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ALEXANDER¹

[356–23 B.C.]

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My subject in this book is the life of Alexander, the king, and of Julius Caesar, the conqueror of Pompey.² The careers of these men embrace such a multitude of events that my preamble shall consist of nothing more than this one plea: if I do not record all their most celebrated achievements or describe any of them exhaustively, but merely summarize for the most part what they accomplished, I ask my readers not to regard this as a fault. For I am writing biography, not history, and the truth is that the most brilliant exploits often tell us nothing of the virtues or vices of the men who performed them, while on the other hand a chance remark or a joke may reveal far more of a man's character than the mere feat of winning battles in which thousands fall, or of marshalling great armies, or laying siege to cities. When a portrait painter sets out to create a likeness, he relies above all upon the face and the expression of the eyes and pays less attention to the other parts of the body: in the same way it is my task to dwell upon those actions which illuminate the workings of the soul, and by this means to create a portrait of each man's life. I leave the story of his greatest struggles and achievements to be told by others.

1. For places mentioned in this *Life*, see Maps 1, 2 and 4, pp. 433–4, 437.

2. See Introduction, pp. 9–10.

THE AGE OF ALEXANDER

NINE GREEK LIVES BY
PLUTARCH

AGESILAUS · PELOPIDAS

DION · TIMOLEON

DEMOSTHENES

PHOCION · ALEXANDER

DEMETRIUS · PYRRHUS

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PENGUIN BOOKS