BOOK V

ROME AN IMPERIAL REPUBLIC

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SITUATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD 201 B.C.[1]

411. THE 'world's debate' was over, for the overthrow of Carthage left Rome without an effective rival in the regions of the Mediterranean. This is clear to us from our knowledge of the sequel: but the generation then living can hardly have guessed that within forty years all Mediterranean peoples and powers would be looking to Rome as their actual or prospective mistress, at least as a resistless umpire. To Polybius, who lived to see the change, it presented itself as the beginning of a world-history, an unification of human affairs that went so far as to make the local histories of other peoples meaningless and uninstructive unless considered in relation to the central history of Rome. As for Rome herself, even after recent triumphs she could hardly as yet be conscious of her imperial destiny. The lesson of the Hannibalic war had been differently learnt by Senate and People. In the eyes of the ordinary citizen the exhaustion produced by long strain and sacrifices suggested the need of a long period of rest: to the Senate, capable of wider views, it seemed a prime necessity to forestall the development of other powers, rivals perhaps even more keen and dangerous than Carthage. An enemy and provocation were not far to seek. Philip of Macedon had left no opening for doubt as to his hostility. But before we enter on the story of the second Macedonian war we had better take a brief glance at the condition and relations of the peoples outside the Roman dominion with whom Rome had been, or was soon to be, brought into contact.

412. In welcoming and helping the Punic invaders the Gauls and Ligurians of northern Italy had written their own doom. Rome

[1] Beside the valuable fourth volume of Holm's *History of Greece*, there are a number of English works bearing on the subject of this chapter. I will only name Freeman's *History of Federal Government*, Hogarth's *Philip and Alexander of Macedon*, Mahaffy's *Empire of the Ptolemies*, Bevan's *House of Seleucus*. For illuminative criticism Mahaffy's *Greek Life and Thought* is a most useful work.

well understood that she must conquer these districts sooner or later, but for the present she was in no urgent hurry, and had much else to do. No great power existed or was likely to arise there. The Gauls of the rich plain and the Ligurians in their rocky strongholds were alike in devotion to a tribal system which made firm combination impossible and their native valour of no effect. And so, slackly and wastefully, the conquest went on. In Spain the situation had changed since the final expulsion of the Carthaginians. Rome felt bound to keep her hold on the country that it might not again become a base of operations for the Punic enemy. But the Spanish natives were restive under any yoke, and had no marked preference for their new masters as compared with the old. And here too the tribal system prevailed: there was no great power the overthrow of which might ensure or promote the submission of its subjects. Hence war, open or smouldering, soon became normal in Spain. Victories achieved little permanent result: any Roman disaster undid the work of years of fighting, and so the weary struggle went on. The final conquest of Spain was not completed till the time of Augustus. Africa presents a different picture. Humbled and crippled as she was, Carthage soon began to recover wealth and strength. Nothing seemed able to impair her commercial vitality, and the jealous fears of Rome awoke. But Roman forethought had provided an effective means for checking the enemy's reviving power. The reduced territory of Carthage bordered on the Numidian kingdom over a frontier of some 200 miles. Masinissa gladly took to a policy which he well understood to suit the real wishes of his Roman allies, and worried the Carthaginians with border forays and claims which the Punic government dared not actively resist. The sequel of this miserable state of things will be dealt with below. Thus from North West and South Rome had for the present nothing serious to fear: it was to the East that she looked uneasily. Here were the great kingdoms formed out of the remains of Alexander's empire, and a number of minor powers: even Greece, though torn by dissension as of old, was for the most part organized in Federations, larger units than the brilliant city-states of her days of glory. Of the real weakness of the eastern powers the Romans could as yet form no adequate notion, and the aggrandisement of any one of them, particularly by encroachments in Greece, was to the Senate a natural cause of alarm.

413. To begin from the South, the greater part of Peloponnesus was now incorporated in the Achaean League. This famous federation had grown up to meet the needs of communities anxious to preserve their autonomy but unable to stand alone. The several members of the League retained the fullest freedom in their internal affairs.

