**Bucephalus, The Horse**

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Here are two fragments pertaining Bucephalus, the horse of Alexander The Great. The first one was written in 344 B.C. by Plutarch in his *Parallel Lives*. The second one was written by Kafka in the beginning of the 20th Century. The fate of Bucephalus illustrates the fate of mankind. So here are the stories:

Dark Horse

by Plutarch

When Philonicus the Thessalian brought to Philip the horse Bucephalus, who was on sale for thirteen talents, the king and the court adjourned to the paddock to put him through his paces. The animal seemed illtempered and unmanageable and would not suffer any of Philip’s people either to mount or to speak to him, but shied at everyone. Philip was greatly annoyed and ordered Philonicus to take the brute away, asserting that he was absolutely wild and unbroken. But Alexander, who was present, exclaimed, “What a magnificent horse they are throwing away! It is ignorance and cowardice that prevents them from managing him!” At first Philip said nothing, but when Alexander kept reiterating his protest and had worked himself up into a state of excitement, Philip remarked, “Do you find fault with your elders because you know more yourself, and are better able to manage a horse?” “This horse at any rate,” replied Alexander, “I should manage better than anyone else!” Then Philip said, “If you fail to manage him, what forfeit will you pay for your rashness?” “By Zeus,” exclaimed Alexander, “I’ll pay the animal’s price to the last penny.” A laugh went around upon that, and then, when the amount of the forfeit money had been mutually arranged, Alexander ran up to the horse and, seizing the bridle, turned him facing the sun, for he had noticed, I imagine, that the animal was thoroughly frightened at the sight of his own shadow falling and dancing before him. In this way he led him for a short trot, and then stroked him down. When he saw his temper and wind restored, he quietly slipped off his cloak, swung himself upon the horse’s back, and safely bestrode him. Pulling lightly on the reins, he held him in without help of either whip or spur, but when he saw that the horse had ceased jibbing and was eager for a race, he let him have his head and now urged him on with a heartier use of voice and spur. Philip and his court were at first anxious and silent, but when the young prince turned and came straight back at full gallop, radiant with happiness, the whole company raised a cheer, and his father is said to have wept with joy and, kissing his head as he dismounted, to have exclaimed, “My son, seek a kingdom worthy of thy greatness! Macedonia is too small for you.”

The New Advocate

by Franz Kafka

We have a new advocate, Dr. Bucephalus. There is little in his appearance to remind you that he was once Alexander of Macedon's battle charger. Of course, if you know his story, you are aware of something. But even a simple usher whom I saw the other day on the front steps of the Law Courts, a man with the professional appraisal of the regular small bettor at a racecourse, was running an admiring eye over the

advocate as he mounted the marble steps with a high action that made them ring beneath his feet.

       In general the Bar approves the admission of Bucephalus. With astonishing insight people tell themselves that, modern society being what it is, Bucephalus is in a difficult position, and therefore, considering also his importance in the history of the world, he deserves at least a friendly reception. Nowadays -- it cannot be denied -- there is no Alexander the Great. There are plenty of men who know how to murder people; the skill needed to reach over a banqueting table and pink a friend with a lance is not lacking; and for many Macedonia is too confining, so that they curse Philip, the father -- but no one, no one at all, can blaze a trail to India. Even in his day the gates of India were beyond reach, yet the King's sword pointed the way to them. Today the gates have receded to remoter and loftier places; no one points the way; many carry swords, but only to brandish them, and the eye that tries to follow them is confused.

 So perhaps it is really best to do as Bucephalus has done and absorb oneself in law books. In the quiet lamplight, his flanks unhampered by the thighs of a rider, free and far from the clamor of battle, he reads and turns the pages of our ancient tomes.

Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir

Sources:

Dark horse: http://www.laphamsquarterly.org/voices-in-time/dark-horse.php

The New Advocate: Kafka, The Complete Stories, Schocken Books, 1971