

MARK ANTONY

[83-30 B.C.]

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1. Mark Antony's grandfather was Antony the orator, who took the side of Sulla in the civil wars and was put to death by Marius. His father, who received the surname Creticus,* did not become famous nor make any great mark in public life, but was remembered rather for his benevolence, his honesty, and especially his generosity, as may be judged by the following episode. He was by no means rich, and for this reason his wife was inclined to restrain his philanthropic impulses. So when one of his intimate friends came to ask him for money, he had none to offer: instead, he ordered a young slave to fetch some water in a silver bowl, and when it arrived he moistened his face as though he were about to shave. He then dismissed the slave on some other pretext, presented his friend with the bowl, and urged him to make what use he could of it. Later, when he saw that a thorough search was being made among the slaves, and that his wife was angry and intended to question them one by one, Antony confessed what he had done and begged her forgiveness.

2. His wife Julia belonged to the family of the Caesars and could take her place among the most nobly born and admirable women of her time. It was under her care that Antony was brought up, and after his father's death she married Cornelius Lentulus, who was executed by Cicero as one of the ringleaders of Catiline's conspiracy. This seems to have been the origin and the reason for the bitter animosity which Antony felt towards Cicero. At any rate Antony

* This surname was given him ironically. He was entrusted with the command of a fleet against the pirates, lost a large part of it in action against the Cretans in 74 B.C., and died soon afterwards, leaving three sons, of whom Mark Antony was the eldest.

used to maintain that Cicero refused even to hand over Lentulus's body for burial until Julia had begged this concession from his wife. But this accusation is obviously false, since none of those who were executed at that time by Cicero was denied burial.

In his youth, it is said, Antony gave promise of a brilliant future, but then he became a close friend of Curio and this association seems to have fallen like a blight upon his career. Curio was a man who had become wholly enslaved to the demands of pleasure, and in order to make Antony more pliable to his will, he plunged him into a life of drinking bouts, love-affairs, and reckless spending. The consequence was that Antony quickly ran up debts of an enormous size for so young a man, the sum involved being two hundred and fifty talents. Curio provided security for the whole of this amount, but his father heard of it and forbade Antony his house. Antony then attached himself for a short while to Clodius, the most notorious of all the demagogues of his time for his lawlessness and loose-living, and took part in the campaigns of violence which at that time were throwing political affairs at Rome into chaos. But he soon grew tired of Clodius's crazy intrigues and alarmed at the strength of the opposition which they aroused, and he therefore left Italy for Greece, where he devoted himself to military training and to the study of public speaking, adopting what was known as the Asiatic style. This type of oratory was just then at the height of its popularity, and indeed had much in common with Antony's own mode of life, which was boastful, insolent, and full of empty bravado and misguided aspirations.

3. During his stay in Greece he was invited by Gabinius, a man of consular rank, to accompany the Roman force which was about to sail for Syria. Antony declined to join him in a private capacity, but when he was offered the command of the cavalry he agreed to serve in the campaign. His first operations were directed against Aristobulus,* who had incited the Jews to revolt. On this occasion Antony was the first man to scale the highest part of the enemy's fortifications, and he drove Aristobulus from all his positions. Then he engaged him, routed a greatly superior force with a handful of men, and killed all but a few of his opponents. Aristobulus and his son were both taken prisoner.

* Aristobulus was king and high priest of the Jews. Pompey had captured him in 63 B.C. and sent him to Rome. He escaped in 57 B.C.

After this campaign was over, Gabinius was approached by Ptolemy Auletes,* who appealed to him to join forces, invade Egypt, and recover his kingdom, for which services he offered a bribe of ten thousand talents. The majority of the Roman officers were opposed to the plan, but Gabinius, although he had no liking for the campaign, was captivated by the vision of the ten thousand talents. Antony, on the other hand, who longed to undertake some ambitious enterprise, was eager to gratify Ptolemy's request and so he threw his weight on to the king's side and persuaded Gabinius to join him. The general opinion was that the greatest danger lay not so much in the fighting as in the march to Pelusium, since the Romans would have to pass through deep sand and a completely waterless region as far as the Ecregma and the Serbonian marshes.† The Egyptians call this region Typhon's breathing-hole, but it is probable that the swamp consists of water which was originally left behind by the Red Sea, or else infiltrated from it at the point where the isthmus dividing it from the Mediterranean is at its narrowest. However, when Antony was ordered to advance with the cavalry, he not only occupied the isthmus, but also seized the large city of Pelusium and captured its garrison, thus securing the line of march for the main Roman force and laying a foundation for the campaign on which his commander could base confident hopes of victory. And on this occasion even the enemy profited from Antony's love of honour. As soon as king Ptolemy arrived in Pelusium, he was so overcome by his anger and resentment that he was about to carry out a massacre of the Egyptians, but Antony stepped in and prevented him. There followed a whole series of hard-fought battles, in which time and again Antony gave proof of his courage and his gifts of leadership. The most remarkable

* The father of Cleopatra. He had been obliged to flee to Ephesus because of the Egyptians' resentment of the high taxes he had imposed. He used these to bribe Roman officials in order to have himself declared a friend and ally of Rome. He was restored to the Egyptian throne in 55 B.C.

† Pelusium lay at the easternmost mouth of the Nile, on the site of the modern Damietta. Typhon, a brother of Isis and Osiris, was the evil deity of the Egyptians and was believed to lie buried beneath the Serbonian marshes, which began a few miles east of Pelusium. Milton refers to them in *Paradise Lost*, II.

A gulf profound as that Serbonian bog,
Betwixt Damietta and Mount Casius old,
Where armies whole have sunk . . .

and Herodotus also describes them (Book III, ch. 5).

of these exploits was the operation in which by wheeling his own force he succeeded in outflanking the enemy and enveloping them from the rear, and so enabled the Roman troops who were attacking from the front to win the battle. He received suitable decorations and honours for all these feats, and the Egyptian people were especially impressed by the humanity which he showed to the dead Archelaus.* Although Antony had been his personal friend and guest, circumstances had forced him to make war upon this prince during his lifetime, but when he had been killed, Antony sought out his body and had it buried with royal honours. In consequence, he left a great name behind him among the Alexandrians, while his comrades in the Roman army looked up to him as a brilliant soldier.

4. Besides these qualities there was a noble dignity about Antony's appearance. His beard was well grown, his forehead broad, his nose aquiline, and these features combined to give him a certain bold and masculine look, which is found in the statues and portraits of Hercules. In fact there was an ancient tradition that the blood of the Heracleidae ran in Antony's family, since they claimed descent from Anton, one of the sons of Hercules, and Antony liked to believe that his own physique lent force to the legend. He also deliberately cultivated it in his choice of dress, for whenever he was going to appear before a large number of people, he wore his tunic belted low over the hips, a large sword at his side, and a heavy cloak. And indeed it was these same 'Herculean' qualities that the fastidious found so offensive – his swaggering air, his ribald talk, his fondness for carousing in public, sitting down by his men as they ate, or taking his food standing at the common mess-table – which made his own troops delight in his company and almost worship him. His weakness for the opposite sex also showed an attractive side of his character, and even won him the sympathy of many people, for he often helped others in their love-affairs and always accepted with good humour the jokes they made about his own. Besides this, his open-handed nature and the generosity with which he showered rewards upon his friends

* Archelaus was the son of Mithridates's general of the same name who had surrendered to Sulla. The son was married to Ptolemy Auletes's daughter Berenice, who had become Queen of Egypt when her father was expelled. Antony's first meeting with Cleopatra may well have taken place during this visit to Alexandria: she was then aged fourteen.

and his soldiers alike laid a splendid foundation when he first set out upon the road to power, and when he had established himself, these qualities raised his authority to still greater heights, even after he had begun to undermine it by innumerable acts of folly. I cannot refrain from quoting one example of his liberality. He had given orders for two hundred and fifty thousand drachmas to be presented to one of his friends, a sum which the Romans call a *decies*. His steward was dumbfounded at this command, and in order to make Antony understand the sheer size of the gift, he had the money laid out in full view of his master. As Antony passed by, he asked what this heap of coins represented, and the steward then explained that this was the gift he had ordered for his friend. Antony saw that the man grudged the expense, and so he remarked: 'I thought a *decies* amounted to more than that. This is just a trifle: you had better double it!'

5. These episodes belong to a later date. At the time of which I am now speaking the affairs of Rome had reached the brink of civil war, with the senatorial party ranging itself under the leadership of Pompey, who was in the capital, while the popular party sought the help of Caesar, who was then commanding the Roman armies in Gaul. At this point Curio, the friend of Antony's younger days, who had himself changed sides and was now one of Caesar's supporters,* persuaded Antony to join him. Curio's gifts as an orator gave him a powerful hold over the masses, and by making lavish use of the funds provided by Caesar, he secured Antony's election as tribune and later as augur, that is to say a priest whose duty it is to observe the flight of birds.† Once in office, Antony quickly found ways to use his powers for the benefit of those who were managing affairs on Caesar's behalf. First of all he found that the consul Marcellus was proposing not only to place the forces which had already been raised under Pompey's command, but also to grant him powers to conscript new levies. Antony opposed this plan by introducing a decree that the soldiers who had already been mobilized should sail for Syria to reinforce the army of Bibulus, who was engaged in a campaign against the

* Caesar had won over Curio by paying off his debts.

† Plutarch's chronology is vague at this point. Antony returned from Egypt in 54 and visited Caesar at his winter quarters in Gaul. He was in Rome again in 53, was elected quaestor in 52, and went out to Gaul. In 50 he returned to Rome and was appointed an augur, and in the following year was elected tribune.

Parthians, and that those whom Pompey was then recruiting should not serve under his command. On another occasion, when the Senate refused either to receive Caesar's letters or to allow them to be read, Antony employed the powers vested in his office to read them out aloud himself, and in this way he won many more supporters for Caesar's cause, because people were enabled to judge from these letters that his demands were no more than moderate and just. Finally, when two questions were laid before the Senate, the first whether Pompey should disband his army, and the second whether Caesar should do the same, and when only a small minority voted that Pompey should disarm and the great majority that Caesar should do so, Antony then rose and asked whether it was the Senate's opinion that both Pompey and Caesar should dismiss their troops. This suggestion was received with great enthusiasm, and amid shouts of applause for Antony the senators demanded that the motion should be put to the vote. But the consuls rejected this procedure, and thereupon Caesar's supporters put forward a fresh set of proposals which they believed to be reasonable. These in turn were overruled by Cato, and then Lentulus, exercising his authority as consul, had Antony ejected from the Senate. Antony responded by delivering a violent attack on his opponents, after which he left the house. He disguised himself in a slave's clothes, and in the company of Quintus Cassius* hired a chariot and set out to join Caesar. As soon as they arrived they reported angrily to Caesar that affairs at Rome were now in chaos, that even the tribunes of the people had been deprived of their freedom of speech, and that anyone who raised his voice on behalf of justice was persecuted and went in danger of his life.

6. When this news reached him, Caesar broke camp and invaded Italy, and it was for this reason that Cicero in his *Philippics* wrote that Antony had been the cause of the civil war, just as Helen had been of the Trojan war. But this is an obvious falsehood, for Caesar was by no means easily influenced, neither was he the man to abandon his calculations on account of anger. The mere sight of Antony and Cassius dressed in rags and arriving at his camp in a hired chariot would never have persuaded him to make war upon his country on the spur of the moment, unless he had planned such an action long before. On the contrary, Caesar had long been anxious to open

* A brother of the conspirator against Julius Caesar.

hostilities, and this episode merely provided him with the occasion and a plausible excuse. The real motive which drove him to make war upon mankind, just as it had urged Alexander and Cyrus before him, was an insatiable love of power and an insane desire to be the first and greatest man in the world, and this ambition could not be attained without subduing Pompey.

So Caesar advanced upon Rome, captured it, and drove Pompey out of Italy. He decided first of all to attack Pompey's forces in Spain, and later, when a fleet had been organized in his absence, to cross the sea to Greece, where his enemy was established. Meanwhile he left Rome to be governed by Lepidus, who was praetor, while the command of the troops and the administration of Italy were entrusted to Antony, who was one of the tribunes of the people. Antony quickly won the affections of the soldiers by joining them in their exercises, spending much of his time amongst them, and providing gifts for them whenever the opportunity arose. The rest of the population, however, saw him in a very different light. He was too lazy to deal with complaints and too impatient to listen to those who wanted to enlist his help, while at the same time he became notorious for his intrigues with other men's wives. In short, Caesar's régime, which appeared to be anything but tyrannical when he conducted it himself, was made unpopular by his friends, and of these it was Antony who wielded the greatest power, and hence was considered the worst offender.

7. In spite of this, when Caesar returned from Spain he ignored all the accusations that were brought against Antony, and, in so far as he found him a capable leader of men who had shown courage and energy in his prosecution of the war, his judgement was correct. Caesar himself now sailed from Brundisium with a small force,* crossed the Ionian sea, and sent back his transports with orders to Gabinius and Antony to embark their troops and join him as quickly as possible in Macedonia. Gabinius, however, was afraid to attempt the crossing, which was difficult in winter, and began to march his army round by the long route overland. Antony, on the other hand, was becoming more and more concerned that Caesar would find himself surrounded by superior forces. He managed to drive off Libo, who was blockading the harbour at Brundisium, by attacking

* Early in 48 B.C.

his galleys with a large number of small boats, and he then embarked a force of twenty thousand infantry and eight hundred horsemen and put out to sea. The enemy sighted and pursued him, but he was rescued from this danger by a strong south wind, which raised such a heavy swell that Libo's galleys wallowed in the trough of the waves and could make no headway. Antony, on the other hand, found that his ships were being driven towards a rock-bound shore and cliffs with deep water under them, from which there seemed to be no hope of escape. But suddenly the wind veered to the south-west, and the swell began to move towards the open sea and allowed him to change his course. As he sailed proudly along he could see the beach strewn with wreckage, for the wind had driven his pursuers ashore, and many of their ships had been destroyed. A great quantity of booty and many prisoners fell into Antony's hands. He then went on to capture the town of Lissus and inspired Caesar with great confidence by arriving at the critical moment with such large reinforcements.

8. There followed a long period of continuous fighting, and in all these engagements Antony distinguished himself brilliantly. Twice when Caesar's troops were in headlong retreat he met them, stemmed the rout, forced them to turn and charge their pursuers, and won a victory. In consequence, his reputation with the army was second only to Caesar's, and Caesar left no doubt as to his own opinion of Antony. When he was about to engage in the final and decisive battle at Pharsalus, Caesar took charge of the right wing and gave the left to Antony as the most able commander in his army. And after the victory, when he had been proclaimed dictator, he himself pressed on to pursue Pompey, but he chose Antony as his master of horse and sent him to Rome. This appointment is the second in rank when the dictator is in the city, but when he is absent it represents the supreme and almost the only authority, for once a dictator has been chosen there remains only the tribunate; all the other offices of state cease to function.

9. One of the tribunes at this time was Dolabella, a young man and a newcomer to politics, who was ambitious to change the existing order. He therefore proposed a law for the cancellation of debts and approached Antony – who was his friend and usually favoured any measure designed to appeal to the masses – to enlist his support. But

Asinius and Trebellius advised Antony against the scheme, and it so happened that at this moment he had reason to suspect that Dolabella had seduced his wife. Antony was enraged at this, drove his wife out of his house – she was his cousin, her father being the Gaius Antonius who had been Cicero's colleague during his consulship – and prepared for an open clash with Dolabella. Meanwhile Dolabella had already occupied the Forum so as to force his measure through the Assembly, and accordingly Antony, as soon as the Senate had passed a resolution authorizing him to take up arms, advanced on the Forum, killed a number of Dolabella's men, and lost some of his own. Through this action Antony forfeited his popularity with the people, while at the same time his course of life earned him the contempt of all men of principle; indeed, as Cicero explains, they positively detested him. They were disgusted at his ill-timed drunkenness, his extravagant spending, his gross intrigues with women, his days spent in sleeping off his debauches, or wandering about with an aching head and befuddled wits, and his nights spent in revels, or watching lavish spectacles, or attending the wedding feast of some actor or buffoon. The story goes that he once attended a banquet given for the wedding of Hippias the actor, ate and drank all night, and then, when he was summoned to attend a political meeting early in the morning at the Forum, he appeared in public surfeited with food and vomited into his toga, which one of his friends held ready for him. Sergius, the mime, was one of his friends who had the greatest influence over him, and also Cytheris, a woman from the same school of acting, to whom he was much attached. When he visited the cities of Italy she accompanied him in a litter, which was followed by a retinue of attendants as large as his own mother's.

Besides this, there was much else in Antony's way of living which caused great offence. People were scandalized, for example, at the sight of the golden drinking cups which were carried before him when he left the city, as if they were part of some religious procession; at the pavilions which were set up on his journeys; at the lavish meals which were spread in groves or on the banks of rivers; at his chariots drawn by lions and at his habit of billeting courtesans and sambucaplayers in the homes of honest men and women. Most people thought it outrageous that while Caesar was sleeping under the open sky far away from Italy, and undergoing great hardships and dangers as he fought out the final campaigns of the civil war, his supporters

should profit by his exertions to wallow in luxury and insult their fellow-citizens.

10. This kind of behaviour is also believed to have intensified the bitterness of the civil war and to have encouraged the soldiers to indulge in looting and other acts of violence. So when Caesar returned to Rome he pardoned Dolabella, and when he was elected consul for the third time, he chose Lepidus as his colleague but not Antony. At this moment also Pompey's house happened to be put up for sale and Antony bought it, but when he was asked to hand over the money for it he became angry. Antony himself makes out that the reason why he did not take part in Caesar's African campaign was that he felt aggrieved at not having been rewarded in any way for his earlier successes. But in spite of this, it appears that Caesar cured Antony of much of his extravagance and folly by not allowing his faults to pass unnoticed. At any rate, he now reformed his whole manner of living, turned his thoughts towards marriage, and chose Fulvia,* the widow of Clodius the demagogue. She was a woman who took no interest in spinning or managing a household, nor could she be content to rule a husband who had no ambition for public life: her desire was to govern those who governed or to command a commander-in-chief. And in fact Cleopatra was indebted to Fulvia for teaching Antony to obey a wife's authority, for by the time he met her, he had already been quite broken in and schooled to accept the sway of women.

