Turkestan, he came down by Herat (which he founded) and Cabul and the Khyber Pass into India. He fought a great battle on the Indus with an Indian king, Porus, and here the Macedonian troops met elephants for the first time and defeated them. Finally he built himself ships, sailed down to the mouth of the Indus, and marched back by the coast of Beluchistan, reaching Susa again in 324 B.C. after an absence of six years. He then prepared to consolidate and organize this vast empire he had won. He sought to win over his new subjects. He assumed the robes and tiara of a Persian monarch, and this roused the jealousy of his Macedonian commanders. He had much trouble with them. He arranged a number of marriages between these Macedonian officers and Persian and Babylonian women: the "Marriage of the East and West." He never lived to effect the consolidation he had planned. A fever seized him after a drinking bout in Babylon and he died in 323 B.C.

Immediately this vast dominion fell to pieces. One of his generals, Seleucus, retained most of the old Persian empire from the Indus to Ephesus; another, Ptolemy, seized Egypt, and Antigonus secured Macedonia. The rest of the empire remained unstable, passing under the control of a succession of local adventures. Barbarian raids began from the north and grew in scope and intensity. Until at last, as we shall tell, a new power, the power of the Roman republic, came out of the west to subjugate one fragment after another and weld them together into a new and more enduring empire.

XXVII. The Museum and Library at Alexandria

BEFORE the time of Alexander Greeks had already been spreading as merchants, artists, officials, mercenary soldiers, over most of the Persian dominions. In the dynastic disputes that followed the death of Xerxes, a band of ten thousand Greek mercenaries played a part under the leadership of Xenophon. Their return to Asiatic Greece from Babylon is described in his Retreat of the Ten Thousand, one of the first war stories that was ever written by a general in command. But the conquests of Alexander and the division of his brief empire among his subordinate generals, greatly stimulated this permeation of the ancient world by the Greeks and their language and fashions and culture. Traces of this Greek dissemination are to be found far away in central Asia and in north−west India. Their influence upon the development of Indian art was profound.

For many centuries Athens retained her prestige as a centre of art and culture; her schools went on indeed to 529 A.D., that is to say for nearly a thousand years; but the leadership in the intellectual activity of the world passed presently across the Mediterranean to Alexandria, the new trading city that Alexander had founded. Here the Macedonian general Ptolemy had become Pharaoh, with a court that spoke Greek. He had become an intimate of Alexander before he became king, and he was deeply saturated with the ideas of Aristotle. He set himself, with great energy and capacity, to organize knowledge and investigation. He also wrote a history of Alexander's campaigns which, unhappily, is lost to the world.

Alexander had already devoted considerable sums to finance the enquiries of Aristotle, but Ptolemy I was the first person to make a permanent endowment of science. He set up a foundation in Alexandria which was formerly dedicated to the Muses, the Museum of Alexandria. For two or three generations the scientific work done at Alexandria was extraordinarily good. Euclid, Eratosthenes who measured the size of the earth and came within fifty miles of its true diameter, Apollonius who wrote on conic sections, Hipparchus who made the first star map and catalogue, and Hero who devised the first steam engine are among the greater stars of an extraordinary constellation of scientific pioneers. Archimedes came from Syracuse to Alexandria to study, and was a frequent correspondent of the Museum. Herophilus was one of the greatest of Greek anatomists, and is said to have practised vivisection.

For a generation or so during the reigns of Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II there was such a blaze of knowledge and discovery at Alexandria as the world was not to see again until the sixteenth century A.D. But it did not continue. There may have been several causes of this decline. Chief among them, the late Professor Mahaffy suggested, was the fact that the Museum was a "royal" college and all its professors and fellows were appointed and paid by

Pharaoh. This was all very well when Pharaoh was Ptolemy I, the pupil and friend of Aristotle. But as the dynasty of the Ptolemies went on they became Egyptianized, they fell under the sway of Egyptian priests and Egyptian religious developments, they ceased to follow the work that was done, and their control stifled the spirit of enquiry altogether. The Museum produced little good work after its first century of activity.