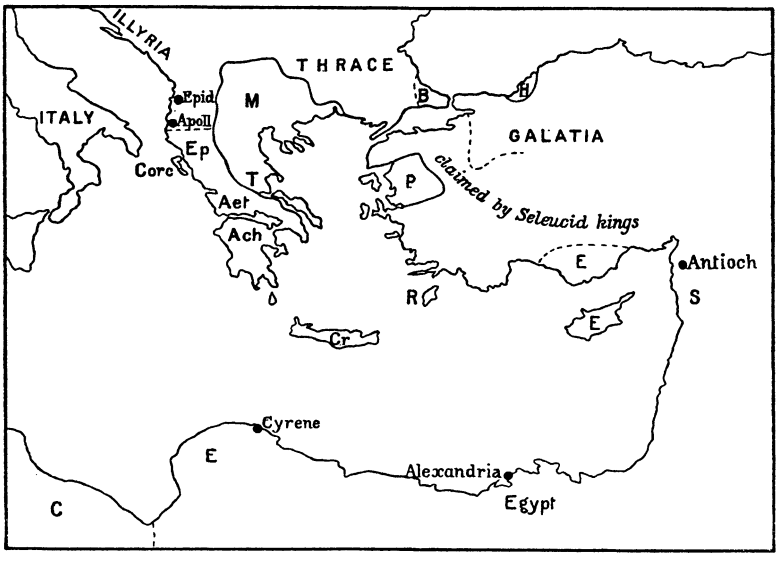
But the central power suffered from the weakness common in Federal governments. The yearly change of persons in office was a disadvantage not neutralized as at Rome by the presence of a Senate of experienced men holding their places for life. To secure prompt obedience on the part of the federated cities to the decisions of the League Assembly was not always easy, and we need not wonder that the military forces of the League sometimes fell to a low level of efficiency. The disastrous results of this slackness had been seen at the time of the collision with Sparta (227—221 B.C.). Sparta still existed as a city-state, and underwent a military revival in the hands of the reforming king Cleomenes III. Aratus, the subtle intriguer to whom the greatness of the League was chiefly due, could make no head against Cleomenes, and at last he was driven to seek the help of Antigonus (Doson) the reigning king of Macedon, rather than come to terms with his Peloponnesian rival, the king of Sparta. The step was a fatal one. For the time, Antigonus crushed Sparta and drove Cleomenes into exile. But he exacted the citadel of Corinth as his price, and so held the key of the Peloponnese. From that time the Achaean League lost its freedom of action. However little the king might interfere with the Achaeans, they could take no important step in disregard of his wishes: and the League built up in an interval of Macedonian weakness, largely as a check on the domination of Macedon, was now in its foreign policy a Macedonian client. Nor was the Spartan question really settled: the military tyrants who ruled there after a period of revolution were a thorn in the side of their neighbours. But the Achaean cause was better upheld by their new leader Philopoemen. He was more soldier than statesman, and his military reforms raised the position of his country for a time: it was a last flicker of Greek freedom, soon destined to be quenched. But he had fallen on evil days, for the possible policy of the League soon narrowed itself to the choice between taking part with one of the great belligerents or waiting in trembling neutrality to become the victor's prize. The situation in the Peloponnese was further complicated by the fact that Elis and some places in Arcadia, for some time even Mantinea, stood in more or less close relations with the great Federation of Aetolia, to which we must now turn.

414. The Aetolian League, a league of cantons rather than cities, had existed from very early times as a loose union of mountaineer tribesmen whom kinship and common interests led to combine, chiefly for purposes of war. As the brilliant age of Greece came to an end, and a tamer patriotism left the defence of civilized states to professional mercenaries, the backward peoples came more to the front, being able to supply large numbers of hardy recruits fit and

willing to face the strain and perils of a soldier's life for a soldier's pay. These 'aliens' (*ξένοι*) were far more efficient as fighters than the amateur citizens: they seem normally to have kept faith with their paymasters, and after the East had been opened up by Alexander the vast treasures put into circulation gave a great stimulus to the employment of these hireling troops. Many were drawn from other parts of Greece, but the most plentiful source of supply was Aetolia. The high pay earned, not to mention gains of looting, brought money into the country. As the League grew in importance, its constitution became more definite, and its area was extended by the addition of new members. Some of these were far distant places, such as coast-towns on the Propontis, others were districts of Greece itself or islands near. They had in Naupactus a good harbour and a fairly good fleet, and kept touch with their outlying members. Our knowledge of this League is mainly derived from the Achaean writer Polybius, a prejudiced witness. It is clear that they were not a mere reckless band of robbers, as he makes out: but their methods were often rough, and between them and the more formal Achaeans there was a deep-seated antipathy. Their heads may have been somewhat turned by their rise to a leading position in the Greek world: but they were at least a free people with a policy of their own, and too highspirited to play adroitly the secondary part allotted them in the course of events. They had on more than one occasion come to the front as champions of Greek freedom against Macedonians or Gauls, and it was as opponents of Macedon that they became entangled in the coiling diplomacy of Rome.