However, Antony did his best by means of practical jokes and other boyish pranks to import a little gaiety into his relationship with Fulvia. For example, when Caesar returned after his victory in Spain, Antony, like many others among his supporters, went out to meet him. Suddenly the rumour began to spread that Caesar had been killed and that his enemies were about to invade Italy, whereupon Antony turned back to Rome. He disguised himself as a slave, made out that he was carrying a letter to Fulvia from Antony, and was admitted to her presence with his face all muffled. Fulvia was distracted and before taking the letter asked him whether Antony was

* Fulvia's first husband was Clodius, and her daughter by this marriage became Octavius Caesar's first wife in 43 B.C. (see ch. 20). Her second husband was Antony's friend Curio, who died in Africa in 49 B.C. Antony was her third husband, by whom she had two children. She died in 39 B.C.

alive. He handed it to her in silence, and no sooner had she opened it and begun to read it than he flung his arms around her and kissed her. I mention this story as a single example of many such actions of his.

11. When Caesar returned from Spain,* everybody of importance in Rome travelled for several days to meet him, but it was Antony whom he singled out for especial honour. As he passed through Italy, it was Antony who shared Caesar's chariot. After them rode Brutus Albinus and Octavius, the dictator's great-nephew who afterwards took the name of Caesar and ruled Rome for many years. And when Caesar had been elected consul for the fifth time, he immediately chose Antony for his colleague. He had intended to resign his office and entrust it to Dolabella, and he announced this plan to the Senate. But Antony violently opposed the scheme and poured abuse upon Dolabella, who returned it with interest, until Caesar became so ashamed of this wrangling among his supporters that for the time being he put the idea aside. Later, when Caesar appeared in public to nominate Dolabella as consul, Antony cried out that the omens were unfavourable,† whereupon Caesar gave up the attempt, much to Dolabella's indignation. In fact, it would appear that Caesar was as much disgusted with Dolabella as he was with Antony. The story goes that when someone was accusing them both of plotting against Caesar, he remarked: 'It is not the fat, sleek-headed men I am afraid of, but the pale, lean ones' – and here he pointed to Brutus and Cassius, the men who were to conspire against him and murder him.

12. It was Antony who quite unintentionally supplied the conspirators with their most plausible pretext. The occasion was the festival of the Lycaea, which the Romans call the Lupercalia, and Caesar, dressed in a triumphal robe and seated upon the rostra in the Forum, was watching the runners as they darted to and fro. This is a ceremony at which many of the young nobles and holders of the offices of state are anointed with oil, and, carrying leather thongs in their hands, they run about and strike in sport at everyone they meet. Antony was one of these runners, but instead of carrying out the traditional ceremony, he twined a wreath of laurel round a diadem and ran with it to the

* After his victory at Munda, in the autumn of 45 B.C.

† In his capacity as augur.

rostra. There he was lifted up by his fellow-runners and placed the diadem on Caesar's head, implying by this gesture that he deserved to be made king. At this Caesar made a show of declining the crown, whereupon the people were delighted and clapped their hands. Again Antony pressed it upon him, and again Caesar waved it aside. This pantomime continued for some time, with a few of Antony's friends encouraging his attempts to force the crown upon Caesar, while the crowd greeted every refusal with shouts of applause. Yet perhaps the most curious aspect of this affair was that while the people were ready to submit to the fact of being ruled by a king, they still shrank from the title, as though it signified the destruction of their liberty. At last, Caesar, who had been vexed by the whole episode, rose from the rostra, pulled open his toga, and called out that anyone who wished to cut his throat might do so there and then. The wreath was placed upon one of his statues, whereupon some of the tribunes of the people tore it down. The people followed them home with loud applause and cries of approval, but at Caesar's orders they were deposed from their office.

13. This episode encouraged Brutus and Cassius in their plot, and when they began to consider which of their friends could be trusted to help them, they discussed the question of whether or not to approach Antony. The rest of the conspirators were in favour of enlisting him, but Trebonius opposed the idea. He mentioned that at the time when many people had left Rome to meet Caesar on his return from Spain, Antony had travelled with him, and Trebonius had then sounded him unobtrusively and cautiously. Antony had understood his drift, he maintained, but had given him no encouragement: at the same time he had not reported the conversation to Caesar, but had faithfully kept it secret. It was then proposed that they should kill Antony at the same time as Caesar, but Brutus objected to this, arguing that if they were undertaking to kill a man for the sake of justice and the laws, then the deed must be kept pure and free from any taint of injustice. The others were afraid of Antony's physical strength and the influence which he commanded through his office, and some of the conspirators were detailed to keep watch for him, so that when Caesar entered the Senate-house and they were about to carry out the assassination, Antony should be engaged in conversation about some urgent matter and kept outside the chamber.

14. These plans were duly put into effect and Caesar fell in the Senate-house. Antony immediately disguised himself as a slave and went into hiding. But when he learned that the conspirators had merely assembled on the Capitol and had no further designs against anyone, he persuaded them to come down into the city and sent them his son as a hostage. He even went so far as to entertain Cassius in his house, and Lepidus did the same for Brutus. He also arranged a meeting of the Senate, at which he moved that an amnesty should be declared and that provinces should be allotted to Brutus and Cassius and their supporters. The Senate passed this proposal, and also voted that no change should be made in the measures which Caesar had taken. So when Antony left the Senate on this occasion, his reputation had never stood higher, for it was felt that he had delivered Rome from civil war and had succeeded in resolving an exceptionally difficult and confused situation in a most prudent and statesmanlike fashion.

However, these counsels of moderation were soon swept away by the tide of popular feeling which was now running in Antony's favour, and which inspired him with the hope that if Brutus could be overthrown, he himself would be sure to become the first man in Rome. It so happened that when Caesar's body was carried out for burial, Antony delivered the customary eulogy over it in the Forum. When he saw that his oratory had cast a spell over the people and that they were deeply stirred by his words, he began to introduce into his praises a note of pity and of indignation at Caesar's fate. Finally, at the close of his speech, he snatched up the dead man's robe and brandished it aloft, all bloodstained as it was and stabbed through in many places, and called those who had done the deed murderers and villains. This appeal had such an effect upon the people that they piled up benches and tables and burned Caesar's body in the Forum, and then, snatching up firebrands from the pyre, they ran to the houses of his assassins and attacked them.

15. Because of these events Brutus and his party left the city, while Caesar's friends allied themselves with Antony. Meanwhile, Caesar's widow Calpurnia entrusted him with the greater part of Caesar's treasure, which she removed from her house and delivered into Antony's hands. This amounted in all to four thousand talents. Antony also took charge of Caesar's papers, which contained written

memoranda of many of his plans and decrees. Antony made a number of insertions into these documents and so appointed many magistrates and senators according to his own wishes, and he also recalled some men from exile and released others from prison, as though all these actions represented the will of Caesar. The Romans by way of mockery nicknamed all those who had benefited in this way *Charonites*,* because if they were called upon to substantiate their case, they appealed to the records of the dead. In short, Antony at this period handled everything in an autocratic fashion, since he himself held the consulship, while his brothers had also been appointed to high office, Gaius as praetor and Lucius as tribune.

16. This was the situation in Rome which the young Octavius found when he arrived. He was, as I have mentioned above,† a son of Caesar's niece, who had been left the heir to the dead man's property, and at the time of the assassination he had been living at Apollonia. He at once paid his respects to Antony as the friend of his family, and then reminded him of the money which had been placed in his charge, since according to the terms of Caesar's will Octavius was bound as the legal heir to pay every Roman citizen the sum of seventy-five drachmas.‡ Antony was at first inclined to despise Octavius as a mere boy, and told him that he must be out of his mind, adding the warning that a young man who possessed few influential friends and little experience of the world would find it a crushing burden to accept the inheritance and act as Caesar's executor. Octavius was quite unmoved by this argument and continued to demand the money, while Antony for his part did everything possible to humiliate him. First of all he opposed him when Octavius stood for election as tribune, and then when the young man attempted to dedicate a golden chair in honour of Caesar, as the Senate had decreed,

* Plutarch gives the Greek word, derived from Charon, the legendary ferryman of Hades. The Latin word was *Orcini*, derived from Orcus the god of the underworld.

† See ch. II.

‡ Octavius was not bound by law to accept the inheritance. Caesar's estate was so great that there was no danger of inheriting debts. The risk lay rather in inheriting the wealth and the odium which might attach to the dead man's name and in the difficulties of administering debatable legacies. Octavius was left three quarters of the estate. The remainder was left to Quintus Pedius, another great-nephew.

Antony threatened to have him imprisoned, unless he stopped trying to ingratiate himself with the people. Octavius's next move was to join forces with Cicero and all the rest of Antony's bitterest enemies: with their help the support of the Senate was secured, while he himself won the goodwill of the people and also succeeded in mobilizing many of Caesar's veterans from the colonies to which they had retired. By now Antony was becoming alarmed at these manoeuvres, and he met Octavius for a conference on the Capitol at which the two men were reconciled. On the same night after their meeting Antony experienced a strange dream, in which it seemed to him that his right hand was struck by a thunderbolt. A few days later a report reached him that Octavius was plotting against his life. Octavius did his utmost to justify himself, but he could not succeed in removing Antony's suspicions, and so the hostility between the two men flared up as intensely as ever. Both of them hurried all over Italy and vied with one another in offering lavish pay and rewards to recruit the veterans, who by now had settled on the land, and in being the first to secure the allegiance of the legionaries who were still under arms.

17. At this time Cicero still commanded more influence than any other man in Rome. He now devoted all his efforts to arousing public opinion against Antony and he succeeded so far as to persuade the Senate to declare him a public enemy, to confer the fasces and other insignia of a praetor upon Octavius, and to dispatch Hirtius and Pansa, the consuls, to drive Antony out of Italy. The two armies met near Mutina* and Octavius was present and fought on the side of the consuls. Antony was defeated, but Hirtius and Pansa were both killed. Antony's army experienced terrible hardships in their retreat, and they suffered most of all from hunger. But it was characteristic of Antony to show his finest qualities in the hour of trial, and indeed it was always when his fortunes were at their lowest that he came nearest to being a good man. It is a common experience for men who have suffered some reverse to understand what virtue is, but it is rare indeed for them to find the strength to emulate the qualities they admire and to rid themselves of the vices they condemn: on the contrary, many people become so discouraged by adversity that they give way to their habits all the more and allow their judgement to

* The modern Modena.

collapse. At any rate, on this occasion Antony set a wonderful example to his soldiers. In spite of all the luxury and extravagance of his recent life, he could bring himself without difficulty to drink foul water and eat wild fruits and roots. And during the crossing of the Alps, we are told, the army was reduced even to devouring the bark of trees and creatures that no man had ever tasted before.

18. They were anxious to make contact with the army commanded by Lepidus, for he was believed to be friendly to Antony, and like him he had benefited greatly from his association with Caesar. But when Antony arrived and encamped close by, there was no sign whatever of a welcome, and so he decided to risk everything on a bold move. His hair was long and uncombed, his beard had been left to grow ever since his defeat, and he now put on a dark cloak, walked up to the palisade which surrounded Lepidus's camp, and began to speak to the soldiers. Many of them were immediately touched by his appearance and stirred by his words, whereupon Lepidus became alarmed and ordered all the trumpets to be sounded so as to drown Antony's voice. But this only increased the soldiers' pity for him, and they then disguised Laelius and Clodius in the dresses of two of the prostitutes who followed the army and sent them to confer with Antony in secret. These two urged him to take courage and attack their camp at once, and told him that there were many who would not only welcome him but would kill Lepidus if he wished. Antony would not allow them to touch Lepidus, but the next day he began to cross the river with his army. He himself was the first to set foot in the water and waded over to the opposite shore, where he could already see many of Lepidus's troops stretching out their hands to welcome him and pulling down the fortifications of their camp. After he had entered and made himself master of the camp, he treated Lepidus with the greatest kindness. He embraced him, addressed him by the title of father, and, although he was in complete control of his rival's army, he insisted that Lepidus should retain the rank and honours of a general. His behaviour persuaded Munatius Plancus, who was encamped close by with another large body of troops, to join forces with him, and so with his army now restored to a formidable strength, he recrossed the Alps and marched into Italy with seventeen legions of infantry and ten thousand cavalry at his back. In addition to these he left six legions to garrison Gaul:

this force was under the command of Varius, one of his intimate friends and drinking companions, who was nicknamed Cotylon.*

19. By this time Octavius Caesar had quarrelled with Cicero, who, he realized, was determined to restore the liberties of the old Republic, and he now sent his friends to Antony and invited him to come to terms. So Antony, Lepidus, and Octavius met on a small island in the middle of a river,† and here their conference lasted for three days. They found no difficulty in agreeing on a great range of subjects, and they divided the rule of the whole world between them as easily as if it had been a family inheritance. The most troublesome of their problems turned out to be the question of which men were to be put to death, since each of them demanded the right to rid himself of his respective enemies and spare his own flesh and blood. In the end the hatred which each of them felt towards their enemies overcame their sense of honour towards their kinsmen and even their loyalty towards their friends, so that Octavius sacrificed Cicero to Antony, while Antony in his turn abandoned Lucius Caesar, who was his uncle on his mother's side. Lepidus was given the privilege of having his own brother Paulus executed, although some say that he gave up Paulus to Antony and Octavius who had demanded his death. However that may be, I can conceive of nothing more savage or vindictive than this trafficking in blood. At the end of all this bartering of one death for another, they were just as guilty of the murder of the men whom they abandoned as of those whom they seized; but the wrong which they did to their friends was the more revolting of the two, since they killed them without even hating them.

20. To complete this reconciliation the soldiers crowded round the three leaders and demanded that Octavius should cement the alliance by marrying Clodia, the daughter of Antony's wife Fulvia by her first husband. This was likewise agreed, after which the triumvirs proceeded to proscribe and put to death three hundred men:‡ Cicero was among the first, and after he had been slaughtered, Antony gave

* Derived from the Greek measure, *kotyle*, a half-pint.

† Near the modern Bologna in November 43 B.C.

‡ According to Appian, some three hundred senators and two thousand knights lost their lives. As in the Sullan proscriptions, the object was not only to eliminate political opponents, but also to raise money.

orders that his head and his right hand, with which Cicero had penned his invectives against him, should be cut off. When these were brought to him he gazed at them in triumph and burst into peals of delighted laughter. Then, after he had taken his fill, he had them nailed up above the rostra in the Forum, as if he had succeeded in inflicting a humiliation on the dead man, and not merely made a spectacle of the abuse of his power and of his own arrogance in the hour of good fortune. His uncle, Lucius Caesar, who had also been proscribed, found himself hunted down by his persecutors and took refuge with his sister, Antony's mother. When the murderers broke into her house and tried to force their way into her room, she stood in front of the door barring their entrance, and stretching out her hands, cried aloud, 'It was I who brought Antony, your general, into the world, and you shall not kill Lucius Caesar unless you kill me first.' By this action she succeeded in getting her brother Lucius out of the way and saved his life.

21. The Roman people came to detest the rule of the triumvirs, but it was Antony who earned the greatest share of the blame. He was older than Octavius and more influential than Lepidus, and yet no sooner had he shaken off his immediate troubles than he plunged once more into his old life of pleasure and debauchery. His general reputation was bad enough, but he aroused still more hatred on account of the house in which he lived. It had previously belonged to Pompey the Great, a man who was admired no less for his sobriety and his modest, orderly, and democratic way of life than for the fact of his having earned three triumphs. People were indignant when they saw that this house was most often barred to generals, magistrates, and ambassadors, who found themselves insolently turned away from the doors, and filled with actors, jugglers, and drunken parasites, upon whom Antony squandered most of the money which he had wrung with such violence and cruelty from his victims. For the triumvirate were not content with selling the properties of the men they proscribed, laying false accusations against their widows and relatives, and imposing extortionate taxes of every kind; when they learned that various sums had been deposited with the Vestal Virgins not only by Roman citizens but by foreigners, they went and seized the money by force. It was not long before Octavius Caesar discovered that Antony's appetite was insatiable, and he then demanded

that the money they confiscated should be shared between them. They also shared the command of the army and led their combined forces into Macedonia to attack Brutus and Cassius, leaving Lepidus in charge of Rome.*

22. However, when they crossed the Adriatic, launched their campaign, and encamped near the enemy with Antony facing Cassius's troops and Octavius those of Brutus, Octavius achieved nothing worth mentioning: it was Antony who seized the initiative and triumphed in every engagement. At any rate, in the first battle Octavius suffered a crushing defeat from Brutus, his camp was taken, and he himself barely managed to escape, although he makes out in his memoirs that he withdrew before the battle because of a dream which one of his friends experienced. Antony, on the other hand, overcame Cassius's army, although according to some accounts Antony was not present at the battle, but only joined in when his men were already in pursuit of the enemy. Cassius knew nothing of Brutus's success and was killed at his own command by Pindarus, one of his trusted freedmen. A second battle was fought a few days later and in this Brutus was defeated and took his own life. Here again Antony earned most of the credit for the victory, since on this occasion Octavius was ill. As he stood over Brutus's body, Antony uttered a few words of reproach for the fate of his brother Gaius, whom Brutus had put to death in Macedonia in revenge for the murder of Cicero. But he declared that Hortensius was more to blame for this action than Brutus and gave orders for him to be executed over his brother's tomb. Then he threw his own scarlet cloak, which was of great value, over Brutus's body and commanded one of his freedmen to make himself responsible for its burial. When he discovered later that this man had never burned the cloak with Brutus's body and had stolen most of the money which should have been devoted to the funeral, he had him put to death.

23. After this, Octavius was carried back to Rome, and it was generally believed that his sickness would prove fatal. Antony now marched across Greece with a large army to levy money from all the eastern provinces. The triumvirs had promised each of their soldiers a bounty of five hundred drachmas, and so they now found themselves

* In the late summer of 42 B.C.

obliged to adopt a harsher policy both in imposing taxes and collecting tribute. In his dealings with the Greeks, Antony's behaviour was moderate and courteous enough, at least in the beginning, and for his entertainment he was content to attend games and religious ceremonies and listen to the discussions of scholars. He was lenient in his administration of justice, and took pleasure in being addressed as a lover of Greece, and still more as a lover of Athens, where he showered gifts upon the city. But when the people of Megara wanted to show him something to rival the beauty of Athens and invited him to see their senate-house, he duly travelled there and looked it over. Then they asked him to tell them what he thought of it, to which he replied, 'Of course it is not very large, but then it is very ruinous!' He also had the temple of the Pythian Apollo surveyed so as to complete it: at least he promised the local senate that he would do this.