Ptolemy I not only sought in the most modern spirit to organize the finding of fresh knowledge. He tried also to set up an encyclopaedic storehouse of wisdom in the Library of Alexandria. It was not simply a storehouse, it was also a book−copying and book−selling organization. A great army of copyists was set to work perpetually multiplying copies of books.

Here then we have the definite first opening up of the intellectual process in which we live to−day; here we have the systematic gathering and distribution of knowledge. The foundation of this Museum and Library marks one of the great epochs in the history of mankind. It is the true beginning of Modern History.

BOTH the work of research and the work of dissemination went on under serious handicaps. One of these was the great social gap that separated the philosopher, who was a gentleman, from the trader and the artisan. There were glass workers and metal workers in abundance in those days, but they were not in mental contact with the thinkers. The glass worker was making the most beautifully coloured beads and phials and so forth, but he never made a Florentine flask or a lens. Clear glass does not seem to have interested him. The metal worker made weapons and jewellery but he never made a chemical balance. The philosopher speculated loftily about atoms and the nature of things, but he had no practical experience of enamels and pigments and philters and so forth. He was not interested in substances. So Alexandria in its brief day of opportunity produced no microscopes and no chemistry. And though Hero invented a steam engine it was never set either to pump or drive a boat or do any useful thing. There were few practical applications of science except in the realm of medicine, and the progress of science was not stimulated and sustained by the interest and excitement of practical applications. There was nothing to keep the work going therefore when the intellectual curiosity of Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II was withdrawn. The discoveries of the Museum went on record in obscure manuscripts and never, until the revival of scientific curiosity at the Renascence, reached out to the mass of mankind.

Nor did the Library produce any improvements in book making. That ancient world had no paper made in definite sizes from rag pulp. Paper was a Chinese invention and it did not reach the western world until the ninth century A.D. The only book materials were parchment and strips of the papyrus reed joined edge to edge. These strips were kept on rolls which were very unwieldy to wind to and fro and read, and very inconvenient for reference. It was these things that prevented the development of paged and printed books. Printing itself was known in the world it would seem as early as the Old Stone Age; there were seals in ancient Sumeria; but without abundant paper there was little advantage in printing books, an improvement that may further have been resisted by trades unionism on the part of the copyists employed. Alexandria produced abundant books but not cheap books, and it never spread knowledge into the population of the ancient world below the level of a wealthy and influential class.

So it was that this blaze of intellectual enterprise never reached beyond a small circle of people in touch with the group of philosophers collected by the first two Ptolemies. It was like the light in a dark lantern which is shut off from the world at large. Within the blaze may be blindingly bright, but nevertheless it is unseen. The rest of the world went on its old ways unaware that the seed of scientific knowledge that was one day to revolutionize it altogether had been sown. Presently a darkness of bigotry fell even upon Alexandria. Thereafter for a thousand years of darkness the seed that Aristotle had sown lay hidden. Then it stirred and began to germinate. In a few centuries it had become that widespread growth of knowledge and clear ideas that is now changing the whole of human life.

Alexandria was not the only centre of Greek intellectual activity in the third century B.C. There were many other cities that displayed a brilliant intellectual life amidst the disintegrating fragments of the brief empire of

Alexander. There was, for example, the Greek city of Syracuse in Sicily, where thought and science flourished for two centuries; there was Pergamum in Asia Minor, which also had a great library. But this brilliant Hellenic world was now stricken by invasion from the north. New Nordic barbarians, the Gauls, were striking down along the tracks that had once been followed by the ancestors of the Greeks and Phrygians and Macedonians. They raided, shattered and destroyed. And in the wake of the Gauls came a new conquering people out of Italy, the Romans, who gradually subjugated all the western half of the vast realm of Darius and Alexander. They were an able but unimaginative people, preferring law and profit to either science of art. New invaders were also coming down out of central Asia to shatter and subdue the Seleucid empire and to cut off the western world again from India. These were the Parthians, hosts of mounted bowmen, who treated the Graeco−Persian empire of Persepolis and Susa in the third century B.C. in much the same fashion that the Medes and Persians had treated it in the seventh and sixth. And there were now other nomadic peoples also coming out of the north−east, peoples who were not fair and Nordic and Aryan−speaking but yellow−skinned and black−haired and with a Mongolian speech. But of these latter people we shall tell more in a subsequent chapter.

