

# ALEXANDER the GREAT and BUCEPHALUS

One day when Alexander was about twelve years old, his father, King Philip of Macedonia, took him with the rest of the court to see a display of cavalry in a large field adjacent to the palace. The handsome young prince with his golden hair falling upon his shoulders and his fine eyes all aglow with enthusiasm, was no disinterested spectator, you may be sure. At the close of the review a Thessalian approached the king, who was standing among his officers, and said that he had a horse for sale which he wished him to buy.

"What is your price, Sir Philonotus?" asked Philip, who, it seems, knew the man quite well. "Sixteen talents," replied the Thessalian, "but 'tis a royal steed and only kings should mount him."

"And your price is royal," laughed the king. "However, let me see your head." If he suits us, we will quarrel about the price."

The horse was brought, a huge black charger of a Thessalian breed that stamped its bit and pawed the turf, like a Pegasus. He was a young horse, not splendidly built, saving a rather large head, and giving promise of remarkable speed.

"He has never been mounted, my lord," observed Philonotus, "doubtless he will be shy at first. A dozen gaily dressed young officers stepped boldly forward to mount the new horse and test his speed. But the black steed appeared as if driven and unmanageable to the gay fellows. They were glad to step back to their places. One of the officers persisting in his attempt, was thrown suddenly upon the ground, from which he arose crestfallen enough, his helmet crumpled with dust, and a brand new cloak nearly spoiled."

The Thessalian courier seemed in a bad humor that morning. He reared and plunged and kicked, and so far from allowing any one to mount him, he would not even bear to be spoken to, but would turn fiercely upon his groom at the least provocation.

"Take away your steed, Sir Thessalian," said Philip, angrily. "He is savage as Cerberus. I marvel that he has not killed thee ere now. Only a Centaur could ride the beast."

"Truly he is possessed," answered Philonotus, very much disappointed. "What aileth thee, Bucephalus? Thou hast never acted so now."

"Father," said Alexander, who had been very quiet and observant, now stepping forward and speaking very earnestly, "that is too good a horse to be lost for want of skill and spirit sufficient to manage him."

"And do you think, forward boy, that you can manage the brute better than your elders?" asked the king. "That I can," replied the prince, "or I will forfeit the price asked for the horse."

At this the courtiers laughed, and Philonotus shook his head, but he did not smile. He only said: "Have I your permission, father?"

"Ho, there! Sir Thessalian, lead back your steed," cried Philip. "Here is a headstrong youth who wishes to break his neck."

Then the young prince, throwing off his saddle-embroidered mantle, and tying his sandals tightly, ran up to Bucephalus, and laying hold of the bridle, turned him to the sun, for he quietly began making up his mind that the horse had been frightened by his own shadow, which had constantly moved as he moved. His assumption was verified at once, for no sooner was Bucephalus turned about than he immediately became quiet. Alexander continued to speak to him gently, patting him on the neck, until he had him under control. Then, springing suddenly upon his back, the prince, without using either whip or spur, galloped the fiery steed across the field to his heart's content.

After a half hour's bad racing, he approached the royal circle again, and delivered Bucephalus as tame as an old chariot horse to the young prince, who said, with a satisfied voice, "Macedon is too small a kingdom for thee, my son, and one day I prophesy, thou shalt rule over an empire." Thou art indeed worthy of empire."

The handsome prince, his face all flushed with the exercise and his golden locks blowing hither and thither, went home leading Bucephalus proudly by the bridle, and Bucephalus was proved to be led, too.

But the Thessalian steed would permit no one else to mount him, so Alexander was the only person who ever rode him. He bore his master through all his campaigns, and when at last he died, Alexander gave the black steed a funeral like that of a king. His name was long preserved by a city which the conqueror built, and named after him Bucephalus. To-day when we think of Alexander the Great we almost always think of the gallant horse in the conqueror's van in his boyhood days through the glorious Fourth. It was divided among seven institutions and was the best record ever made for the first week in July.

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