415. In most other parts of northern and central Greece confederations existed closer or looser according to the various degrees of common sentiment and interest and the pressure of external danger. Such were Epirus, Locris, Phocis and Boeotia. In Acarnania was a League which probably resembled the Aetolian. Suffering from the violence of their stronger neighbours, they had at one time looked to Rome for help, but relief came through the mediation of the Macedonian king, who set in motion the pirates of Illyria. The Acarnanians are depicted as a brave and loyal people: it was unlucky that their connexion with Macedon involved them in a losing cause. In Thessaly too Aetolians and Macedonians competed for power. What recognition of unity there was among the Thessalian cities was slight and inefficient. The country was generally a Macedonian dependency, but the Aetolians had made conquests there: and the reconquest of some of these places by king Philip at the end of the so-called Social war (221—217) left the Aetolian League ready to join any power in opposition to Macedon. Of the old city-states

Athens still remained, an unfederated unit, dreaming of her old imperial splendour now long departed. Weak in her isolation, celebrated only as the centre of the philosophic schools, spared by the great powers in reverence for her former achievements in literature and art, she enjoyed on sufferance a freedom that she knew not how to use. Aratus had bought out the last Macedonian garrisons in 229, but Athens only became an ally of the Achaeans: she would not forget her pride and become a member of the League. Her vain democracy thought it more dignified to earn by subservience and flattery the patronage and largesses of foreign kings. In no community did the intervention of Rome in Greek affairs meet with a readier welcome.



Powers in eastern Mediterranean about 200 B.C. Epidamnus (Dyrrachium), Apollonia and Corcyra are dependents of Rome. Macedon (M) holds Euboea, also Corinth and a few other places in Peloponnesus, and dominates Achaean League (Ach). Southern Thessaly (T) had been won from the Aetolian League (Aet) in the peace of 205. Byzantium (B), Heraclea (H), Rhodes (R) and Crete (Cr) are free Greek states. P = Pergamene kingdom. S = Seleucid kingdom of Syria. E = dependencies of Lagid kingdom of Egypt. C = Carthaginian territory. Ep = Epirus.

416. Two of the Aegean islands call for mention. Rhodes had been a prosperous maritime state for some 200 years. Into her interesting history we cannot enter here. Her chief interests were of course commerce and banking, but as a seat of Greek culture she ranked very high. Good faith, and the absence of grasping ambition, made the Rhodians contrast favourably with other powers, and they

were so thoroughly trusted and respected that international disputes were sometimes submitted to their arbitration. Their fleet was better equipped and handled than other naval forces of the day, and its chief employment was the suppression of piracy, already a serious evil in the eastern Mediterranean. When a great earthquake in 227 wrecked their splendid city, kings and princes sent rich gifts to aid its restoration: so frankly was it recognized that the welfare of Rhodes was the interest of all. But, while the Rhodian republic kept on good terms with all civilized powers, it had a policy of its own, and an old particular friendship[1] with the governments of Egypt and Rome. Nor was it found inconsistent with their unambitious scheme to hold a province on the mainland of Asia Minor, the revenue derived from which was a help in the maintenance of their position. For the remaining free cities and islands of the Aegean and Euxine looked generally to Rhodes as their leader, and there was a sort of confederation with some of them for the protection of seaborne trade. Very different was the condition of Crete. Here there were a number of separate communities organized on a common model, a chief feature in which was the support and training of a dominant military caste. They and their followers found insufficient occupation in the internal wars long chronic in the island, and numbers of them served for hire in foreign armies. Beside the horse and foot of Aetolia might commonly be seen the bowmen and slingers of Crete. Others took to the sea and infested the trade-routes. For lying and treachery the Cretans were proverbial: and it may be said of them that they were pests abroad, though powerless at home.

417. We cannot pause to sketch the vicissitudes through which the great empire of Alexander had passed since his death in 323. Within its vast bounds there now remained three kingdoms held by dynasties descended from some of the Successors (*διάδοχοι*), the Marshals who won thrones in the partition of the empire. In Macedon were the Antigonids, in Syria and lands to East and West of Syria were the Seleucids, in Egypt were the Lagids or Ptolemies. Beside these there was the kingdom of Pergamum in western Asia Minor, ruled by Attalus I (241—197). But Attalus was not descended from one of the genuine Successors. For him there was no share of the mantle of Alexander, and the Attalids were not recognized as equals by the occupants of the three great thrones. The same may be said of the kingdom of Bithynia, at this time ruled by Prusias. This was a meaner power, and need not detain us here. The bulk of northern Asia Minor had never been really conquered by Alexander, nor are we at present concerned with Pontus and Cappadocia. But the large