24. Soon after, he left Lucius Censorinus in charge of Greece,* crossed into Asia, and at once began to help himself to the wealth of the province. Obsequious rulers would flock to his door, while their wives would vie with one another in offering gifts and exploiting their beauty, and would sacrifice their honour to his pleasure. So while Octavius Caesar in Rome was wearing himself out in the never-ending struggle of party politics and civil war, Antony was revelling in the delights of peace and infinite leisure, and soon allowed his passions to sweep him back into his accustomed mode of life. Lute-players like Anaxenor, flute-players like Xanthus, the dancer Metrodorus, and a whole horde of Asiatic performers, who far surpassed in insolence and buffoonery even the pests who had come out with him from Italy, now descended upon him and took control of his household, and more and more people began to find it intolerable that all Antony's resources should be squandered on extravagances like these. For the whole province of Asia, like the Thebes of Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, was now filled with incense,

The sound of paeans and despairing cries.†

At any rate, when Antony made his entry into Ephesus, women dressed as Bacchantes and men and boys as satyrs and Pans marched in procession before him. The city was filled with wreaths of ivy and

* In 41 B.C.

† *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1, 4.

thyrsus wands, the air resounded with the music of harps, pipes, and flutes, and the people hailed him as Dionysus the Benefactor and the Bringer of Joy. Certainly this was how some people saw him, but to the majority he came as Dionysus the Cruel and the Eater of Flesh,* for he stripped many noble families of their property and gave it away to rogues and flatterers. In other cases men were allowed to steal fortunes from owners who were still living by making them out to be dead. And in Magnesia Antony presented a man's house to a cook, whose reputation, we are told, had been earned on the strength of a single dinner. But at last when Antony imposed a second levy on the cities, Hybreas, speaking on behalf of the whole province of Asia, summoned up the courage to say this; 'If you can take tribute from us twice a year, no doubt you can give us two summers and two harvests'. He expressed himself with a certain rhetorical flourish which appealed to Antony's taste, but then he added in blunter language that Asia had already raised two hundred thousand talents for Antony. 'If you have never received this money,' he went on, 'you should ask for it from the men who collected it. But if you did receive it and no longer have it, we are ruined.' These words made a deep impression upon Antony, for he was completely ignorant of much that was done in his name, not merely because he was of an easygoing disposition, but because he was simple enough to trust his subordinates.

His character was, in fact, essentially simple and he was slow to perceive the truth. Once he recognized that he was at fault, he was full of repentance and ready to admit his errors to those he had wronged. Whenever he had to punish an offence or right an injustice, he acted on the grand scale, and it was generally considered that he overstepped the bounds far more often in the rewards he bestowed than in the punishments he inflicted. As for the kind of coarse and insolent banter which he liked to exchange, this carried its own remedy with it, for anyone could return his ribaldry with interest and he enjoyed being laughed at quite as much as laughing at others. And in fact it was this quality which often did him harm, for he found it impossible to believe that the real purpose of those who took liberties and cracked jokes with him was to flatter him. He never

* Dionysus was credited with many different names and qualities, and the primitive and savage element in his cult was quite as typical as the genial and beneficent.

understood that some men go out of their way to adopt a frank and outspoken manner and use it like a piquant sauce to disguise the cloying taste of flattery. Such people deliberately indulge in bold repartee and an aggressive flow of talk when they are in their cups, so that the obsequious compliance which they show in matters of business does not suggest that they associate with a man merely to please him, but seems to spring from a genuine conviction of his superior wisdom.

25. Such being Antony's nature, the love for Cleopatra which now entered his life came as the final and crowning mischief which could befall him. It excited to the point of madness many passions which had hitherto lain concealed, or at least dormant, and it stifled or corrupted all those redeeming qualities in him which were still capable of resisting temptation. The occasion on which he lost his heart came about as follows. While he was preparing for the campaign against the Parthians, he sent word to Cleopatra, ordering her to meet him in Cilicia to answer the charge that she had raised money for Cassius and sent him help in his war against the triumvirs. Dellius, who carried out this mission, was struck by the charm and subtlety of Cleopatra's conversation as soon as he set eyes on her, and he saw at once that such a woman, so far from having anything to fear from Antony, would probably gain the strongest influence over him. He decided to pay his court to the Egyptian queen and urged her to go to Cilicia dressed in 'all the splendour her art could command', as Homer puts it,* and to have no fear of Antony, who was the gentlest and most chivalrous of generals. Cleopatra was impressed by what Dellius told her. She had already seen for herself the power of her beauty to enchant Julius Caesar and the younger Pompey, and she expected to conquer Antony even more easily. For Caesar and Gnaeus Pompey† had known her when she was still a young girl with no experience of the world, but she was to meet Antony at the age when a woman's beauty is at its most superb and her mind at its most mature.‡ She therefore provided herself with as lavish a supply of gifts, money, and ornaments as her exalted position and the

* The quotation is from *Iliad* xvi, 162, a passage which describes how Hera decked herself out to seduce Zeus.

† The son of Pompey the Great.

‡ In 41 B.C. Cleopatra was twenty-eight.

prosperity of her kingdom made it appropriate to take, but she relied above all upon her physical presence and the spell and enchantment which it could create.

26. She received a whole succession of letters from Antony and his friends summoning her to visit him, but she treated him with such disdain, that when she appeared it was as if in mockery of his orders. She came sailing up the river Cydnus in a barge with a poop of gold, its purple sails billowing in the wind, while her rowers caressed the water with oars of silver which dipped in time to the music of the flute, accompanied by pipes and lutes. Cleopatra herself reclined beneath a canopy of cloth of gold, dressed in the character of Venus, as we see her in paintings, while on either side to complete the picture stood boys costumed as Cupids, who cooled her with their fans. Instead of a crew the barge was lined with the most beautiful of her waiting-women attired as Nereids and Graces, some at the rudders, others at the tackle of the sails, and all the while an indescribably rich perfume, exhaled from innumerable censers, was wafted from the vessel to the river-banks. Great multitudes accompanied this royal progress, some of them following the queen on both sides of the river from its very mouth, while others hurried down from the city of Tarsus to gaze at the sight. Gradually the crowds drifted away from the market-place, where Antony awaited the queen enthroned on his tribunal, until at last he was left sitting quite alone and the word spread on every side that Venus had come to revel with Bacchus for the happiness of Asia.

Antony then sent a message inviting Cleopatra to dine with him, but she thought it more appropriate that he should come to her, and so, as he wished to show his courtesy and goodwill, he accepted and went. He found the preparations made to receive him magnificent beyond words, but what astonished him most of all was the extraordinary number of lights. So many of these, it is said, were let down from the roof and displayed on all sides at once, and they were arranged and grouped in such ingenious patterns in relation to each other, some in squares and some in circles, that they created as brilliant a spectacle as can ever have been devised to delight the eye.

27. On the following day Antony returned her hospitality with another banquet, but although he had hoped to surpass her in

splendour and elegance he was hopelessly outdone in both, and was the first to make fun of the crude and meagre quality of his entertainment. Cleopatra saw that Antony's humour was broad and gross and belonged to the soldier rather than the courtier, and she quickly adopted the same manner towards him and treated him without the least reserve. Her own beauty, so we are told, was not of that incomparable kind which instantly captivates the beholder. But the charm of her presence was irresistible, and there was an attraction in her person and her talk, together with a peculiar force of character which pervaded her every word and action, and laid all who associated with her under its spell. It was a delight merely to hear the sound of her voice, with which, like an instrument of many strings, she could pass from one language to another, so that in her interviews with barbarians she seldom required an interpreter, but conversed with them quite unaided, whether they were Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes, or Parthians. In fact, she is said to have become familiar with the speech of many other peoples besides, although the rulers of Egypt before her had never even troubled to learn the Egyptian language, and some of them had even given up their native Macedonian dialect.

28. At any rate, Cleopatra succeeded in captivating Antony so completely that, at the very moment when Fulvia his wife was carrying on war in Italy against Octavius Caesar in defence of her husband's interests, and a Parthian army under Labienus* (whom the king's generals had appointed commander-in-chief) was hovering threateningly on the frontier of Mesopotamia and was about to invade Syria, he allowed the queen to carry him off to Alexandria. There this veteran indulged himself in the amusements and diversions of a young man with all his future before him, and was content to squander on idle pleasures what Antiphon calls the most precious of all commodities, that is time. Antony and Cleopatra gathered around them a company of friends whom they called the *Inimitable Livers*,

* This Labienus was a son of the Titus Labienus who had been one of Caesar's officers in Gaul, joined Pompey's side, and was killed at the battle of Munda in 45 B.C. The son was sent by Brutus and Cassius to seek help from Orodes, the king of Parthia, and was there when the conspirators were defeated at Philippi. Labienus invaded Syria in 40 B.C., but was driven out by Antony's general Ventidius and later captured in Cilicia.

and each day they gave banquets for one another of an almost incredible extravagance. Philotas, a physician who lived at Amphisssa, used to tell my grandfather that he was studying his profession in Alexandria at this time,* and that, having made the acquaintance of one of the royal cooks, he was persuaded, as was natural enough in a young man, to come and see the lavish preparations which were made for a royal dinner. He was introduced into the kitchens of the palace, and, after he had seen the enormous abundance of provisions and watched eight wild boars being roasted, he expressed his astonishment at the size of the company for which this vast hospitality was intended. The cook laughed aloud and explained that this was not a large party, only about a dozen people, but that everything must be cooked and served to perfection, and that the whole effect could be ruined by a moment's delay. It might happen that Antony would call for the meal as soon as the guests had arrived, or a little later he might postpone it and call for a cup of wine, or become absorbed in some conversation. 'So we never prepare one supper,' he explained, 'but a whole number of them, as we never know the exact moment when they will be sent for.' This is the story Philotas used to tell, and he also mentioned that in later years he treated Antony's eldest son by Fulvia as one of his patients, and was in the habit of dining with him at his house with his friends, when the young man did not dine with his father. On one occasion there was a physician present, who had been talking boastfully and had annoyed the company at supper, until Philotas managed to silence him with the following piece of sophistry: 'In some states of fever the patient should take cold water. Everyone in a fever is in some state of fever: therefore everyone in a fever should take cold water.' The man was nonplussed by this argument and could say nothing in reply. Antony's son was delighted and said with a laugh, 'All this is yours, Philotas', and pointed to a table which was laden with large drinking cups. Philotas appreciated his host's desire to show his gratitude, but gave himself leave to doubt whether so young a boy could possibly have the authority to give away a present of this size. But not long afterwards one of the slaves brought the cups to him in a sack and asked him to put his seal on it. And when Philotas waved them aside and was afraid to accept the present, the man said, 'Don't be a fool! Why do you hesitate? Don't you know that this is Antony's son, who has the right to give you all

* Alexandria possessed a famous school of medicine.

these things in gold if he wants to? But if I were you, I should exchange the whole lot with us for cash. Some of these cups are old, and the workmanship is considered very valuable, and it is quite possible the boy's father might miss them.' According to my grandfather, Philotas was fond of telling stories like these at every opportunity.

29. Plato speaks of four kinds of flattery, but Cleopatra knew a thousand. Whether Antony's mood were serious or gay, she could always invent some fresh device to delight or charm him. She engrossed his attention utterly and never released him for an instant by day or by night. She played dice with him, drank with him, and hunted with him, and when he exercised with his weapons, she watched him. At night, when he liked to wander about the city, stand by the doors or windows of ordinary citizens' houses, and make fun of the people inside, she would dress up as a maidservant and play her part in any mad prank that came into Antony's head, for it was his custom to go out disguised as a slave. On these occasions he was always received with torrents of abuse, and sometimes even found himself beaten up before he returned to the palace, although most people guessed who he was. The fact was that the Alexandrians had a weakness for his buffoonery and enjoyed taking part in these amusements in their elegant and cultivated way. They liked him personally, and used to say that Antony put on his tragic mask for the Romans, but kept the comic one for them.

Now it would be a great waste of time for me to describe all the details of Antony's childish amusements, but a single instance may serve as an illustration. One day he went out fishing, had no luck with his line, and was all the more enraged because Cleopatra happened to be present. So he ordered some fishermen to dive down and secretly to fasten on to his hook a number of fish they had already caught. Then he proceeded to pull up his line two or three times, but the queen discovered the trick. She pretended to admire his success, but then told her friends what had happened and invited them to come and watch on the next day. A large party got into the fishing boats, and when Antony had let down his line, Cleopatra ordered one of her own servants to swim immediately to his hook and fix on to it a salted fish from the Black Sea. Antony, believing that he had made a catch, pulled up his line, whereupon the whole

company burst out laughing, as was natural, and Cleopatra told him: 'Emperor, you had better give up your rod to us poor rulers of Pharos and Canopus. Your sport is to hunt cities and kingdoms and continents.'

30. In the midst of these follies and boyish extravagances Antony was surprised by two reports. The first was from Rome to the effect that his brother Lucius and Fulvia had quarrelled with one another and then joined forces to make war against Octavius Caesar, but had been defeated and forced to flee from Italy. The second, which was no less disturbing, announced that Labienus in command of a Parthian army was making himself master of Asia, from the Euphrates and Syria as far west as the provinces of Lydia and Ionia. Then at last,* like a man who has been roughly awoken after sleeping off a heavy debauch, Antony took the field against the Parthians and advanced as far as Phoenicia. There, however, he received a letter from Fulvia full of lamentations at her plight and so he decided to change his plans and sail for Italy with his fleet of two hundred ships. On his way he picked up a number of his supporters who were in flight from Italy, and from them he learned that it was Fulvia who had been the principal cause of the war with Octavius. She was a headstrong woman who enjoyed meddling in politics, and she had hoped that the quickest way to make Antony leave Cleopatra would be to stir up hostilities in Italy. But it so happened that Fulvia, as she was on her way to meet Antony, fell ill and died at Sicyon. This event greatly improved the prospects of a reconciliation with Octavius, for when Antony arrived in Italy it soon became clear that Octavius had no intention of holding him responsible for the war, while Antony himself was ready to blame Fulvia for any accusations that might be made against himself. At any rate, when they met,† their friends on both sides refused to allow time to be spent in probing too closely into Antony's excuses. Their first concern was to reconcile the two men personally, and then to divide up the empire. They made the Ionian sea the boundary between them and gave the eastern territories to Antony and the western to Octavius, while Lepidus was assigned the province of Africa. It was also agreed that when neither of the two men wished to be consul themselves, their supporters should hold this office in turn.

* Early in 40 B.C.

† In October 40 B.C.

31. These arrangements were generally considered fair on both sides, but it was felt that a closer tie would also be desirable, and for this fortune now provided the opportunity. Octavius Caesar had a half-sister, Octavia, who was older than himself and was the daughter of Anchoria, while he was the child by a later marriage of Atia. Octavius was deeply attached to his sister, who was, as the saying is, a wonder of a woman. Her husband, Gaius Marcellus, had died only a short while before and she was now a widow, while Antony, since Fulvia's death, was also regarded as a widower. He did not deny his connexion with Cleopatra, but he did not admit that she was his wife, and in this matter he was still torn between his reason and his love for the Egyptian queen. Meanwhile, on the Roman side, everybody was anxious that this marriage should take place, for it was hoped that if only Octavia – who in addition to her beauty possessed great dignity of character and good sense – could become united to Antony and win his love, as such a woman could hardly fail to do, this alliance would prove the salvation of their own affairs and would restore harmony to the Roman world.* Accordingly, when the two men had agreed upon terms, they went up to Rome and celebrated Octavia's wedding. The law did not allow a woman to marry until ten months had elapsed after her husband's death, but in this instance the Senate passed a decree to dispense with the usual time limit.

32. At this time Sextus Pompeius's forces were still in control of Sicily. He was also ravaging the Italian coast, and with the help of a pirate fleet under the command of Menas and Menecrates was able to threaten shipping throughout the whole central Mediterranean area. Nevertheless, he had given help to Antony's mother when she had fled from Rome with Fulvia and was believed to be well disposed towards Antony himself, and so the triumvirs decided to negotiate with him. They met at the promontory of Misenum† by the mole

* There is evidence that it was this union and the hope that a son would be born from it which inspired Virgil's famous Fourth Eclogue, with its prophecy of the coming of a divine infant who would inaugurate a golden age.

† This conference at Misenum, the northern tip of the gulf of Naples, took place in the spring of 39 B.C. Sextus was the younger son of Pompey the Great, and his control of the sea enabled him to cut off corn supplies from Rome. This had produced famine and a number of riots in the capital which had been brutally suppressed.

which runs into the sea. Pompey's fleet was anchored close by, and Antony's and Octavius's troops were drawn up on the shore. There it was agreed that Pompey should hold Sardinia and Sicily, in return for which he undertook to keep the sea clear of pirates and send a specified quantity of grain to Rome: then, after they had reached agreement, they invited one another to dine. They cast lots to decide who should be host, and it fell to Pompey to entertain the company first. When Antony inquired where the banquet would be held, Pompey replied 'There', and pointed to his flagship with its six banks of oars, 'it is the only ancestral home that is left me.' This retort was by way of reproach to Antony, who had taken possession of the house which had belonged to Pompey the Great.* At any rate, Pompey anchored his ship close inshore, constructed a pontoon between it and the headland, and warmly welcomed his guests on board. But later, when the company had become thoroughly convivial, and jokes concerning Antony's passion for Cleopatra were being bandied freely about, Menas the pirate came up to Pompey and whispered to him out of the guests' hearing, 'Shall I cut the cables and make you master not just of Sicily and Sardinia but of the whole Roman empire?' Pompey thought over this remark for a moment, and then burst out, 'Menas, you should have acted, not spoken to me about this beforehand. Now we must be content with things as they are. I do not break my word.' After this Pompey was entertained in his turn by Antony and by Octavius, and later he sailed back to Sicily.