XXVIII. The Life of Gautama Buddha

BUT now we must go back three centuries in our story to tell of a great teacher who came near to revolutionizing the religious thought and feeling of all Asia. This was Gautama Buddha, who taught his disciples at Benares in India about the same time that Isaiah was prophesying among the Jews in Babylon and Heraclitus was carrying on his speculative enquiries into the nature of things at Ephesus. All these men were in the world at the same time, in the sixth century B.C.−unaware of one another.

The sixth century B.C. was indeed one of the most remarkable in all history. Everywhere−for as we shall tell it was also the case in China−men's minds were displaying a new boldness. Everywhere they were waking up out of the traditions of kingships and priests and blood sacrifices and asking the most penetrating questions. It is as if the race had reached a stage of adolescence−after a childhood of twenty thousand years.

The early history of India is still very obscure. Somewhen perhaps about 2000 B.C., an Aryan−speaking people came down from the north−west into India either in one invasion or in a series of invasions; and was able to spread its language and traditions over most of north India. Its peculiar variety of Aryan speech was the Sanskrit. They found a brunette people with a more elaborate civilization and less vigour of will, in possession of the country of the Indus and Ganges. But they do not seem to have mingled with their predecessors as freely as did the Greeks and Persians. They remained aloof. When the past of India becomes dimly visible to the historian, Indian society is already stratified into several layers, with a variable number of sub−divisions, which do not eat together nor intermarry nor associate freely. And throughout history this stratification into castes continues. This makes the Indian population something different from the simple, freely inter−breeding European or Mongolian communities. It is really a community of communities.

Siddhattha Gautama was the son of an aristocratic family which ruled a small district on the Himalayan slopes. He was married at nineteen to a beautiful cousin. He hunted and played and went about in his sunny world of gardens and groves and irrigated rice−fields. And it was amidst this life that a great discontent fell upon him. It was the unhappiness of a fine brain that seeks employment. He felt that the existence he was leading was not the reality of life, but a holiday−a holiday that had gone on too long.

The sense of disease and mortality, the insecurity and the unsatisfactoriness of all happiness, descended upon the mind of Gautama. While he was in this mood he met one of those wandering ascetics who already existed in great numbers in India. These men lived under severe rules, spending much time in meditation and in religious discussion. They were supposed to be seeking some deeper reality in life, and a passionate desire to do likewise took possession of Gautama.

He was meditating upon this project, says the story, when the news was brought to him that his wife had been delivered of his first−born son. "This is another tie to break," said Gautama.

He returned to the village amidst the rejoicings of his fellow clansmen. There was a great feast and a Nautch dance to celebrate the birth of his new tie, and in the night Gautama awoke in a great agony of spirit, "like a man who is told that his house is on fire." He resolved to leave his happy aimless life forthwith. He went softly to the threshold of his wife's chamber, and saw her by the light of a little oil lamp, sleeping sweetly, surrounded by flowers, with his infant son in her arms. He felt a great craving to take up the child in one first and last embrace before he departed, but the fear of waking his wife prevented him, and at last he turned away and went out into the bright Indian moonshine and mounted his horse and rode off into the world.

Very far he rode that night, and in the morning he stopped outside the lands of his clan, and dismounted beside a sandy river. There he cut off his flowing locks with his sword, removed all his ornaments and sent them and his horse and sword back to his house. Going on he presently met a ragged man and exchanged clothes with him, and so having divested himself of all worldly entanglements he was free to pursue his search after wisdom. He made his way southward to a resort of hermits and teachers in a hilly spur of the Vindhya Mountains. There lived a number of wise men in a warren of caves, going into the town for their simple supplies and imparting their knowledge by word of mouth to such as cared to come to them. Gautama became versed in all the metaphysics of his age. But his acute intelligence was dissatisfied with the solutions offered him.

