander directed his whole army to advance under arms. And so it happened. The whole army advanced under arms and radiated light just like the stars, since all their arms were encased in gold. All day long they marched, but failed completely to find water. Then a Macedonian soldier named Zephir found a little water in a hollow rock. He promptly filled his helmet with the water