[1] See note at end of this chapter.

inland district traversed by the upper waters of the Sangarius and Halys was held by intruders of Celtic race known as Galatians. Here they had settled down in the first half of the third century B.C., after long wanderings in the course of which they had devastated Macedonia and penetrated far into Greece. They brought their families with them, for their movement was a popular migration: and when they reached their Asiatic home they were still numerous enough to form three strong tribes and to become the plague of their neighbours. Like their brother Gauls in Italy, they inspired terror by their wild charge in battle and their habitual ferocity. We hear of them everywhere as mercenaries: whole armies of them could be hired to fight on any side in any quarrel. So their employers made no scruple of sending them to certain destruction when it served the purpose in view, or even massacring them if troublesome. They are in short a barbarian type quite different from the Asiatic, a disturbing element in the history of Asia Minor.

418. To return to the three great Successor-kingdoms and the lesser monarchy of Pergamum. They had many common characteristics. There was in each an established Royal House, and the reigning king was absolute: if the Macedonian king had to consider the wishes of assembled chiefs, this check, seldom in operation, was practically void through the existence of a national loyalty. If Macedon was an exception to the rule that the seat of government was a splendid capital city, the residence of the royal court, this was simply the outcome of local circumstances. In general, the efficiency gained by the concentration of power in a single hand was neutralized by the mistakes of a monarch unaccustomed to hear the truth. The less assured position of the Pergamene kings made them keener than others to discern their interest. An unscrupulous diplomacy, based on deep mutual distrust, was common to all. The common language of the royal courts was Greek, and their tone cosmopolitan, as was perhaps only natural when the governments were dynasties imposed from without, not national organs developed from within. In this last respect the case of Macedon is again exceptional. The generally free tone of the courts is illustrated by the bold self-assertion of the princesses. That royal marriages were matters of dynastic interest and ambition was a principle well understood and accepted. The royal ladies could not change this even if they wished to do so: but they could and did make their influence felt in the policy of the courts, and bear an active part in intrigue and crimes. The contrasts were not less striking than the resemblances. The king of Macedon differed from his neighbours in having a real nation at his back, in

fact the only community of ancient times to which we can apply the name of a nation in a fully significant sense. It was Philip II, Alexander's father, that had welded together the discordant tribes with masterful force and judgment, till they became a nation in virtue of what has been well called 'community of tradition and hope.' When Alexander's conquests were over and his empire divided, the Macedonians sank back into their previous condition as a nation of farmer-folk. But they enjoyed little rest. Wars between claimants of the throne (for the old royal house was soon extinct), followed by the disastrous inroad of the Gauls (279) left exhaustion behind them, but the reign of Antigonus Gonatas (277—239) was marked by a revival. This king was grandson of old Antigonus, one of the great Marshals of Alexander, and in him we see the Antigonid dynasty firmly established in Macedon. His grandson Philip V reigned from 220 to 179, a king ambitious unscrupulous passionate clever and unwise, who played a great part in the politics of Greece and the East and achieved his own ruin in collision with Rome.

419. Very different was the Asiatic realm over which Antiochus III ruled for 35 years (222—187). He had succeeded to what was left of the vast dominions of his ancestor, the great Seleucus. The core of his kingdom was Syria. Of the lost eastern provinces he reconquered some, and recovered part of the 'Hollow Syria,' which in the weakness of the Seleucid monarchy had been annexed by the Ptolemies. Styled 'the Great' by his admirers, and convinced of his own competence and power, he turned his ambitions to the West, to restore the shaken authority of his house in that direction. The Seleucid kings claimed a long strip of country running westward from Cilicia and the Taurus, and a considerable territory beyond. How the determination of Antiochus to confirm and extend his power in Asia Minor led him into Europe and into conflict with Rome, we shall see below. In 203 he made an infamous compact with Philip of Macedon to rob the boy king of Egypt of some of his possessions, but the Rhodians and Attalus in fear for themselves took the part of Egypt, and time was given for Rome to get her hands free and humble Philip. The Syrian monarchy was in extent much the largest of the Successor-kingdoms, and the house of Seleucus was firmly seated on the throne: but the loyalty of its subjects was the sectional loyalty of various peoples bound together by allegiance to a common master, not the national loyalty that sees in the nation's king an embodiment of the nation's vital unity. Thus the fabric of Seleucid power was territorial: provinces could be lopped off without rendering it necessary for the conqueror to

fell the main stem. The capital city, Antioch on the Orontes, was famed for its beauty and its luxuries: and the whole atmosphere of the Syrian court was more Oriental than Greek.