33. After this treaty had been concluded, Antony sent Ventidius† ahead of him into Asia to check the Parthian advance. Meanwhile, to please Octavius, he accepted the office of Pontifex Maximus, which Julius Caesar had held, and during this period they consulted one another and acted in harmony in their handling of political problems and other affairs of state. Nevertheless, Antony was vexed by the fact that in their various diversions and amusements he always found himself worsted by Octavius. He kept in his house an Egyptian soothsayer who was skilled in casting horoscopes, and this man, either

* See ch. 21.

† P. Ventidius Bassus was what the Romans called a *novus homo*, that is the first member of his family to win distinction. His talents as a commander were originally discovered by Julius Caesar.

to oblige Cleopatra or because he wished to tell Antony the truth, made no secret of his conviction that Antony's fortune, although great and brilliant by any other standard, was constantly eclipsed by that of Octavius; and so he advised Antony to keep as far away from his young colleague as he could. 'Your guardian spirit,' he warned Antony, 'stands in awe of his, and although by itself it is proud and full of mettle, it becomes cowed and daunted in the presence of Caesar's.' And indeed the turn of events seemed to bear out the Egyptian's words, for we are told that whenever the two men cast lots or threw dice, whether by way of amusement or to decide some matter on which they were engaged, it was always Antony who came out the loser.

Antony contrived to hide his annoyance at such incidents, but they made him pay more attention to the Egyptian's warnings, and, after placing the management of his household in Octavius's hands, he left Italy and took Octavia, who had meanwhile given birth to a daughter, with him to Greece. He spent the winter in Athens and it was there that the news reached him of the first successes of Ventidius,* who had defeated the Parthians in a pitched battle and killed not only Labienus, but also Pharnapates, who was king Hyrodes' ablest general. In honour of this victory Antony gave entertainments for the Greeks and organized an athletic festival in Athens, at which he presided. He left at home his insignia of rank as a Roman general, and appeared in public wearing the robes and white shoes and carrying the rods of a gymnasiarch, and he acted as referee in some of the contests, taking the young wrestlers by the neck and parting them.

34. When the time came for him to set out for the Parthian campaign, he took a wreath from the sacred olive tree of Athena, which stands on the Acropolis, and in obedience to an oracle had a vessel filled with water from the sacred spring of the Clepsydra, and took it with him. Meanwhile Pacorus, king Hyrodes's son, had again invaded Syria with a large army of Parthians, but he was engaged

* In 39 B.C. Ventidius defeated the Parthians at the Cilician Gates and Mt Amanus. In these campaigns the Parthians abandoned the long-range attacks by mounted archers, which had won them the battle of Carrhae against Crassus, and relied, unsuccessfully, upon their armoured cavalry, manned by the feudal nobility. By the time that Antony invaded Parthia this lesson had been learned.

and defeated by Ventidius at Gindarus in the region of Cyrrhastica,* and the greater part of his force was annihilated, Pacorus himself being one of the first to be killed. With this victory, which came to be regarded as one of their most brilliant military achievements, the Romans gained their full revenge for the disaster which they had suffered under Crassus, and the Parthians, who had now been decisively defeated in three successive battles, were driven back behind the frontiers of Media and Mesopotamia. Ventidius decided not to pursue them any farther, however, for fear of arousing Antony's jealousy at his success. Instead, he attacked and subdued the tribes which had revolted against Rome, and laid siege to Antiochus of Commagene in the city of Samosata. When Antiochus offered to pay a thousand talents and make his submission to Antony, Ventidius told him that he must send his offer to Antony himself, who had advanced into the neighbourhood and had refused to allow Ventidius to conclude a settlement directly with Antiochus.† He was anxious that at least one achievement should be credited to his own name and did not wish every success to be attributed to Ventidius. However, the siege dragged on and the townspeople, when they found that they had no hope of obtaining terms, defended themselves stoutly. Antony could achieve nothing, and as he had now begun to feel ashamed and repentant at having refused the original offer, he was content to make peace with Antiochus and accept a payment of three hundred talents. He went on to settle some minor affairs in Syria, and then returned to Athens, and at the same time conferred appropriate honours on Ventidius and sent him home to be given his triumph.

Ventidius is the only man up to the present time who has ever celebrated a triumph over the Parthians. His origins were humble, but his friendship with Antony gave him the opportunities to achieve great things, and he made such effective use of these that he confirmed the general verdict which has been passed on both Antony and Octavius Caesar, namely that their victories were more often won

* In 38 B.C., according to Dio Cassius, Pacorus was killed on 9 June, the same day on which Crassus had lost his life fifteen years earlier.

† Other evidence suggests that Ventidius accepted a bribe from Antiochus not to press the siege with any vigour, and Antony was obliged to finish off the operation himself. Ventidius was allowed to return to Rome to celebrate his triumph, but thereafter he disappears from the scene.

by their subordinates than by themselves. Certainly Sossius, another of Antony's commanders, won important victories* in Syria, while Canidius not only conquered the Armenians† when Antony left him in their territory, but also subdued the kings of the Iberi and the Albani‡ and advanced as far as the Caucasus. As a result of these campaigns the fame and the prestige of Antony's power spread far and wide among the barbarians.

35. Meanwhile, Antony had again been angered by various slanders which Octavius had been spreading against him, and he sailed with three hundred ships for Italy. The people of Brundisium closed their harbour against him, and he therefore sailed round the coast to Tarentum. There he was prevailed upon by Octavia, who had accompanied him from Greece, to allow her to visit her brother. She had already borne Antony two daughters and was now again pregnant. She met Octavius on her way to him, and, after taking aside his two friends Agrippa and Maecenas and winning their sympathy, she appealed to her brother with tears and passionate entreaties not to make her the most wretched of women after having been the happiest. As it was, she told him, the eyes of the whole world were upon her, since she was the wife of one of its masters and the sister of the other. 'If the worst should happen,' she said, 'and war break out between you, no one can say which of you is fated to conquer the other, but what is quite certain is that my fate will be miserable.' Her words touched Octavius and he came to Tarentum in a mood to make peace.§ There the inhabitants witnessed a truly noble spectacle, an immense army, peaceably encamped on land, and an equally

* He took the island and town of Aradus in Phoenicia in 38 B.C. and also captured Jerusalem.

† In 37 B.C., the year before Antony's invasion of Parthia, Canidius led an advance expedition into Armenia.

‡ Tribes living to the south of the Caucasus.

§ This meeting at Tarentum took place in the spring of 37 B.C. From Antony's point of view there were two most pressing problems. First, although both triumvirs had an equal right to recruit troops in Italy, he found that his were repeatedly held back or diverted on various pretexts. Secondly, the appointed term for the triumvirate would shortly expire and it was important to renew his powers. By this pact he abandoned Sextus Pompeius and supplied Octavius with ships to use against him. In return, since his right to recruit was proving valueless, he demanded troops. The triumvirate was extended for a further five years.

powerful fleet lying quietly off shore, while between these two great armaments there passed nothing but friendly greetings and expressions of goodwill. Antony took the initiative by entertaining Octavius Caesar, who accepted the invitation for his sister's sake, and they arrived at an agreement whereby Octavius was to transfer two legions to Antony for his Parthian campaign, and Antony in return a hundred galleys armed with bronze rams. Besides these concessions Octavia persuaded her husband to make over twenty light vessels to her brother, and her brother a thousand infantrymen to her husband. In this way they parted friends, and Octavius, who was anxious to secure Sicily, lost no time in launching his campaign against Sextus Pompeius.* Antony, on the other hand, after entrusting Octavia and her daughters together with his children to Caesar's charge, set sail for Asia.

36. But now the fatal influence, that is his passion for Cleopatra, which for a long while had lain dormant in his heart, and which appeared to have been charmed away or at least lulled into oblivion by wiser counsels, suddenly gathered strength and blazed once more into life as he approached the coast of Syria. And finally, just like the rebellious and unmanageable horse which Plato describes when he compares the human soul to a chariot team,† so Antony flung away all those nobler considerations of restraint which might have saved him, and sent Fonteius Capito to escort Cleopatra to Syria. And when she arrived, the presents he showered upon her were no mere trinkets. To the dominions she already possessed he added Phoenicia, Coele Syria,‡ Cyprus, and a large part of Cilicia. He also gave her the region of Judaea which produces balsam and the coastal strip of Arabia Nabataea, which stretches down to the Red Sea. The gift of these territories aroused deep resentment among the Romans. In the past, Antony had bestowed tetrarchies and even the sovereignty of great peoples upon private individuals; he had deprived many rulers of their

* In effect, he spent the rest of 37 preparing for this operation. Pompeius was finally defeated and driven from Sicily in the autumn of 36. He fled to Asia and was there captured and put to death by one of Antony's officers.

† In the *Phaedrus* Plato compares the soul to a winged chariot with a charioteer, Reason, a white horse, which represents Honour, and a black, Pride and Insolence.

‡ The central region of Syria which extends eastwards from the Lebanon mountains and includes Damascus and Palmyra.

kingdoms, as for example Antigonus,* whom he had brought out of prison and beheaded, although no king before him had ever been punished by the Romans in this way, but nothing caused so much offence to his own countrymen as the shame of these honours conferred upon Cleopatra. He went on to make the scandal worse by acknowledging his twin children by her, one of whom he named Alexander and the other Cleopatra, and surnamed them the Sun and the Moon. However, Antony was well versed in the art of putting the best possible face on disreputable actions, and he used to declare that the greatness of the Roman empire was manifested in its power to bestow kingdoms rather than to take them, and that a noble line should be extended by leaving a succession born of many sovereigns. At any rate it was on this principle, he said, that his own ancestor had been begotten by Hercules, who did not limit his posterity to any single womb, nor allow himself to be overawed by any Solonian laws to regulate conception. He never feared the audit of his copulations, but let nature have her way, and left behind him the foundations of many families.

37. Not long after this, Phraates put his father Hyrodes to death and seized possession of the kingdom of Parthia. Many of the Parthians fled the country, and one of them named Monases, a man of high rank and considerable power, took refuge with Antony. It occurred to Antony that this man's situation was rather like that of Themistocles, and, as he also saw a flattering parallel between his own abundant wealth and generosity and those of the Persian kings, he presented him with three cities, Larissa, Arethusa, and Hierapolis which was previously called Bambyce.† However, when the Parthian king summoned Monases to return, sending him a right hand,‡ as the saying is, Antony gladly took the opportunity of sending him back.

* Antigonus was in fact a High Priest of the Jews, a usurper, not a king, and he had risen to power with the support of the Parthians during their invasion of Syria. He was executed in 37 B.C. Herod, whom Antony now made ruler of Judaea, had been a loyal adherent of his, and according to Dio Cassius it was at Herod's request that Antigonus was put to death.

† It was an oriental custom to grant a man of a certain eminence a town or a district. It maintained him and he administered it. He was then expected to show loyalty on the feudal principle.

‡ An expression used among the Persians and Parthians to signify an offer of peace and friendship.

In reality his plan was to deceive Phraates* by pretending that he had no intention of fighting, and the only demand he made was for the return of the Roman standards, which had been captured when Crassus was defeated, and the release of any of his men who might still be living. Antony himself, after sending Cleopatra back to Egypt, at once marched through Arabia and Armenia to a place where he had arranged for his own forces to be joined by those of the various kings who were his allies. There were many of these rulers, but the most powerful of them was Artavasdes, the king of Armenia, who provided six thousand cavalry and seven thousand infantry. Here Antony held a review of his army. The Romans themselves numbered sixty thousand, together with the cavalry which was classed at that time as Roman, in this case ten thousand Spaniards and Celts. The other nations contributed a total of about thirty thousand men, including cavalry and light-armed troops.

And yet we are told that this immense concentration of strength, which alarmed even the Indians beyond Bactria and made all Asia tremble, was rendered useless to Antony because of his attachment to Cleopatra. Such was his passion to spend the winter with her that he took the field too early in the season and conducted the whole campaign in a disorderly fashion. It was as if he were no longer the master of his own judgement, but rather under the influence of some drug or magic spell, for he gave the impression that his eyes were constantly drawn to her image and his thoughts fixed upon hastening his return rather than upon conquering the enemy.

38. In the first place, then, his best plan would have been to spend the winter in Armenia, to rest his men who were worn out by a march of a thousand miles, and after this to occupy Media in the early weeks of the spring, before the Parthians had moved out of their winter quarters. As it was, he was too impatient to wait and immediately led his army forward, leaving Armenia on his left and traversing the province of Atropatene, which he ravaged. Secondly, his haste was so great that he refused to wait for the engines needed for siege operations, which were transported on three hundred wagons, and included a battering ram eighty feet long. If any of these machines

* The deception worked rather against Antony, since it seems unlikely that Monaeses ever needed to seek refuge. His purpose was to spy out Antony's plans and report them.

were destroyed, it would be impossible to replace them in time for the campaign, because none of the provinces of upper Asia produce timber which is sufficiently long or hard for these purposes. Nevertheless, Antony gave orders for this equipment to follow in the rear, on the ground that it hindered the speed of his advance: he therefore detached a large force under the command of Statianus to escort it, while he himself began the siege of Phraata, a large city which was the residence of the wives and children of the king of Media. But the difficulties of this operation quickly showed him what a blunder he had made in leaving his siege-train behind. Accordingly, he moved his troops close up to the city wall and began to build a mound against it, which his men could only heap up slowly and with great labour. In the meanwhile Phraates had marched down from Parthia with a large army, and as soon as he discovered that the wagons with the siege-train had been left in the rear he despatched a strong force of cavalry to attack it. Statianus found himself surrounded,* he and ten thousand of his men were killed, and the barbarians captured the siege-engines and destroyed them. They also took a large number of prisoners, among whom was Polemon, one of the kings of Pontus.

39. Antony's army, as was natural, was deeply discouraged at suffering this unexpected disaster at the very beginning of their campaign. To make matters worse, Artavasdes, the king of Armenia, decided that the Romans' prospects were hopeless, withdrew his forces, and departed,† although he had been the prime mover of the war in the first instance. The Parthians now came up to the besieging army and used their finest troops to make a demonstration in full armour, during which they shouted insulting threats at the Romans. Thereupon Antony, who was anxious that his army should not lose its offensive spirit and become utterly demoralized by remaining inactive, took with him ten legions, three cohorts of the praetorian guard, and all his cavalry, and led them out on a foraging expedition, in the hope that this would be the best way to draw the enemy into a pitched battle.

* He was defeated by the same tactics that had been used against Crassus – hordes of mounted archers, constantly supplied with fresh quivers by pack animals, who stayed out of reach of the legions and poured in a destructive hail of arrows upon them.

† Artavasdes in fact deserted Statianus's force. It was his cavalry which had formed a large part of the escort, and their defection contributed greatly to the annihilation of the siege-train.

After he had advanced one day's journey, he noticed that the Parthians were beginning to envelop him and were evidently watching their opportunity to fall upon him as he marched. He therefore hung out the signal for battle inside his camp, but had the tents taken down, as though his intention were not to fight but to retreat, and he then marched past the line of barbarians who were drawn up in a crescent-shaped formation. But he had given orders that, as soon as the legionaries were close enough to attack the enemy's leading ranks, the cavalry should launch a charge. To the Parthians drawn up in a parallel line the steadiness of the Roman discipline seemed indescribably impressive, as they watched them march past, rank upon rank, maintaining their exact intervals in perfect order and silence and with their spears at the ready. But when the signal was given and the Roman cavalry wheeled and charged with loud shouts, they received their onslaught and repelled it, even though the enemy were upon them so quickly that they could not use their bows. However, when the legionaries joined in the attack, shouting and clashing their weapons, the Parthian horses took fright and backed away, and the Parthians fled before the infantry could get to close quarters.

Antony pursued them hard, for he had great hopes that he had put an end to the war, or at any rate won a decisive victory in that one battle. His infantry kept up the pursuit for over six miles and his cavalry for twenty, and yet when the Parthian losses were reckoned up they amounted to a mere thirty prisoners and eighty dead. This news spread dismay and despondency throughout the army, and it came as a terrible shock to the men to discover how few of the enemy they had killed in winning this victory, compared with the crushing defeat they had suffered when the wagons were captured. The next day they broke camp and started back towards their base at Phraata. On the way they encountered at first only a few scattered troops of the enemy, then larger groups and finally the whole body, who immediately challenged and attacked them from all sides, as if they were a completely fresh army which had never been defeated. The Romans were hard pressed, but at last after much heavy fighting they forced their way through to their camp. Soon afterwards the Medes made a sortie from the town, attacked the Romans' mound, and put its defenders to flight. This enraged Antony, and he carried out the punishment which is known as decimation against the troops who had been guilty of cowardice. This meant that they were divided

into groups of ten and one man out of each ten, chosen by lot, was put to death. He ordered the rest to be issued with rations of barley instead of with wheat.

40. This was a campaign of great hardship for both sides, and the future looked even more disturbing. Antony had now to reckon with the prospect of famine, since it was no longer possible to maintain his army by foraging without suffering heavy losses in killed and wounded. On the other hand, Phraates knew that his men would do anything rather than endure the hardships of a winter campaign and months of bivouacking in the open, and he was afraid that if the Romans held out and stayed in their camp, his own men would desert him, for the air was already growing sharp now that the autumn equinox was past. He therefore tried the following trick. He arranged that those of the Parthians who were most familiar with the Roman troops should not harry them so strenuously on their foraging expeditions and other encounters, but should allow them to obtain some provisions: at the same time they should take every opportunity to praise their courage and let them know that the Parthians considered them first-rate soldiers, and that they were admired with good reason by the king. After this they would ride up closer, and, drawing their horses unobtrusively alongside the Romans, they would begin to blame Antony, saying that although Phraates was anxious to come to terms and save the lives of so many brave men, Antony would give him no chance to do so. Instead, he insisted on staying there and waiting for those two powerful and formidable enemies, famine and winter, which they would find it difficult to escape, even if the Parthians escorted them on their way. These tactics were reported to Antony from many different sources, but, although his hopes prompted him to open negotiations, he did not send heralds to the Parthians until he had inquired from the barbarians who had assumed this friendly attitude whether their words expressed their king's sentiments. When they assured him that this was so and that he need have no fear nor suspicion of their offer, he sent some of his companions to repeat his request for the return of Crassus's standards and the Roman prisoners of war, for he did not wish the king to suppose that all his demands would be satisfied if he could make his escape in safety. However, the Parthian king's reply was that he should not press this matter of the prisoners, but that if he now withdrew his

troops he would be guaranteed a safe and unmolested journey, and so within a few days Antony packed up his baggage and broke camp. But although he was an orator who could always dominate a popular audience, and knew better than any man of his time how to produce the kind of speech which would inspire his troops, he found himself too much weighed down by shame and melancholy to make the customary speech of encouragement to the army, and he deputed Domitius Ahenobarbus* to do it. Some of the soldiers resented this and felt that they were being treated with contempt, but most of them were touched to the heart and understood the reason, and indeed felt that they ought to show all the more respect and obedience to their commander on that account.