The Indian mind has always been disposed to believe that power and knowledge may be obtained by extreme asceticism, by fasting, sleeplessness, and self−torment, and these ideas Gautama now put to the test. He betook himself with five disciple companions to the jungle and there he gave himself up to fasting and terrible penances. His fame spread, "like the sound of a great bell hung in the canopy of the skies." But it brought him no sense of truth achieved. One day he was walking up and down, trying to think in spite of his enfeebled state. Suddenly he fell unconscious. When he recovered, the preposterousness of these semi−magical ways to wisdom was plain to him.

He horrified his companions by demanding ordinary food and refusing to continue his mortifications. He had realized that whatever truth a man may reach is reached best by a nourished brain in a healthy body. Such a conception was absolutely foreign to the ideas of the land and age. His disciples deserted him, and went off in a melancholy state to Benares. Gautama wandered alone.

When the mind grapples with a great and intricate problem, it makes its advances step by step, with but little realization of the gains it has made, until suddenly, with an effect of abrupt illumination, it realizes its victory. So it happened to Gautama. He had seated himself under a great tree by the side of a river to eat, when this sense of clear version came to him. It seemed to him that he saw life plain. He is said to have sat all day and all night in profound thought, and then he rose up to impart his vision to the world.

He went on to Benares and there he sought out and won back his lost disciples to his new teaching. In the King's Deer Park at Benares they built themselves huts and set up a sort of school to which came many who were seeking after wisdom.

The starting point of his teaching was his own question as a fortunate young man, "Why am I not completely happy?" It was an introspective question. It was a question very different in quality from the frank and self−forgetful externalized curiosity with which Thales and Heraclitus were attacking the problems of the universe, or the equally self−forgetful burthen of moral obligation that the culminating prophets were imposing upon the Hebrew mind. The Indian teacher did not forget self, he concentrated upon self and sought to destroy it. All suffering, he taught, was due to the greedy desires of the individual. Until man has conquered his personal cravings his life is trouble and his end sorrow. There were three principal forms that the craving for life took and they were all evil. The first was the desire of the appetites, greed and all forms of sensuousness, the second was

the desire for a personal and egotistic immortality, the third was the craving for personal success, worldliness, avarice and the like. All these forms of desire had to be overcome to escape from the distresses and chagrins of life. When they were overcome, when self had vanished altogether, then serenity of soul, Nirvana, the highest good was attained.

This was the gist of his teaching, a very subtle and metaphysical teaching indeed, not nearly so easy to understand as the Greek injunction to see and know fearlessly and rightly and the Hebrew command to fear God and accomplish righteousness. It was a teaching much beyond the understanding of even Gautama's immediate disciples, and it is no wonder that so soon as his personal influence was withdrawn it became corrupted and coarsened. There was a widespread belief in India at that time that at long intervals Wisdom came to earth and was incarnate in some chosen person who was known as the Buddha. Gautama's disciples declared that he was a Buddha, the latest of the Buddhas, though there is no evidence that he himself ever accepted the title. Before he was well dead, a cycle of fantastic legends began to be woven about him. The human heart was always preferred a wonder story to a moral effort, and Gautama Buddha became very wonderful.

Yet there remained a substantial gain in the world. If Nirvana was too high and subtle for most men's imaginations, if the myth−making impulse in the race was too strong for the simple facts of Gautama's life, they could at least grasp something of the intention of what Gautama called the Eight−fold way, the Aryan or Noble Path in life. In this there was an insistence upon mental uprightness, upon right aims and speech, right conduct and honest livelihood. There was a quickening of the conscience and an appeal to generous and self−forgetful ends.

XXIX. King Asoka

FOR some generations after the death of Gautama, these high and noble Buddhist teachings, this first plain teaching that the highest good for man is the subjugation of self, made comparatively little headway in the world. Then they conquered the imagination of one of the greatest monarchs the world has ever seen.

We have already mentioned how Alexander the Great came down into India and fought with Porus upon the Indus. It is related by the Greek historians that a certain Chandragupta Maurya came into Alexander's camp and tried to persuade him to go on to the Ganges and conquer all India. Alexander could not do this because of the refusal of his Macedonians to go further into what was for them an unknown world, and later on (321 B.C.) Chandragupta was able to secure the help of various hill tribes and realize his dream without Greek help. He built up an empire in North India and was presently (303 B.C.) able to attack Seleucus I in the Punjab and drive the last vestige of Greek power out of India. His son extended this new empire. His grandson, Asoka, the monarch of whom we now have to tell, found himself in 264 B.C. ruling from Afghanistan to Madras.