420. The Egyptian kingdom rested on the material foundations of security and wealth. Its founder, Ptolemy son of Lagus, had with far-sighted judgment chosen this wonderful country as his share of Alexander's heritage. Its resources were enormous, and in those days wealth gave the command of mercenary soldiers according to need. Nor were the natives, patient tillers of the Nile-dressed soil, of themselves inclined to rebel: and it was the policy of the Ptolemies to conciliate the priests of the ancient worship, whose hostility was the one serious source of danger from within. Against foreign invasion nature had provided barriers, for the belts of desert were an obstacle to the passage of armies. The rapid growth of Alexandria as the successful rival of Tyre and Sidon made easy the creation of a powerful fleet. Thus not only was the country secured against an attack by sea but the possessions of the kingdom were extended abroad. Cyprus and the Cyrenaic district became appanages of the Egyptian crown, and a number of places in southern and western Asia Minor, Aegean islands and towns on the Propontis, were gradually added as dependencies. The earlier Ptolemies acquired much influence in Greece, and from Egypt more than any other kingdom came the royal subsidies by which Greek statesmen were enabled to prosecute their designs: for instance, both Aratus and Cleomenes were in the pay of Ptolemy III. Speaking generally, the Antigonid and Seleucid kings were hostile to the Lagid house, the former jealous of Egyptian influence in Greece and the Aegean, the latter as rivals in the control of Hollow Syria and Palestine. With Rhodes and Pergamum, powers interested in peace and trade, the Ptolemies as a rule were good friends. Their policy was to make useful alliances, and we have seen how Ptolemy II became a friend if not an ally of Rome before the first Punic war: he did not however break with Carthage, also his nominal friend. The land forces of the Lagids were what money and management made them: strong and efficient, or the opposite, at various times. There was a Macedonian body-guard, privileged, and important at least in the earlier days of the dynasty: the Greek mercenaries, Aetolians, Peloponnesians, Cretans and others, beside the barbarians from Galatia and Thrace. But there was a growing tendency to train and use native troops, and the increase of this element was one of the symptoms of the decay of the Graeco-Macedonian government. For after the death of Ptolemy III (in 222 or 221) a degeneration of the Lagid house sets in: only the protection of Rome delays for nearly two centuries the

inevitable end. The great capital of Ptolemaic Egypt, Alexandria, has been described by several modern writers. It was the most splendid populous and cosmopolitan of all the imperial cities, and contained among its motley throng a large colony of Jews living according to their own customs, and in a separate quarter of their own. The Museum, a sort of great college of professors, with its library observatory and natural history collections etc., was the greatest centre of learning and research in the world. It was the home of Greek mathematics and kindred sciences, and, on the literary side, of criticism and grammar. It was in short a world's university of special and technical studies.

421. The kingdom of Pergamum had its origin in the enterprise of an eunuch who was holding that fortress for Lysimachus king of Thrace. When his master lost throne and life in 281, the fort and the treasure stored there were at the governor's disposal. He raised more troops, and gradually won a considerable territory. He courted the favour of his powerful neighbours, and in troubled times it was more their interest to keep on good terms with the upstart than to take arms and eject him. He was succeeded by his nephews, the second of whom, the famous Attalus (241—197), was the first to assume the title of king, after his victory over the Galatians. Pergamum now became a considerable power both on land and sea, and the capital an art-centre with a fine school of sculpture. But the growth and pretensions of Pergamum (for Attalus had no small influence in Greece) roused the jealousy of the kings of Syria and Macedon, and the need of a powerful ally threw him into the arms of Rome. The Pergamene kingdom, having no national cohesion and only a moderate extent of territory, depended on sheer wealth: so far as its geographical position was concerned, it was, unlike Egypt, insecure.

422. Such in brief outline was the state of things in Greece and the East about 200 B.C. The Roman Senate was afraid to stand aside and let things settle themselves: at present they had allies and owed those allies a duty. It was not for Rome to abandon her traditional policy by leaving her allies to perish, with the prospect of having to fight their conqueror single-handed. The fatal slackness shewn in the case of Saguntum was fresh in men's memories, and not to be repeated for the present. The first need was to put an end to the aggrandisement of Philip of Macedon and confine him to his hereditary domains. But it was not likely that the responsibilities of Rome would end here. From Rhodes Alexandria and Pergamum came news of the movements of the 'Great' Antiochus, pushing boldly to the West. An important factor in the Roman policy in the time now coming on was the attitude of leading Romans towards