41. Antony had planned to lead his troops back by the same road that he had come, which ran through level country and was completely bare of trees. But a man of the Mardian tribe from the southern shores of the Caspian, who was thoroughly familiar with Parthian customs and had already proved his loyalty to the Romans during the battle for the siege-train, now came forward and urged Antony to keep close to the hills on his right during his retreat: above all he must not expose an army of infantrymen heavily burdened with equipment to the attacks of such a large force of mounted archers by marching across open country which did not offer a vestige of cover. This was exactly what Phraates had intended, he said, when he had used these friendly approaches to persuade Antony to raise the siege. But if Antony agreed to his plan, he offered to guide the army by a route which was shorter and better supplied with provisions. When he heard this, Antony thought over what the tribesman had told him. Now that a truce had been arranged, he did not wish to give the impression that he distrusted the Parthians. But as he himself favoured the shorter route and preferred to follow a road which would take them past inhabited villages, he asked the Mardian for a pledge of his good faith. The man offered to let himself be put in chains until he had conducted the army into Armenia. This was done

* This officer, who plays so important a part in Shakespeare's tragedy, had fought on Brutus's side at Philippi, and then, after sailing part of the Republican fleet to the Adriatic, joined forces with Antony in 40 B.C. An outspoken opponent of Cleopatra and her influence, he remained with Antony up to Actium, but deserted on the eve of the battle.

and he proceeded to guide them for two days without meeting any opposition. But on the third day, by which time Antony had dismissed the enemy from his thoughts, and, because of the confidence he felt, had allowed the column to march in a somewhat ragged fashion, the Mardian noticed that the embankment of the river beside them had been recently demolished, and that the stream was pouring over the road directly across their line of march. He saw at once that this was the work of the Parthians, who had diverted the river to obstruct and delay the Romans' retreat, and he warned Antony to keep a sharp look-out and be on his guard, as the enemy must be close at hand. Sure enough, just as Antony had deployed the heavy infantry and was arranging for the slingers and javelin-throwers to pass through the ranks and advance against the enemy, the Parthians appeared and began to gallop round them, so as to encircle the army and throw it into confusion on all sides. They were at once attacked by the Roman light-armed troops, who were severely harassed by their arrows, but, as the Parthians suffered just as many casualties from the sling-shot and javelins of their opponents, they fell back. They rallied, however, to make a second attack, which continued until the Celts, massing all their horses together, charged and scattered them, whereupon the Parthians vanished for the rest of that day.

42. This engagement taught Antony a number of tactical lessons. He now covered not only his rear but his flanks with strong detachments of javelin-throwers and slingers, and arranged his order of march in the form of a hollow square. He also gave orders to the cavalry that they must drive off the enemy when they attacked, but that, after routing them, they must not pursue them far. As a result, the Parthians during the four days that followed suffered many more casualties than they inflicted, their ardour became noticeably cooler, and they began to think of returning home, making the excuse that the winter was now well advanced.

However, on the fifth day Flavius Gallus, one of Antony's senior officers and an exceptionally daring and spirited commander, came and asked permission to take a detachment of light-armed troops from the rear and some of the cavalry from the vanguard, as he felt confident that he could achieve an important success. Antony let him take these troops, and when the Parthians attacked, Gallus drove them

off. But he did not gradually give way and draw them on to the legions, as had been done on the preceding days, but held his ground and engaged them more boldly. The officers in charge of the rear-guard could see that he was in danger of becoming cut off from them and sent runners to call him back, but he refused to listen to them. Then Titius, the quaestor, it is said, seized hold of his standards, turned them round as if to order the troops to fall back on the main body, and blamed Gallus for throwing away the lives of so many brave men. Gallus retorted equally angrily, and ordered his soldiers to stand firm, whereupon Titius turned back alone. But as Gallus continued to push forward, he failed to notice that large numbers of the enemy had now encircled him from the rear. Then at last, when he found himself shot at from all sides, he appealed for help. At this point the officers of the legions – among them Canidius, for whom Antony had an especially high regard – are generally considered to have made a serious blunder. They ought to have wheeled so as to engage the enemy with their whole line at once, but instead they sent only small groups to help Gallus, and waited until each was overwhelmed in turn before sending out reinforcements; and so before they were aware of it they came near to involving the whole army in the defeat and rout of these units. Fortunately, Antony hurried back from the vanguard with his heavy infantry to stem the retreat, and his third legion forced its way through to face the enemy and check any further pursuit.

43. The Romans lost no less than three thousand killed, and five thousand men were brought back wounded to the camp: among them was Gallus, who had been pierced in front by four arrows. He died of his wounds soon after, but Antony visited the rest of the wounded men, and his affection for them brought tears to his eyes even as he tried to raise their spirits. For their part, the men greeted him with cheerful faces and gripped his hand as he passed: they begged him not to let their sufferings weigh upon him, but to go and take care of himself, and they hailed him as their Emperor and told him that they knew they were safe so long as he was unharmed. Altogether it would be true to say that no other commander of that age ever gathered together an army of such superb fighting qualities, composed as it was of soldiers in the prime of their young manhood, who were capable of great feats both of

courage and of endurance. But most impressive of all was the respect, the obedience, and the goodwill which they showed towards their general, together with the feeling shared by every man – those with the greatest reputation and those with none, commanders and privates alike – that they preferred Antony's good opinion to their own lives and safety: in short, this was an army which could not have been excelled even by the soldiers of ancient Rome. There were many reasons to inspire this devotion, as I have already mentioned, namely Antony's noble birth, his eloquence, his simplicity, his generosity which amounted to extravagance, and the familiar and genial manner which he showed in his amusements and his social intercourse. On this occasion the sympathy with which he treated his men and his readiness to share their distress and attend to their wants had the effect of making the wounded and the sick even more ready to serve him than those who were well and strong.

44. However, the enemy, who only the day before had been exhausted and ready to give up fighting, were now so exultant at their victory and so contemptuous of the Romans that they spent the night close by, expecting that they would soon be able to plunder the empty tents and abandoned baggage of a routed army. At daybreak they gathered to attack in far greater strength, and at this moment their forces are said to have numbered forty thousand horsemen, as the king had sent even the royal bodyguard to join in the battle. This action proved that he now felt completely confident of success, because the Parthian king is never present in person at any battle. Antony decided to address the troops, and at first he called for a dark robe, as he wanted to make this speech as moving as possible. His friends opposed this idea, and so he appeared in a general's scarlet cloak and spoke to the army, praising the troops who had driven back the enemy and reproaching those who had fled. The former urged him to have confidence in them, while the latter in the effort to excuse their conduct told him that they were ready to suffer decimation and any other punishment he thought fit, if only he would forget their disgrace and cease to distress himself at it. In reply Antony lifted up his hands and prayed to the gods that, if some retribution were in store for him to balance his former good fortune, they would allow it to fall upon him alone and grant safety and victory to the rest of the army.

45. On the next day the Romans covered their advance more effectively, and when the Parthians attacked they met with a severe shock. They rode up expecting to have nothing to do but pillage and plunder their enemies, but when they were greeted with a hail of missiles and saw that the Romans were fresh, resolute, and eager for battle, they once more grew tired of the struggle. However, when the Romans were obliged to descend a steep slope, the Parthians made another attack and poured their arrows into the column as it wound slowly downhill. At this the infantry, who carried heavy shields, wheeled so as to enclose the light-armed troops within their ranks. Then the legionaries in front dropped on to one knee and held their shields in front of them. Those in the second rank held their shields out over the heads of the first, and those behind them took up the same position towards the second rank. This formation, which looks like the tiled roof of a house, makes a striking spectacle and provides the most effective defence against arrows, which merely glance off it. The Parthians, however, when they saw the Romans dropping on to one knee, imagined that they were exhausted, and so they put down their bows, gripped their spears by the middle, and advanced to close quarters. Then the Romans suddenly leaped to their feet and, joining all together in one great battle-cry, lunged forward with their javelins, speared the front ranks of the Parthians, and put the rest to flight. The days that followed saw a series of similar engagements, so that the retreat could proceed only in short stages.

The army was also beginning to suffer severely from hunger, since it could only find small quantities of grain even by fighting, and it was not well supplied with implements for grinding it. Most of these they had been obliged to abandon, since some of the pack animals had died, while many others were needed to carry the sick and wounded. It is said that at this time an Attic *choenix** of wheat cost fifty drachmas, while loaves of barley were sold for their weight in silver. The Romans had no choice but to fall back on vegetables and roots, but since they could find very few to which they were accustomed, they were obliged to try some they had never tasted before and it was in this way that they came to eat a herb which first drove men mad and then killed them. Those who ate of it lost their memory and became obsessed with the task of moving and turning over every stone they could see, as if they were accomplishing some-

* About a bushel: fifty drachmas is roughly the equivalent of £2.

thing of immense importance. All over the plain men could be seen stooping to the ground, digging around stones and removing them, and finally they would vomit bile and die, since they had no stores of wine which is the only remedy against this sickness. The Romans lost many men in this way, and all the while the Parthians kept up their attacks, while Antony, so the story goes, often exclaimed, 'O, the Ten Thousand!' This was to show his admiration for Xenophon's army, which made an even longer march from Babylon to the sea and succeeded in forcing its way through against even stronger opposition.

46. All this time the Parthians had still been unable to throw the Roman army into confusion or break up its formation. So, after being defeated and put to flight in many engagements, they began once more to fraternize with the legionaries as they went out to look for fodder or grain, and pointing to their unstrung bows, they would say that they had now given up their pursuit and were returning home. A few Medes would continue to follow the Romans for one or two days' march, but would cause them no trouble, as their only purpose was to protect the outlying villages. These professions of friendship were accompanied by greetings and various acts of goodwill, so that once again the Romans' spirits rose, and when he heard these reports, Antony was tempted to direct his march through the plains, as the route through the mountains was said to be waterless. But just as he was about to do this, a man named Mithridates arrived in his camp from the enemy: he was a cousin of the Monaeses who had taken refuge with Antony and been presented with the three cities.* Mithridates asked for somebody who could speak the Parthian or the Syrian language and interpret for him, and Alexander of Antioch, who was a close friend of Antony's, went out to meet him. After Mithridates had announced who he was, and explained that they must thank Monaeses for the information he was now going to give them, he asked Alexander whether he could see a range of lofty hills lying ahead of them. When Alexander replied that he could, Mithridates told him, 'Under those mountains the whole Parthian army is waiting in ambush for you. The great plains stretch right up to the foot of the range, and the Parthians expect that you will be deceived by their friendly advances into

* See ch. 37.

leaving the road through the mountains and marching in that direction. It is true that if you cross the heights you will have thirst and exhaustion to contend with, but you are accustomed to these by now: on the other hand if Antony tries to march across the plains he can expect to meet the same fate as Crassus.'

47. After he had given this information, the man departed. Antony was greatly disturbed at what he had heard and called together his friends and his Mardian guide, who took the same view as Mithridates. He considered that, even if they had no enemy to reckon with, the route across the plains involved the risk of much arduous wandering about with no certainty of finding their way because of the absence of clearly marked tracks, and he pointed out that the way through the mountains, although it was rough, offered no other danger than the lack of water for a single day. So Antony chose this route, and, after ordering his men to carry water with them, led the march by night. Most of his men, however, had no containers, and some actually filled their helmets and carried them, while others took water in skins.

As soon as Antony set off, his movements were reported to the Parthians, and contrary to their usual custom they started in pursuit while it was still dark. Just as the sun was rising they made contact with the Roman rear-guard, who were already tired out with hard marching and lack of sleep, for they had covered thirty miles during the night. The spirits of the Romans sank, for they had never expected that the enemy would overtake them so quickly, and, worse than this, the fighting increased their thirst, for they continued to march on at the same time as they tried to beat off the enemy's attacks. At length the vanguard arrived at a river, the water of which was clear and cool, but turned out to be salty in taste and poisonous in its effects. As soon as it was drunk, it produced painful spasms in the bowels and increased the men's thirst, but although the Mardian guide had warned them of this danger, the soldiers thrust aside anyone who tried to restrain them, and drank from the stream. Antony went along the column begging his men to hold out for a little longer, and telling them that not much farther on they would come to a river whose water was drinkable, and that the track ahead of them was too rocky for cavalry, so that in any case the enemy would be forced to turn back. At the same time he ordered the

troops who were engaged in fighting to break off the action, and gave the signal to pitch tents, so that the men might at least be refreshed by the shade.

48. Accordingly, the Romans set to work pitching their tents, and the Parthians, following their usual tactics, immediately began to fall back. At this moment Mithridates appeared again, and after Alexander had been sent to receive him, he offered the advice that Antony should allow the army only a short spell of rest and should then resume his march and press on to the next river, for his opinion was that the Parthians would not cross this, but were determined to pursue the Romans until they reached it. Alexander conveyed this message to Antony, and by way of reward brought back from him a large number of golden drinking-cups and bowls. Mithridates stuffed as many of these as he could hide under his clothes and rode away. Then, while it was still daylight, the Romans broke camp and continued their march. The enemy did not attack them, but by their own actions they contrived to make this the most disastrous and terrifying night they had yet experienced. Those who were known to possess gold and silver were murdered and robbed, many private possessions were stolen from the pack animals, and finally Antony's own baggage-train was attacked and his drinking-cups and expensive tables broken up and divided among the thieves.

This outbreak of looting produced great confusion throughout the army, and some of the troops began to lose touch and stray from the main body, for the rumour went round that the enemy had attacked, caused a rout, and so broken up the army's formation. At this Antony called for one of his bodyguard named Rhamnus and made him swear that when he gave the order the man would run him through with his sword and cut off his head, for he was determined neither to be taken alive by the enemy nor to be recognized when he was dead. Antony's friends burst into tears, but the Mardian did his best to raise his master's spirits, assuring him that they had now almost reached the river, for there was moisture in the breeze that was blowing from that direction and the cooler air in their faces made it easier to breathe. He explained too that the time they had been on the march proved that the river must be close by, for the hours of darkness were now almost past. At the same time others arrived with the news that the uproar had been caused by the greed

and violence of their own troops.* Antony therefore gave the signal to pitch camp, so as to bring his army back to its proper formation after this collapse of discipline and organization.

49. It was now daylight and a certain degree of order and tranquillity had been established, when the arrows of the Parthians began to fall upon the rear-guard, and the light-armed troops were given the signal to engage. The infantry took up the same defensive formation as before, so as to cover one another with shields, and succeeded in holding off their attackers, who did not venture to move in to close quarters. Following these tactics the head of the column slowly moved on, and at last the river came into sight. When they reached the bank, Antony drew up his cavalry to face the enemy and had his sick and wounded carried over first. But before long even the troops who were holding off the enemy were left free to drink at their ease, for as soon as the Parthians caught sight of the river, they unstrung their bows, told the Romans they could cross over without fear, and shouted to them praising their courage. In this way they reached the other side unmolested, and after resting for a while they resumed their march, but at the same time they put no faith whatever in the Parthians' assurances. On the sixth day after their last engagement they arrived at the river Araxes, which forms the frontier between Media and Armenia. This river is so deep and its current so violent that they expected to find it difficult to ford, and there was a rumour that the enemy were waiting in ambush there, and would attack them as soon as they tried to force a passage. At any rate, as soon as they had made their way over safely and set foot in Armenia, they kissed the ground and threw their arms around one another for joy, as if they were storm-tossed mariners who had just sighted land. But as they marched through this region, which abounded in provisions of every kind, and took to eating and drinking freely after the hardships they had suffered, they began to succumb to dropsy and dysentery.

50. Here Antony held a review of his army, and found that he had lost twenty thousand of his infantry and four thousand of his cavalry,

* This episode seems curiously inconsistent with the supposed devotion of Antony's troops, and it has been conjectured that the plundering of his possessions may have been caused by a report of his despair or a false rumour of his death.

more than half of whom had died not at the hands of the enemy but through disease. They had marched for twenty-seven days from Phraata and had defeated the Parthians in eighteen battles, but their victories had been indecisive and had failed to secure them against attack, because they could never follow them up effectually nor pursue the enemy for more than a short distance. This fact more than any other makes it clear that it was the defection of Artavasdes the Armenian* which deprived Antony of the power to finish off the war. For if the sixteen thousand† horsemen which he withdrew from the expedition when it was in Media had been available, armed as they were like the Parthians and accustomed to fighting them, and if they, after the Romans had routed the enemy in pitched battles, had pursued and cut down the fugitives, the Parthians would never have been able to rally their forces and return to the attack as often as they did. For this reason the army was furious with Artavasdes and urged Antony to take revenge on him. However, Antony, since his army had been so much weakened both in manpower and in supplies, refrained for reasons of policy from blaming Artavasdes for his treachery, or from treating him with any less goodwill, friendship, or respect than he had shown before. But afterwards, when he carried out a second invasion of Armenia, he sent Artavasdes a succession of invitations and tempting promises, managed to persuade him to come to a meeting, and then had him arrested, put into chains, and brought to Alexandria. There Antony organized a triumph and led the king in it, an action which caused particular offence to the Romans, because it was felt that he was celebrating the honourable and solemn rites of his own country for the benefit of the Egyptians and for the sake of Cleopatra. These events, however, took place at a later date.