Asoka was at first disposed to follow the example of his father and grandfather and complete the conquest of the Indian peninsula. He invaded Kalinga (255 B.C.), a country on the east coast of Madras, he was successful in his military operations and−alone among conquerors−he was so disgusted by the cruelty and horror of war that he renounced it. He would have no more of it. He adopted the peaceful doctrines of Buddhism and declared that henceforth his conquests should be the conquests of religion.

His reign for eight−and−twenty years was one of the brightest interludes in the troubled history of mankind. He organized a great digging of wells in India and the planting of trees for shade. He founded hospitals and public gardens and gardens for the growing of medicinal herbs. He created a ministry for the care of the aborigines and subject races of India. He made provision for the education of women. He made vast benefactions to the Buddhist teaching orders, and tried to stimulate them to a better and more energetic criticism of their own accumulated literature. For corruptions and superstitious accretions had accumulated very speedily upon the pure and simple teaching of the great Indian master. Missionaries went from Asoka to Kashmir, to Persia, to Ceylon and

Alexandria.

Such was Asoka, greatest of kings. He was far in advance of his age. He left no prince and no organization of men to carry on his work, and within a century of his death the great days of his reign had become a glorious memory in a shattered and decaying India. The priestly caste of the Brahmins, the highest and most privileged caste in the Indian social body, has always been opposed to the frank and open teaching of Buddha. Gradually they undermined the Buddhist influence in the land. The old monstrous gods, the innumerable cults of Hinduism, resumed their sway. Caste became more rigorous and complicated. For long centuries Buddhism and Brahminism flourished side by side, and then slowly Buddhism decayed and Brahminism in a multitude of forms replaced it. But beyond the confines of India and the realms of caste Buddhism spread−until it had won China and Siam and Burma and Japan, countries in which it is predominant to this day.

XXX. Confucius and Lao Tse

WE have still to tell of two other great men, Confucius and Lao Tse, who lived in that wonderful century which began the adolescence of mankind, the sixth century B.C. In this history thus far we have told very little of the early story of China. At present that early history is still very obscure, and we look to Chinese explorers and archaeologists in the new China that is now arising to work out their past as thoroughly as the European past has been worked out during the last century. Very long ago the first primitive Chinese civilizations arose in the great river valleys out of the primordial heliolithic culture. They had, like Egypt and Sumeria, the general characteristics of that culture, and they centred upon temples in which priests and priest kings offered the seasonal blood sacrifices. The life in those cities must have been very like the Egyptian and Sumerian life of six or seven thousand years ago and very like the Maya life of Central America a thousand years ago.

If there were human sacrifices they had long given way to animal sacrifices before the dawn of history. And a form of picture writing was growing up long before a thousand years B.C.

And just as the primitive civilizations of Europe and western Asia were in conflict with the nomads of the desert and the nomads of the north, so the primitive Chinese civilizations had a great cloud of nomadic peoples on their northern borders. There was a number of tribes akin in language and ways of living, who are spoken of in history in succession as the Huns, the Mongols, the Turks and Tartars. They changed and divided and combined and re−combined, just as the Nordic peoples in north Europe and central Asia changed and varied in name rather than in nature. These Mongolian nomads had horses earlier than the Nordic peoples, and it may be that in the region of the Altai Mountains they made an independent discovery of iron somewhen after 1000 B.C. And just as in the western case so ever and again these eastern nomads would achieve a sort of political unity, and become the conquerors and masters and revivers of this or that settled and civilized region.

It is quite possible that the earliest civilization of China was not Mongolian at all any more than the earliest civilization of Europe and western Asia was Nordic or Semitic. It is quite possible that the earliest civilization of China was a brunette civilization and of a piece with the earliest Egyptian, Sumerian and Dravidian civilizations, and that when the first recorded history of China began there had already been conquests and intermixture. At any rate we find that by 1750 B.C. China was already a vast system of little kingdoms and city states, all acknowledging a loose allegiance and paying more or less regularly, more or less definite feudal dues to one great priest emperor, the "Son of Heaven." The "Shang" dynasty came to an end in 1125 B.C. A "Chow" dynasty succeeded "Shang," and maintained China in a relaxing unity until the days of Asoka in India and of the Ptolemies in Egypt. Gradually China went to pieces during that long "Chow" period. Hunnish peoples came down and set up principalities; local rulers discontinued their tribute and became independent. There was in the sixth century B.C., says one Chinese authority, five or six thousand practically independent states in China. It was what the Chinese call in their records an "Age of Confusion."