51. Antony now pressed on, for the winter had already set in sharply, and he encountered incessant snow-storms and lost eight thousand men on the march. He himself went down to the Mediterranean coast with a small escort, and at a place between Berytus and Sidon called the White Village he waited for Cleopatra to join him. When she was slow in coming he became distraught and soon gave himself up to heavy drinking, and yet he could not endure the tedium of the

* In 30 B.C. Artavasdes was put to death by Cleopatra after the battle of Actium.

† In ch. 37 Plutarch mentions six thousand, which is a more probable figure.

table, but would jump to his feet and run out to see if she were coming, until at last she arrived by sea, bringing with her large quantities of clothing and money for the soldiers. But according to some accounts, while Cleopatra presented the clothes, it was Antony himself who took the money from his private funds and distributed it to the army as a gift from her.

52. At this date* a quarrel arose between the king of the Medes and Phraates of Parthia. This had arisen, so it is said, over the division of the spoils captured from the Romans, but it aroused the suspicions of the Median king, who now feared that his throne might be taken from him. For this reason he invited Antony to come to his help and promised to support him with his own forces in a war against Parthia. This offer greatly raised Antony's hopes, for the one factor which, as he believed, had prevented him from conquering the Parthians, that is the lack of a strong force of cavalry and archers, was now to be supplied to him, and on such terms that if he accepted he would be conferring a favour rather than asking one. He therefore made preparations to march once more into upper Asia through Armenia, and there to join forces with the Median king at the river Araxus and reopen the war.

53. Meanwhile, at Rome, Octavia was becoming anxious to sail east and join Antony. It is generally agreed that Octavius allowed her to do this not so much to give her pleasure, but rather to give himself a plausible pretext for declaring war, if she were neglected or insulted by her husband. When Octavia arrived in Athens† she received letters from Antony in which he told her to stay there and explained the plans for his new expedition. Octavia, although she was hurt by this news and saw through Antony's excuses, nevertheless wrote asking him where he wished to have the things sent which she was bringing him, for she had come out with large stores of clothing for his troops, many pack animals and money and presents for Antony's staff and his friends, and besides all this two thousand picked men splendidly equipped with full armour to serve as praetorian guards.‡

* Late in 35 B.C.

† In the summer of 35 B.C.

‡ Under the Roman Republic, while the consuls were the commanders-in-chief of its armies, the praetors were often its generals: hence the praetorian guard was originally a picked body of cavalry and infantry who served as the general's personal bodyguard.

Octavia sent one of Antony's friends whose name was Niger to give him this news, and in delivering it he praised and complimented her, as indeed she deserved.

Cleopatra now saw that her rival was preparing to challenge her influence at close quarters. She was afraid that if to her natural dignity and her brother's power Octavia could once add the charm of her daily society and her affectionate attention, she would win complete control of her husband and make her position unassailable. So she pretended to be consumed with the most passionate love for Antony, adopted a rigorous diet, and succeeded in making her body waste away. Whenever Antony came near her she would fix her eyes on him with a look of rapture, and whenever he left she would appear to languish and be on the verge of collapse. She took great pains to arrange that he should often see her in tears, and then she would quickly wipe them away and try to hide them as if she did not wish him to notice, and she kept up this elaborate performance all the time that he was preparing to march from Syria and join the king of Media. Her flatterers also worked hard upon Antony at this time. They told him that he must be an insensitive brute with a heart of stone, for here was a mistress who was utterly devoted to him alone, and he was killing her. Octavia, they made out, had married him as a matter of political convenience to suit her brother's interests, and she enjoyed the title of his wife: but Cleopatra, who was the sovereign of many nations, had been content to be called his mistress, and she did not shun this name nor think it unworthy of her so long as she could see him and spend her life with him, but if he drove her away it would be the death of her. In the end they so melted and unmanned him, that he began to believe she would take her own life if he left her. And so he returned to Alexandria and put off his Median expedition until the summer, in spite of the fact that Parthia was said to be greatly weakened by internal dissensions. Later, however, he made a journey to Media and restored his friendly relations with the king. Then, after arranging the betrothal of one of the king's daughters, who was still only a young child, to one of his sons by Cleopatra, he returned to Egypt, but by this time his thoughts were taken up by the impending war between Octavius Caesar and himself.

54. When Octavia returned from Athens Octavius considered that Antony had insulted her outrageously, and he told her that she must

now set up her own household. But she refused to leave her husband's house, in fact she even begged Octavius, unless he had already made up his mind to declare war for quite different reasons, to ignore Antony's behaviour towards her, for it would be intolerable, she pleaded, to have it said of the two greatest Imperators in the world that they had plunged the Roman people into civil war, the one out of love and the other out of jealousy for the rights of a woman. These were her words and her actions added weight to them. She went on living in her husband's house as if he were at home, and she looked after Antony's children, not only those whom she had borne him but also Fulvia's, with a truly noble devotion and generosity of spirit. She also entertained any friends of Antony's who were sent to Rome either on business or to solicit posts of authority, and she did her utmost to help them obtain whatever they wanted from Octavius. But in this way she unintentionally did great harm to Antony's reputation, since he was naturally hated for wronging such a woman.

Antony also aroused great resentment because of the division of his inheritance which he carried out in Alexandria* in favour of his children. People regarded this as an arrogant and theatrical gesture which seemed to indicate a hatred for his own country. Nevertheless, he assembled a great multitude in the athletic arena there, and had two thrones of gold, one for himself and one for Cleopatra, placed on a dais of silver, with smaller thrones for his children. First, he proclaimed Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, and Coele Syria† and named Caesarion as her consort. This youth was believed to be a son of Julius Caesar, who had left Cleopatra pregnant. Next he proclaimed his own sons by Cleopatra to be Kings of Kings. To Alexander he gave Armenia, Media, and Parthia, as soon as he should have conquered it, and to Ptolemy Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia. At the same time he presented his sons to the people, Alexander in a Median costume which was crowned by a tiara, and Ptolemy in boots, a short cloak, and a broad-brimmed hat encircled by a diadem. The latter wore Macedonian dress like the kings who succeeded Alexander the Great, and the former the dress of the Medes and Armenians. After the children had embraced their parents, the one

* This pronouncement was no mere gesture but a deliberately conceived political settlement, known as the Donations of Alexandria (see Appendix, p. 356).

† See note in ch. 36.

was given a guard of honour of Armenians and the other of Macedonians. Cleopatra not only on this but on other public occasions wore the robe which is sacred to Isis, and she was addressed as the New Isis.

55. Octavius Caesar reported these actions to the Senate,* and by repeatedly denouncing Antony in public he did his utmost to rouse the Roman people's anger against him. Antony for his part made a number of counter-accusations against Octavius. The most important of these were, first that after capturing Sicily from Sextus Pompeius he had not given Antony any share of the island; secondly, that after borrowing some of Antony's ships for this campaign he kept them for his own use; thirdly, that after removing his colleague Lepidus from his position as triumvir and degrading him, he took possession himself of the troops, the territories, and the revenues which had been assigned to Lepidus, and, finally, that he had distributed almost all the available land in Italy to his own soldiers and left nothing for Antony's. Octavius Caesar's retort to these charges was that he had deprived Lepidus of his authority because he was misusing it, and that as for his conquests in war he was willing to divide these with Antony as soon as Antony offered to share Armenia with him. He added that Antony's soldiers had no claim upon any lands in Italy. Their rewards lay in Media and Parthia which they had added to the Roman empire by their gallant campaigns under their Imperator.

56. Antony was in Armenia when this answer reached him, and he at once ordered Canidius to march to the coast with sixteen legions. Meanwhile, he travelled with Cleopatra to Ephesus, where his naval force was assembling from all quarters. It numbered eight hundred warships together with merchant vessels: Cleopatra provided two hundred of these, as well as twenty thousand talents and supplies for the whole army during the campaign. On the advice of Domitius Ahenobarbus and several other friends, Antony told Cleopatra to sail to Egypt and to wait there for the outcome of the war. But the queen was afraid that Octavia might again succeed in reconciling the two

* Octavius brought matters to a head by surrounding the Senate with soldiers when he delivered his accusations. Antony still had many supporters in Rome, for at this point both the consuls for 32 B.C. and some four hundred senators left Rome to join him in the East.

antagonists, and so she bribed Canidius to plead for her with Antony, pointing out that it was unjust to refuse a woman who contributed so much to the expenses of the war the privilege of being present at it, and unwise for Antony to depress the spirits of the Egyptians who formed so large a part of their naval force. Besides, there was no indication as far as he could see that Cleopatra was inferior in intelligence to any of the kings who were taking part in the expedition: on the contrary, she had for many years ruled a large kingdom by herself, and her long association with Antony had taught her many lessons in the management of great affairs. And so, since fate had decreed that everything should fall into Octavius Caesar's hands, these arguments won the day, and when all their forces had been assembled, the two sailed together to Samos and there gave themselves up to pleasure.* For just as the order had gone out that all the kings, princes, tetrarchs, nations, and cities from Syria to the Mareotic Lake and from Armenia to Illyria should bring or send their quota of equipment for the war, so all the dramatic artists were commanded to present themselves at Samos, and, while almost the whole world round about was filled with sighs and lamentations at the impending war, this single island echoed for many days with the music of strings and flutes, the theatres were packed and choirs competed with one another. Every city sent an ox for sacrifice, and the kings who accompanied Antony vied with one another in the magnificence of their gifts and entertainments, until the word went round, 'If these people spend so much on festivals just to prepare for war, what will the conquerors do to celebrate a victory?'

57. At the end of these entertainments Antony arranged for the dramatic artists to be settled in the city of Priene as their permanent residence. Then he sailed on to Athens, and allowed himself to be diverted by a further round of amusements and theatrical spectacles. Cleopatra for her part felt jealous of the honours which the city had paid to Octavia – for the Athenians were particularly devoted to her – and tried to make herself popular with the citizens by heaping lavish benefactions on them. The Athenians responded by conferring various public honours upon the queen and sent a delegation to her

* It is also possible that these ceremonies were not organized for pleasure but for a religious purpose: in a similar fashion Alexander organized gatherings in honour of Dionysus before several of his campaigns.

house to present her with the public decree to this effect. Antony himself accompanied them in his capacity as an honorary citizen, and standing before her he delivered a ceremonial address on behalf of the city of Athens. At the same time he sent men to Rome with instructions to turn Octavia out of her house. We are told that, when she left it, she took with her all of Antony's children except Antyllus, the eldest son of his marriage to Fulvia, who was with his father, and that she wept tears of anguish at the thought that she would be regarded as one of the causes of the war. Yet it was not she whom the Romans pitied so much as Antony for his folly, especially those who had seen Cleopatra and knew that she had neither Octavia's youth nor her beauty.

58. Octavius Caesar was dismayed when he learned of the speed and the scope of Antony's preparations, since he was afraid that he would be forced to embark that very summer* upon the campaign that would decide the war, and for the time being he was not only very short of supplies but had made himself thoroughly unpopular on account of the taxes he had imposed. Full citizens were obliged to pay over one quarter of their income and freedmen one eighth of their property, with the result that there was a violent outcry from both classes against Octavius and disturbances broke out all over Italy. For this reason Antony's postponement of the war is now considered to have been one of his greatest errors of judgement, since it gave Caesar the opportunity to complete his preparations and allowed time for the indignation aroused by his measures to subside. People felt rebellious at the moment when the money was extorted from them, but, once they had paid it, their anger cooled off. At the same time Cleopatra went out of her way to insult two of Antony's friends, Titius and Plancus, both of them men of consular rank, who strongly opposed the idea that she should remain with the expedition. They made their escape and passed on to Octavius some information about the contents of Antony's will of which they knew the details. This will had been deposited with the Vestal Virgins,† and when Octavius Caesar asked for it, they refused to send it to him, but told

* 32 B.C.

† This was apparently a common custom with men of rank. But Octavius's action was resented, because a will deposited with the Vestal Virgins was regarded as especially sacred, and it was still in Antony's power to change its provisions.

him that if he wished to have it he should come and take it himself, which he proceeded to do. First of all he read it through privately and marked the passages which would serve best to discredit Antony, and later he summoned a meeting of the Senate and read it aloud to them. Most of the senators had little sympathy for this performance, since they thought it an extraordinary and intolerable procedure that a man should be called to account while he was still alive for what he wished to have done after his death. Octavius singled out for especial emphasis the clause which dealt with Antony's burial, for he had left instructions that even if he were to die in Rome, his body should be carried in state through the Forum and then sent to Cleopatra in Egypt. Besides this, Calvisius, one of Octavius's friends, accused Antony of a number of other excesses in his behaviour towards Cleopatra: he had presented her with the libraries at Pergamum which contained two hundred thousand scrolls; at a banquet with a large company present he had risen from his place and anointed her feet, apparently to fulfil some compact or wager; he had allowed the Ephesians to salute Cleopatra as their sovereign in his own presence, and on many occasions, while he was seated on the tribunal administering justice to kings and tetrarchs, he would receive love-letters from her written on tablets of onyx or crystal and read them through in public; and on another occasion when Furnius, a man of great distinction and the foremost orator in Rome, was pleading a case, Cleopatra happened to pass through the Forum in her litter, whereupon Antony leaped to his feet from his tribunal, walked out of the trial, and accompanied Cleopatra on her way, hanging on to her litter.

59. However, Calvisius was generally believed to have invented most of these accusations. Meanwhile, Antony's friends also canvassed the people and appealed to them on his behalf, and they sent one of their number named Geminus to urge Antony not to sit by and allow himself to be voted out of authority and declared an enemy of Rome. But as soon as Geminus landed in Greece, he was suspected by Cleopatra of being an agent working for Octavia, and she arranged that he should be humiliated by being seated in the least distinguished place at the dinner table and having practical jokes played on him. Geminus endured all these insults with great patience and waited for an opportunity to speak to Antony. But when he was called upon to

explain the reason for his presence, they were seated at dinner, and so Geminus answered that he would keep the rest of his message for a more sober occasion, but that he had one thing to say, sober or drunk, and this was that all would go well if Cleopatra were sent back to Egypt. Antony was furious at this reply, but Cleopatra put in, 'You have done well, Geminus, to confess the truth without being put to the torture.' At any rate Geminus escaped a few days later and returned to Rome.* Cleopatra's parasites succeeded in driving away many other friends of Antony's, who found these creatures' drunken antics and ribald buffoonery more than they could tolerate. Among those who left him at this time were Marcus Silanus and Delliis the historian. Delliis also mentions that he was afraid of a plot against his life, which Glaucus the physician warned him had been organized by Cleopatra. It appears that he had offended her on one occasion at supper by remarking that Antony's friends were served with sour wine, while at Rome Sarmentus, Octavius Caesar's little page, one of his boy favourites or *deliciae*, as the Romans call them, was drinking Falernian.

60. As soon as Octavius Caesar had completed his preparations, he had a decree passed declaring war on Cleopatra and depriving Antony of the authority which he had allowed a woman to exercise in his place. Octavius Caesar also gave it out that Antony had allowed himself to fall under the influence of drugs, that he was no longer responsible for his actions, and that the Romans were fighting this war against Mardian the eunuch, Potheinus, Iras, who was Cleopatra's hairdresser, and Charmian, her waiting-woman, since it was they who were mainly responsible for the direction of affairs.

Here I may mention a number of prodigies which are said to have heralded the outbreak of war. Pisaurum, a city near the Adriatic which Antony had colonized, was suddenly engulfed by an earthquake. One of the marble statues of Antony near Alba was seen to ooze with sweat, and the moisture in spite of being wiped away continued to flow. At Patras the temple of Hercules was destroyed by

* Matters had gone too far for any reconciliation with Octavia to be likely. It is more probable that Cleopatra feared Geminus to be one of those who, like Ahenobarbus, were pressing Antony to break off his connexion with her and restore his position in the west. The fact that she could threaten a free-born man with torture was the final provocation for some of Antony's friends.

lightning, and in Athens the figure of Dionysus in the group known as the Battle of the Giants was torn loose by the wind and hurled down into the theatre. Now Antony, as I have mentioned earlier in this Life, claimed to be descended from Hercules, and because he liked to associate himself with Dionysus in his manner of living he had been given the name of the New Dionysus.* The same storm also fell upon the colossal statues of Eumenes and Attalus at Athens, on which Antony's name had been inscribed, and overturned them, while the other sculptures nearby remained undisturbed. Besides this, Cleopatra's flagship was named Antonias, and here too an alarming portent was observed. A number of swallows had built their nests under the stern, but other swallows attacked them, drove them out, and killed their young.

61. When the two sides had mobilized for the war, Antony's fleet numbered no less than five hundred warships, including many vessels which carried eight or ten banks of oars, and were fitted out with elaborate decorations as though they were intended for a triumph, while his army consisted of a hundred thousand infantry and twelve thousand cavalry. Among the subject kings who came to his support were Bocchus the king of Libya, Tarcondemus the king of Upper Cilicia, Philadelphus of Paphlagonia, Mithridates of Commagene, and Sadalas of Thrace. These rulers accompanied his forces, while other contingents were sent him by Polemon of Pontus, Malchus of Arabia, Herod of Judaea, and Amyntas of Lycaonia and Galatia, while the king of the Medes also provided an auxiliary force. Octavius Caesar on the other hand had two hundred and fifty warships, eighty thousand infantry, and about twelve thousand cavalry. Antony's dominions stretched from the Euphrates and Armenia to the Ionian sea and Illyria, and Octavius Caesar's from Illyria to the Atlantic ocean and from there back to the seas which bordered Etruria and Sicily. On the African shore of the Mediterranean, the coast which lies opposite Italy, Gaul and Iberia as far as the Pillars of Hercules belonged to Caesar, while Antony controlled the region that extends from Cyrene to Armenia.

62. By this time Antony had become so much of a tool in Cleopatra's hands that, although he was far stronger than Octavius on land, he

* See chs. 4 and 24.

was determined that his victory should be gained by his fleet; he insisted on this merely to please the queen; even though he could see that he was so short of seamen that his trierarchs were impressing travellers, muledrivers, reapers, and boys not yet of military age from the exhausted provinces of Greece. Even then his crews were still below strength, with the result that the vessels were undermanned and wretchedly handled. Octavius Caesar's fleet, by contrast, consisted of ships which had not been built to an ostentatious height nor designed for show, but were fully manned, fast sailing, and easy to manoeuvre. He had concentrated his fleet at Tarentum and Brundisium, and now sent a message to Antony challenging him not to waste any more time, but to come with his forces: Caesar would then leave the roadsteads and harbour free for his fleet to enter and would withdraw his army the distance of a day's ride inland, until Antony had safely disembarked and established his camp. Antony retorted in equally boastful language, challenging Octavius to meet him in single combat, even though he was the older man. If Octavius declined this, Antony demanded that they should fight out the issue at Pharsalus, as Julius Caesar and Pompey had done before them. However, while Antony's fleet was anchored off Actium, where the city of Nicopolis now stands, Octavius stole a march on him by crossing the Ionian sea and seizing a town in Epirus named Toryne, the name of which means 'ladle'. When Antony's friends showed alarm at this, as their own army had not yet come up, Cleopatra made a joke of it and asked mockingly, 'What is so terrible about Caesar's having got hold of a ladle?'

63. A little later the enemy sailed against Antony's fleet at daybreak and he was afraid that his ships might be captured before his soldiers could arrive to go aboard them. He therefore armed his oarsmen and paraded them on the decks so as to make the best possible show. Then he drew up the vessels near the mouth of the gulf of Actium with their banks of oars raised out of the water and held in readiness for the strike, and with their bows pointing towards the enemy, as if they were fully manned and ready to engage. Octavius Caesar was outwitted by this manoeuvre and retired. Antony was also considered to have made a skilful move by erecting some earthworks to cut off the enemy from the supply of drinkable water, since there were few springs in the neighbourhood, and even these were of poor quality.

It was also at this time that he behaved with great generosity – although quite against Cleopatra's inclinations – to Domitius Ahenobarbus. Domitius, who was already suffering from fever, put off in a small boat and went over to Octavius Caesar; but Antony, although he was deeply grieved by his friend's desertion, sent not only his baggage but all his friends and servants after him, whereupon Domitius died almost immediately, as if he longed to repent as soon as his treachery and disloyalty were discovered.

Some of the subject kings also chose this moment to change sides, and Amyntas and Deiotarus went over to Octavius Caesar. Moreover, since his fleet proved unsuccessful in every one of its operations and always arrived too late to give any help, Antony was obliged to pay more attention to his land forces. Canidius too, now that he recognized the danger in which they stood, reversed the attitude he had taken up before and advised Antony to send Cleopatra away, withdraw his troops into Thrace or Macedonia, and trust to a land battle to decide the issue. Dicoemes, the king of the Getae, had promised to support him with a powerful army, and there would be no disgrace, Canidius urged, in giving up the control of the sea to Octavius, since his forces had been trained in naval operations during the Sicilian campaign against Sextus Pompeius. On the other hand, it would be absurd for Antony, who was as experienced in fighting on land as any commander living, not to take advantage of the superior numbers and equipment of his legions, but to distribute his fighting men among the ships and so fritter away his strength.

But in spite of anything that Canidius could say, it was Cleopatra's choice that the war should be decided at sea which finally prevailed. And yet the truth was that her thoughts were already turning towards flight, and the real purpose of the battle order which she drew up for her forces was not to win a victory but to ensure her escape in the event of defeat. It happened also that there were two long walls which stretched from Antony's camp down to the naval base, and Antony was in the habit of walking between these without suspecting any danger. Octavius was informed by a slave that Antony could be captured as he passed down this route, and so he sent a patrol to ambush him. The soldiers almost achieved their purpose, but they jumped to their feet a moment too soon and seized a man who was in front of Antony, while Antony himself ran off and just succeeded in escaping.

64. When he had finally decided to fight at sea, Antony had all but sixty of the Egyptian ships burned.* He then manned the best and largest which carried between three and ten banks of oars and embarked in them twenty thousand heavy infantry and two thousand archers. It was on this occasion, we are told, that one of the centurions from the legions, who had fought in innumerable battles under Antony and whose body was seamed with scars, suddenly burst out as Antony was passing by, 'Imperator, how can you distrust this sword and these wounds of mine and put all your hopes in rotten timbers? Let these Egyptians and Phoenicians do their fighting at sea. Give us the land, where we know how to stand foot to foot and conquer our enemies or die.' To this Antony could make no reply. All he did with a look and a gesture of his hand was to encourage the man to take heart, and then he passed on. And in fact it seemed that he had little enough confidence himself, because when the captains of his ships proposed leaving their sails behind,† he gave orders that they should be put aboard on the pretext that they must not allow a single one of the enemy to escape.

65. On that day and throughout the three that followed, a strong wind blew and the sea ran so high that it was impossible to engage. But on the fifth day the wind dropped, the sea grew calm, and the two fleets met. Antony together with Publicola took command of the right wing, Coelius was in charge of the left, and Marcus Octavius and Marcus Insteius of the centre. Octavius Caesar posted Agrippa on the left and took the right wing himself. Antony's army was commanded by Canidius and Octavius's by Taurus, but both generals drew up their forces along the shore and remained inactive. As for the two commanders, Antony made the round of all the ships in a small rowing boat. He urged the soldiers to rely on the weight of their vessels and to stand firm and fight exactly as if they were on land, and at the same time he ordered the sea captains to receive the

* This seems to have been done for fear that they might desert. The sixty were reserved to guard Cleopatra.

† Antony is said to have hoped to take advantage of the following wind to drive the opposing fleet down the coast. However, in battle, warships normally relied on their oars, not their sails, and his order inevitably created the impression that his real intention was not to fight but to escape: this was strengthened by the fact that his treasure, which could have been guarded by the army, was in fact embarked with the fleet.

shock of the enemy's warships as if they were lying quietly at anchor, and to hold their positions at the mouth of the gulf which was a narrow and difficult passage. Octavius Caesar, so the story goes, had left his tent while it was still dark and was on his way to visit his fleet when he met a man driving an ass. He asked his name and the man, who recognized him, replied: 'My name is Fortunate and my ass is named Conqueror.' After the battle, when Octavius Caesar set up many of the beaks of the captured ships to decorate the place, he also erected a bronze statue of a man and an ass. After he had inspected the dispositions of the rest of his fleet, he was rowed in a small boat to the right wing, and there he saw to his astonishment that the enemy were lying motionless in the narrows, for their ships looked as though they were riding at anchor. For some while he believed that this was really the case and kept his own ships at about a mile's distance. But about noon a breeze sprang up from the sea. By this time Antony's men had become impatient at waiting so long for the enemy, and since they felt confident that the height and the size of their ships made them invincible, they got the left wing of the fleet under way. Octavius Caesar was overjoyed to see this and ordered the rowers of his right wing to back water, so as to lure the enemy out of the gulf and its narrow entrance. His plan was to surround them with his more agile craft and fight at close quarters, where he was confident that he would have the advantage over his opponents' large and unmanned galleys which were slow and difficult to manoeuvre.

66. When the opposing battle lines first met, the ships did not attempt to ram or crush one another at all. Antony's vessels, because of their great weight, were not making the speed which is required to stave in an opponent's timbers. Octavius Caesar's, on the other hand, deliberately avoided a head-on collision with their enemies' bows, which were armoured with massive plates and spikes of bronze, nor did they even venture to ram them amidships, since their beaks would have been easily snapped off against hulls which were constructed of huge square timbers bolted together with iron. And so the fighting took on much of the character of a land battle, or, to be more exact, of an attack upon a fortified town. Three or four of Octavius's ships clustered round each one of Antony's and the fighting was carried on with wicker shields, spears, poles, and flaming missiles, while

Antony's soldiers also shot with catapults from wooden towers. Agrippa then began to extend his left wing, so as to feel his way round the enemy's flank. Publicola to counter this manoeuvre was obliged to advance against him and so became separated from the centre, which was thrown into confusion and was promptly engaged by Arruntius, who commanded the centre of Octavius's fleet. At this moment, while neither side had gained a decisive advantage, Cleopatra's squadron of sixty ships was suddenly seen to hoist sail and make off through the very midst of the battle. They had been stationed astern of the heavy ships, and so threw their whole formation into disorder as they plunged through. The enemy watched them with amazement, as they spread their sails before the following wind and shaped their course for the Peloponnese. And it was now that Antony revealed to all the world that he was no longer guided by the motives of a commander nor of a brave man nor indeed by his own judgement at all: instead, he proved the truth of the saying which was once uttered as a jest, namely that a lover's soul dwells in the body of another, and he allowed himself to be dragged along after the woman, as if he had become a part of her flesh and must go wherever she led him. No sooner did he see her ships sailing away than every other consideration was blotted out of his mind, and he abandoned and betrayed the men who were fighting and dying for his cause. He got into a five-banked galley, and taking with him only Alexas the Syrian and Scellius, he hurried after the woman who had already ruined him and would soon complete his destruction.

67. Cleopatra recognized him and hoisted a signal on her ship, whereupon Antony came up and was taken on board, but he neither saw her, nor was seen by her. Instead he went forward by himself into the bows and sat down without a word, holding his head between his hands. Presently several light Liburnian vessels from Octavius's fleet were seen coming up in pursuit. Antony ordered the ship to be turned to face them and held them all off except for the vessel commanded by Eurycles the Spartan, who came in close and stood on the deck brandishing a spear, as though to hurl it at Antony. When Antony stood up in the bows and shouted out, 'Who is it who pursues Antony?' the answer came back, 'I am Eurycles, the son of Lachares, and I come armed with Caesar's fortune to avenge my father's death.' This Lachares had been involved in a charge of robbery

and had been beheaded on Antony's orders. Eurycles did not attack Antony's vessel, but he rammed the other admiral's galley – for there were two of them – and swung her round with the shock, and as she fell away from her course captured her, and soon after another ship, which contained valuable plate and furniture. When Eurycles had sailed off, Antony flung himself down in the same position and refused to move. For three days he stayed by himself in the bows of the ship; all this time he felt either too angry or too ashamed to see Cleopatra, and he then put in at Taenarum.* It was here that Cleopatra's waiting women first persuaded the two to speak to one another, and then later to eat and sleep together.

By this time several of their heavy transports and some of their friends began to rally to them from the general rout. Their news was that the fleet had been utterly destroyed, but they believed that the army still held together. When he heard this, Antony sent messengers to Canidius with orders to withdraw as quickly as he could through Macedonia into Asia. As for himself, he intended to sail from Taenarum to Libya, but at the same time he picked out one of the transports which carried a great quantity of money and a number of precious utensils of silver and gold which belonged to the royal household: this ship he presented to his friends, and urged them to divide up the treasure and save themselves. They refused his offer with tears in their eyes, but Antony comforted them with all the warmth and kindness imaginable and entreated them to accept his gift. Finally he sent them away, after writing to Theophilus, his steward in Corinth, with instructions that he should give them refuge and keep them hidden until they could make their peace with Octavius Caesar. This Theophilus was the father of Hipparchus, who was the most influential of all Antony's followers: yet he was the first of Antony's freedmen to go over to Octavius's side, and he afterwards settled in Corinth.

68. This was how matters stood with Antony. At Actium his fleet continued to hold out for several hours against Octavius, and it was only after the ships had been severely battered by a gale, which blew head on against them, that his men unwillingly surrendered at about four in the afternoon. Not more than five thousand lost their lives, but three hundred ships were captured, as Octavius has re-

* The modern Cape Matapan, the most southerly point in the Peloponnese.

corded. Up to this moment only a few people knew that Antony had fled, and those who heard the news at first found it impossible to believe that he should have run away and left them, when he had nineteen legions of infantry and twelve thousand cavalry, all of them undefeated. After all, Antony had had plenty of experience of fortune in all her moods, and was inured to the reverses and vicissitudes of innumerable campaigns. His soldiers longed to see him and were confident that he would appear from one quarter or another: indeed, such was their loyalty and courage that, even after his flight had become common knowledge, they still held together for seven days and ignored every approach made to them by Octavius. It was only when their general Canidius left the camp and stole away at night that the soldiers, finding themselves completely destitute, cut off from their supplies, and betrayed by their commanders, finally went over to the conqueror.

After these events Octavius sailed to Athens and made a settlement with the Greeks. He found that the cities were suffering great hardship, because they had been stripped of money, slaves, and pack animals, and he proceeded to arrange for the distribution of all the supplies of grain which had not been used in the war. My great grandfather Nicarchus used to relate how all the citizens of our native town of Chaeronea were forced to carry on their shoulders a certain quantity of wheat down to the sea at Anticyra, and how they were urged on by the whip. They had carried down one consignment in this fashion, when the news that Antony had been defeated arrived just in time to save the city from further hardships, for all Antony's agents and soldiers immediately fled, and the inhabitants were left to share out the wheat among themselves.

69. When Antony landed on the coast of Libya, he sent Cleopatra ahead into Egypt from Paraetonium,* and was able to enjoy all the solitude he could desire. He wandered about the country attended by only two friends, the one a Greek named Aristocrates, who was a rhetorician, and the other a Roman, one Lucilius, whom I have already mentioned in my *Life of Brutus*.† This man fought at Philippi, and in order to help Brutus escape he impersonated him and gave himself up to Brutus's pursuers. Because of this action Antony spared his life, and Lucilius remained faithful and loyal through all his

* Near the modern Sollum.

† See ch. 30.

misfortunes to the very end. When Carpus,* whom Antony had put in command of the troops in Libya, also went over to Octavius, Antony tried to kill himself, but was prevented by his friends who persuaded him to come to Alexandria. There he found Cleopatra on the point of embarking upon a perilous and ambitious enterprise. The isthmus, which divides the Red Sea from the Mediterranean and is generally regarded as the boundary between Africa and Asia, measures at its narrowest point less than forty miles† across. It was here that Cleopatra intended to raise her ships out of the water and haul them overland. Her plan was then to embark a large sum of money and a strong escort, launch the vessels in the Red Sea, and settle beyond the frontiers of Egypt, leaving the dangers of war and captivity far behind her. But the Arabs of the kingdom of Petra set fire to the first ships that were brought across,‡ and, since Antony still imagined that his army at Actium had remained loyal, Cleopatra abandoned the attempt and posted her troops to guard the approaches to Egypt. Meanwhile, Antony abandoned the city and the company of his friends and went to live on the island of Pharos,§ in a house which he had built on a jetty running into the sea. There he shut himself away from all human society, and said that he asked for nothing better than to follow the example of Timon, since his own fate had been so similar. Like Timon he had been wronged and treated with ingratitude by his friends, and for this reason he distrusted and hated the whole human race.

70. Timon had been a citizen of Athens who lived about the time of the Peloponnesian war, and he is mentioned in the comedies of Aristophanes and of Plato.|| These writers represent him as a gloomy and misanthropic character, but although he took pains to avoid or repel almost every kind of human contact, yet he enjoyed the society of Alcibiades – who was at this time an insolent and aggressive young man – and used to embrace and kiss him affectionately. When Apemantus expressed his amazement at this and asked the reason,

* One of Antony's officers who had fought with him at Philippi.

† In fact, about seventy.

‡ The subjects of Malchus of Nabatea. This ruler had had a grudge against Cleopatra ever since his territory had been given her under the settlement drawn up by Antony in 37 B.C. (see ch. 36).

§ The island opposite Alexandria, which contained the famous lighthouse.

|| The comic dramatist, not the philosopher.

Timon told him that he was devoted to Alcibiades because he knew that he would be the cause of infinite mischief to Athens. This Apemantus was the only man whom he sometimes admitted into his company, since the two had much in common, and Apemantus sometimes tried to model his way of living upon Timon's. On one occasion during the Festival of the Two Pitchers,* as it is called, Apemantus remarked, 'Timon, what an excellent party we are having!' 'We would be,' Timon retorted, 'if you were not here.' There is another story that when the Athenians were holding a public assembly, Timon mounted the rostra, and this in itself was such an extraordinary event that the audience immediately fell silent and strained their ears to catch what he would say. Then Timon announced: 'I have a small plot of building land, men of Athens, and on it there stands a fig-tree. Many of my fellow-citizens have already hanged themselves on its branches, but as I propose to build a house on the site, I thought it best to give public notice, so that if any of you are anxious to hang yourselves, you may do so before the tree is cut down.' After Timon's death, he was buried at Halae by the edge of the sea, but part of the shore in front of his tomb subsided and the sea flowed over it and made it impossible to approach. The inscription on his tomb read as follows:

Here, after snapping the thread of a wretched life, I lie buried.

Seek not to know my name: I have nothing for you but my curse.

This epitaph he is said to have written himself, but the version which is more generally known was composed by Callimachus, and this is how it runs:

Here lies Timon who hated mankind: let no passer-by linger.

Curse me if that is your wish, but pass, that is all I entreat.

71. These are a few of the many anecdotes which have come down to us about Timon. It was Canidius who broke the news to Antony that his entire army at Actium had melted away, and soon afterwards Antony learned that Herod of Judaea† had declared for Octavius and taken a number of legions and cohorts with him, that the rest of his

* The second day of the wine festival held in honour of Dionysus. It was a day of libations to the dead.

† Herod the Great, until then an ardent supporter of Antony. He had sent a contingent to Actium but had not been present there.

client-kings were deserting him, and that nothing now remained of his power outside Egypt. But by this time such news could no longer affect him, and he seemed happy to rid himself both of his hopes and of his cares at once. He left his retreat by the sea, which he had called the Timoneum, was welcomed by Cleopatra into the palace, and once more plunged the city into a round of banquets, drinking-parties, and lavish distributions of gifts. He had Caesarion, the son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra, enrolled in the list of ephebes, and conferred the *toga virilis* without the purple hem on Antyllus,* his own son by Fulvia, and the entertainments, banquets, and revels which were given to celebrate these honours engaged the whole city for days on end. Cleopatra and Antony now dissolved their celebrated society of Inimitable Livers and instituted another, which was at least its equal in elegance, luxury, and extravagance, and which they called the Order of the Inseparable in Death. Their friends joined it on the understanding that they would end their lives together, and they set themselves to charm away the days with a succession of exquisite supper parties. Meanwhile, Cleopatra collected together many kinds of deadly poisons, and tested these on prisoners who had been condemned to death, to discover which was the most painless. When she found that the drugs which acted most quickly caused the victim to die in agony, while the milder poisons were slow to take effect, she went on to examine the lethal qualities of various venomous creatures which were made to attack one another in front of her. She carried on these experiments almost every day, and after trying almost every possibility, she discovered that it was the bite of the asp alone which brought on a kind of drowsy lethargy and numbness. The venom caused neither groans nor convulsions, but only a light perspiration on the face, while the senses were gradually dulled and deprived of their power, and the sufferers resisted any attempt to awake or revive them, as people do when they are in a deep natural sleep.