But this Age of Confusion was compatible with much intellectual activity and with the existence of many local centres of art and civilized living. When we know more of Chinese history we shall find that China also had her Miletus and her Athens, her Pergamum and her Macedonia. At present we must be vague and brief about this period of Chinese division simply because our knowledge is not sufficient for us to frame a coherent and consecutive story.

And just as in divided Greece there were philosophers and in shattered and captive Jewry prophets, so in disordered China there were philosophers and teachers at this time. In all these cases insecurity and uncertainty seemed to have quickened the better sort of mind. Confucius was a man of aristocratic origin and some official importance in a small state called Lu. Here in a very parallel mood to the Greek impulse he set up a sort of Academy for discovering and teaching Wisdom. The lawlessness and disorder of China distressed him profoundly. He conceived an ideal of a better government and a better life, and travelled from state to state seeking a prince who would carry out his legislative and educational ideas. He never found his prince; he found a prince, but court intrigues undermined the influence of the teacher and finally defeated his reforming proposals. It is interesting to note that a century and a half later the Greek philosopher Plato also sought a prince, and was for a time adviser to the tyrant Dionysius who ruled Syracuse in Sicily.

Confucius died a disappointed man. "No intelligent ruler arises to take me as his master," he said, "and my time has come to die." But his teaching had more vitality than he imagined in his declining and hopeless years, and it became a great formative influence with the Chinese people. It became one of what the Chinese call the Three Teachings, the other two being those of Buddha and of Lao Tse.

The gist of the teaching of Confucius was the way of the noble or aristocratic man. He was concerned with personal conduct as much as Gautama was concerned with the peace of self−forgetfulness and the Greek with external knowledge and the Jew with righteousness. He was the most public−minded of all great teachers. He was supremely concerned by the confusion and miseries of the world, and he wanted to make men noble in order to bring about a noble world. He sought to regulate conduct to an extraordinary extent; to provide sound rules for every occasion in life. A polite, public−spirited gentleman, rather sternly self−disciplined, was the ideal he found already developing in the northern Chinese world and one to which he gave a permanent form.

The teaching of Lao Tse, who was for a long time in charge of the imperial library of the Chow dynasty, was much more mystical and vague and elusive than that of Confucius. He seems to have preached a stoical indifference to the pleasures and powers of the world and a return to an imaginary simple life of the past. He left writings very contracted in style and very obscure. He wrote in riddles. After his death his teachings, like the teachings of Gautama Buddha, were corrupted and overlaid by legends and had the most complex and extraordinary observances and superstitious ideas grafted upon them. In China just as in India primordial ideas of magic and monstrous legends out of the childish past of our race struggled against the new thinking in the world and succeeded in plastering it over with grotesque, irrational and antiquated observances. Both Buddhism and Taoism (which ascribes itself largely to Lao Tse) as one finds them in China now, are religions of monk, temple, priest and offering of a type as ancient in form, if not in thought, as the sacrificial religions of ancient Sumeria and Egypt. But the teaching of Confucius was not so overlaid because it was limited and plain and straightforward and lent itself to no such distortions.

North China, the China of the Hwang−ho River, became Confucian in thought and spirit; south China, Yang−tse−Kiang China, became Taoist. Since those days a conflict has always been traceable in Chinese affairs between these two spirits, the spirit of the north and the spirit of the south, between (in latter times) Pekin and Nankin, between the official−minded, upright and conservative north, and the sceptical, artistic, lax and experimental south.

The divisions of China of the Age of Confusion reached their worst stage in the sixth century B.C. The Chow dynasty was so enfeebled and so discredited that Lao Tse left the unhappy court and retired into private life.