72. At the same time the pair also sent a delegation to Octavius Caesar in Asia. Cleopatra asked that her children should inherit the

* Caesarion was to be educated as a Greek – hence his enrolment among the *ephebes* – Antyllus as a Roman. A Roman boy assumed the *toga virilis* at about fourteen, which signified that he had attained full legal capacity; up to that date he wore the *toga praetexta*, which had a broad purple border. Both these boys were put to death by Octavius.

throne of Egypt, and Antony that he should be allowed to retire into private life in Athens, if he were forbidden to stay in Egypt. But since they had been deserted by many of their friends and scarcely knew any longer whom they could trust, they sent Euphronius, who was their children's tutor. This was because of the action of Alexas of Laodicea. Timagenes had originally introduced this man to Antony in Rome, and he had come to enjoy more influence with him than any other Greek. He had also worked most effectively upon Antony on Cleopatra's behalf, and had persuaded him to reject all the considerations which might have reunited him to Octavia. Antony had sent him to Herod of Judaea in the hope of preventing the king from changing sides. But then, after Alexas had stayed with Herod for some time, and had betrayed his master, he had the impudence to appear before Octavius Caesar, relying on Herod's influence to protect him. However, Herod could do nothing to help. Alexas was arrested and brought in chains to his own country, where he was executed on Octavius's orders. This was the penalty which Alexas paid for his treachery while Antony was still alive.

73. Octavius Caesar rejected Antony's petition, but he sent back word to Cleopatra that she would be granted any request within reason, on condition that she would put Antony to death or expel him from Egypt. At the same time Octavius also sent to Cleopatra one of his freedmen named Thyrsus.* He was an intelligent man, and Octavius calculated that he might use his powers of persuasion effectively in delivering a message from a young general to a woman who was conscious and intensely proud of her personal beauty. When the delegation returned to Cleopatra, this man was granted a longer audience than the others and was so conspicuously honoured that Antony at once became suspicious. He had the man seized and flogged and sent him back to Octavius with a letter explaining that Thyrsus's insolent and arrogant airs had enraged him at a moment when his misfortunes made him all the more easy to provoke. 'If you are displeased at what I have done,' he went on, 'you have my

* Antony and Cleopatra had sent several emissaries to Octavius without success, including Antony's son Antyllus with a large sum of money. Octavius kept the money but dismissed Antyllus. It seems likely that Thyrsus was sent to keep the prospect of negotiations sufficiently alive to prevent the royal treasure of the Ptolemies from being destroyed. This was of immense value and Octavius was badly in need of money.

freedman Hipparchus as a hostage. You can string him up and whip him and we shall be quits.' After this Cleopatra tried to redeem her fault and calm Antony's suspicions by showing him the greatest tenderness and affection. She passed her own birthday in a way which was appropriate to their fallen fortunes, but she celebrated his with such a dazzling display of luxury and extravagance that many of the guests came to the banquet as paupers and went away rich men. Meanwhile, Octavius Caesar was recalled to Italy by Agrippa who kept writing from Rome to remind him that his presence there was urgently needed.

74. For the moment, then, the war remained at a standstill, but when the winter was over, Octavius marched against Antony from Syria, while his other generals advanced from Libya. When Pelusium was captured, it was rumoured that Seleucus had surrendered the city with Cleopatra's consent, but at the same time she allowed Antony to put to death Seleucus's wife and children. Not long before, Cleopatra had built for herself a number of high monuments and tombs of great beauty near the temple of Isis, and she now collected here all the most precious items of the royal treasures, gold, silver, emeralds, pearls, ebony, ivory, and cinnamon, and also a great quantity of firewood and tow. Octavius Caesar became alarmed at these preparations, and as he drew nearer to the city with his army he continued to send her messages and hints of generous treatment, for he was afraid that Cleopatra might set fire to all this wealth in a fit of despair. However, after he had encamped near the Hippodrome of Alexandria, Antony made a sortie and delivered a brilliant attack in which he routed Octavius's cavalry and pursued them as far as their camp. Elated by his victory, he marched back in triumph to the city, entered the palace, embraced Cleopatra just as he was, in full armour, and presented to her one of his soldiers who had fought most gallantly. Cleopatra gave the man a golden breastplate and helmet as a reward for his valour. He accepted them and the very same night deserted to Octavius Caesar.

75. Antony now sent Octavius another challenge to meet him in single combat, but all he received was the retort that Antony might find many other ways to end his life. This answer brought it home to Antony that to die in battle was the most honourable end left to

him, and he determined to attack by land and sea at once. It is said that at dinner he told his slaves to fill his cup and serve him more generously than usual, for no man could say whether on the next day they would be waiting on him or serving other masters, while he himself would be lying dead, a mummy and a nothing. But when he saw that his friends were weeping at these words, he told them that he would not lead them into action, since he did not expect that he would come out of the battle victorious or safe, but rather looked to it to assure him of an honourable death. That evening, so the story goes, about the hour of midnight, when all was hushed and a mood of dejection and fear of its impending fate brooded over the whole city, suddenly a marvellous sound of music was heard, which seemed to come from a consort of instruments of every kind, and voices chanting in harmony, and at the same time the shouting of a crowd in which the cry of Bacchanals and the ecstatic leaping of satyrs were mingled, as if a troop of revellers were leaving the city, shouting and singing as they went. The procession seemed to follow a course through the middle of the city towards the outer gate, which led to the enemy's camp, and at this point the sounds reached their climax and then died away. Those who tried to discover a meaning for this prodigy concluded that the god Dionysus, with whom Antony claimed kinship and whom he had sought above all to imitate, was now abandoning him.*

76. As soon as it was light, Antony posted his infantry on the hills in front of the city and watched his ships as they put out and advanced against the enemy. Then, as he still believed that his fleet might carry the day, he stood and waited for the issue of the battle at sea. But his crews, as soon as they drew near the enemy, raised their oars in salute, and, when their greeting was returned, they went over to Octavius as one man, and so the two fleets, now combined into one, changed their course and headed straight for the city. No sooner had Antony witnessed this than he found himself abandoned by the cavalry, which likewise deserted to the enemy, and finally when his infantry was routed he retreated into the city, crying out in his rage that Cleopatra had betrayed him to the very men he was fighting for her sake. Then the queen, in terror at his fury and despair, fled to her monument, let down the hanging doors which were strengthened with bars and

* There was a familiar legend that the gods abandoned a doomed city before its fall.

bolts, and sent messengers to tell Antony that she was dead. Never doubting the message, he said to himself, 'Why delay any longer, Antony? Fate has taken away the one excuse which could still make you desire to live,' and went into his room. There, as he unbuckled his armour and laid the pieces aside, he exclaimed, 'O, Cleopatra, it does not hurt me to lose you, for I shall soon be with you, but I am ashamed that an Emperor such as I have been should prove in the end to have less courage than a woman.'

Now Antony had a faithful servant, whose name was Eros. He had long ago made this man swear to kill him if the need arose, and he now ordered him to carry out his promise. Eros drew his sword and raised it as if he were about to strike his master, but suddenly turned away and killed himself. As he fell at his master's feet, Antony cried out, 'That was well done, Eros. You have shown me what I must do, even if you had not the heart to strike the blow yourself.' Then he stabbed himself with his own sword through the belly and fell upon the bed. But the wound did not kill him quickly. Presently, as he lay prostrate, the bleeding stopped and he came to himself and implored the bystanders to put him out of his pain. But they ran out of the room and left him writhing in agony and crying for help, until Cleopatra's secretary, Diomedes, arrived with orders from the queen to bring him to the monument.

77. When he understood that Cleopatra was still alive, Antony eagerly ordered his slaves to lift him up, and they carried him in their arms to the doors of the tomb. Even then Cleopatra would not allow the doors to be opened, but she showed herself at a window and let down cords and ropes to the ground. The slaves fastened Antony to these and the queen pulled him up with the help of her two waiting women, who were the only companions she had allowed to enter the monument with her. Those who were present say that there was never a more pitiable sight than the spectacle of Antony, covered with blood, struggling in his death agonies and stretching out his hands towards Cleopatra as he swung helplessly in the air. The task was almost beyond a woman's strength, and it was only with great difficulty that Cleopatra, clinging with both hands to the rope and with the muscles of her face distorted by the strain, was able to haul him up, while those on the ground encouraged her with their cries and shared her agony. When she had got him up and laid him upon a

bed, she tore her dress and spread it over him, beat and lacerated her breasts, and smeared her face with the blood from his wounds. She called him her lord and husband and emperor, and almost forgot her own misfortunes in her pity for his. Antony calmed her lamentations and called for a cup of wine, either because he was thirsty or because he hoped it might hasten his death. When he had drunk it, he urged her to think of her own safety, if she could do this without dishonour, and told her that of all Caesar's associates she would do best to put her trust in Proculeius. Last of all, he begged her not to grieve over this wretched change in his fortunes, but to count him happy for the glories he had won and to remember that he had attained the greatest fame and power of any man in the world, so that now it was no dishonour to die a Roman, conquered only by a Roman.

78. The breath was scarcely out of his body when Proculeius arrived from Octavius Caesar. After Antony had stabbed himself and while he was being carried to Cleopatra, one of his bodyguard named Dercetaeus snatched up Antony's sword, hid it, and slipped out of the palace. Then he ran to Octavius and was the first to bring him the news of Antony's death, while at the same time he showed him the sword covered with blood. When Octavius heard what had happened, he retired into his tent and wept, for Antony was not only related to him by marriage, but had been his colleague in office and his partner in many great enterprises and battles. Then he brought out the letters they had exchanged, and calling in his friends, he read them aloud to let them hear in what moderate and conciliatory terms he had written, and how contemptuously Antony had always replied. After this he dispatched Proculeius with orders to make every possible effort to capture Cleopatra alive, for he was afraid, as I have already mentioned, that the queen would set fire to her treasure, and he also felt that her presence would greatly enhance the splendour of his triumphal procession in Rome. Cleopatra refused to surrender herself into Proculeius's hands, but she consented to talk to him when he came to the monument and stood outside one of the doors at the ground level. This door was strongly secured with bolts and bars, but it was possible to speak through it. There they held a parley in which Cleopatra asked that her children should be allowed to succeed to her kingdom, while Proculeius urged her to take courage and trust Octavius Caesar in everything.

79. Meanwhile, Proculeius took careful note of the monument, and, when he had made his report to Octavius Caesar, Gallus* was sent to hold a further interview with the queen. Gallus walked up to the door and engaged Cleopatra in conversation, while Proculeius fixed a scaling ladder against the monument and entered by the window through which the women had lifted Antony. Then he ran down with two servants to the door where Cleopatra was standing with her attention fixed on Gallus. One of the waiting women caught sight of him and screamed aloud, 'Unhappy Cleopatra, you are caught!' In the same instant the queen turned, saw Proculeius, and tried to stab herself, for she carried in her girdle a dagger of the kind which robbers wear. But Proculeius rushed up, flung both his arms around her, and said, 'Cleopatra, you do yourself and Caesar a great injustice. Do not refuse him this opportunity to show his generosity towards you. He is the gentlest of commanders, but you are acting as if he were a treacherous and implacable enemy.' At the same time he snatched away the weapon and shook out her dress to see whether she had hidden any poison. Octavius Caesar also sent one of his freedmen named Epaphroditus, whose orders were to allow her every concession which might comfort or give her pleasure, but to take the strictest precautions to keep her alive.

80. Meanwhile, Octavius Caesar made his entry into Alexandria with Arcius the philosopher at his side. He gave him his right hand and kept up a conversation with him, so as to increase Arcius's importance in the eyes of the Alexandrians and make him respected on account of this signal honour which he was being shown by Caesar. When he entered the public gymnasium and mounted a tribunal which had been erected there, the people were beside themselves with fear and fell on their faces before him. But Octavius told them to rise and assured them that he had no intention of holding their city to blame, first because it had been founded by Alexander, secondly because he himself admired its beauty and spaciousness, and lastly because of his regard for Arcius. This was a special mark of honour which he conferred upon Arcius, and at his request Octavius also granted a number of individual pardons. Among these was Philo-

* A Roman knight in command of the forces which had been advancing on Egypt from Libya. He later became governor of Egypt and was a friend of Virgil, who dedicated the tenth Eclogue to him.

stratus, a man who as an extempore speaker was the superior of the sophists of any age. Unfortunately he had made a completely unfounded claim to be a philosopher of the Academy, and for this reason Octavius, who detested the man's whole manner of life, refused to pardon him. So Philostratus allowed his white beard to grow, and then, dressing himself in black, he made a point of following close behind Arcius and constantly repeating this verse,

The wise, if they are wise, will save the wise.

When Octavius heard of this, he granted the man a pardon, though he was more concerned to spare Arcius embarrassment than to relieve the fears of Philostratus.

81. As for Antony's children, Antyllus, his son by Fulvia, was betrayed by his tutor Theodorus and executed. When the soldiers beheaded him, the tutor contrived to steal a precious stone which the boy wore around his neck, and sewed it into his belt, but although he denied the theft, he was found guilty and crucified. Cleopatra's children and their servants were kept under guard, but otherwise they were generously treated. However, Caesarion, who was supposed to be Cleopatra's son by Julius Caesar, was sent away by his mother with a large sum of money to travel to India by way of Ethiopia. Before long his tutor Rhodon, a man of the same type as Theodorus, talked him into believing that Octavius would make him king of Egypt and persuaded him to return. It is said that while Octavius was making up his mind how to treat him, Arcius, parodying Odysseus's famous verse in the *Iliad*,* remarked to him,

It is bad to have too many Caesars . . .

82. After Cleopatra's death Octavius acted on his advice and had Caesarion executed. But as for Antony, although a number of kings and generals petitioned Octavius to allow them to perform the last rites for him, he would not take the body away from Cleopatra, and she buried it with her own hands and gave it a funeral of royal

* *Iliad* 11, 204. Odysseus, striving to restore discipline in the Greek army, remarked

It is bad to have too many rulers . . .

splendour and magnificence, for which she was granted all the resources she needed. Because of the grief and pain she had suffered – for her breasts were inflamed and lacerated from the blows she had given them – she gladly seized upon her illness as a pretext to refuse food and so release herself without further interference from the burden of living. One of her trusted attendants was a physician named Olympus to whom she confided her true intentions: it was on his advice and help that she relied to bring about her death, and he confirms the fact in a history of these events which he has published. Meanwhile, Octavius Caesar had become suspicious and began to frighten her by uttering threats about the fate of her children. By applying these pressures in much the same way as a general uses siege-engines, he quickly undermined her resistance, so that she gave up her body to be treated and nourished as he desired.

83. A few days later Octavius paid a visit to talk to Cleopatra and try to reassure her. She had abandoned her luxurious style of living, and was lying on a pallet bed dressed only in a tunic, but, as he entered, she sprang up and threw herself at his feet. Her hair was unkempt and her expression wild, while her eyes were sunken and her voice trembled uncontrollably: her breasts bore the marks of the cruel blows she had inflicted on herself, and in a word her body seemed to have suffered no less anguish than her spirit. And yet her charm and a certain reckless confidence in her beauty were still by no means extinguished, and despite her sorry appearance they shone forth from within and revealed themselves in the play of her features. At any rate after Octavius had urged her to lie down and seated himself close to her, she tried at first to justify her part in the war, making out that her actions had been forced upon her by necessity and through her fear of Antony. But as Octavius contradicted her on every point and demolished her excuses, she quickly changed her manner and began to appeal to his pity with prayers and entreaties, as if she still clung above all else to the hope of saving her life. Finally, she handed to him a paper, which was supposed to be a complete inventory of her treasures, but when Seleucus, one of her stewards, made it clear that she was concealing and making away with a number of her possessions, she leaped to her feet, seized him by the hair, and pummelled his face. Octavius smiled at this episode and at last restrained her, whereupon she said, 'But is it not outrageous,

Caesar, when you do me the honour to come and speak to me in my wretched condition, that I should be accused by my own servants of putting aside a few women's trinkets like these? They were not meant for my poor self, you may be sure, but simply to have some little present by me for Octavia and your wife, Livia, so that I could appeal to them to make you kinder and more merciful.' Octavius was pleased at this speech, because it convinced him that Cleopatra still wished to live. He told her that she could settle any details of this kind as she pleased, but that in most important matters he would treat her more generously than she could possibly expect. Then he took his leave, feeling confident that he had deceived the queen, but the truth was that she had deceived him.

84. One of the members of Octavius's staff was a young aristocrat named Cornelius Dolabella.* He was by no means insensible to Cleopatra's charms, and now when she pressed him, he contrived to warn her secretly that Octavius was planning to march through Syria with his army, and had decided that she and her children were to be sent away within three days. When the queen heard this, her first action was to beg Octavius to allow her to pour her last libations for Antony, and when this request was granted, she had herself carried to the tomb. She was accompanied by the women who usually attended her, and there at the tomb she clasped the urn which contained his ashes and said, 'My beloved Antony, it is only a little while ago that I buried you with these hands. Then they were free, but now, when I come to pour libations for you, I am a prisoner, guarded so that I shall not disfigure this body of mine by beating it or even by weeping. It has become a slave's body, and they watch over it only to make me adorn their triumph over you. But after this you must expect no more honours or libations; these are the last that Cleopatra the captive can bring you. For, although in our lives nothing could part us, it seems that death will force us to change places. You, the Roman, have found a grave in Egypt, and I, unhappy woman, will receive just enough of your country to give me room to lie in Italy. But if there is any help or power in the gods of Rome, for mine have betrayed us, do not abandon your wife while she lives, and do not let me be led in triumph to your shame. Hide me and let me be buried here with you, for I know now that the thousand griefs

* The son of the politician mentioned in ch. 9.

I have suffered are as nothing beside the few days that I have lived without you.'

85. So Cleopatra mourned Antony, and she crowned his urn with a garland and kissed it. Then she ordered a bath to be made ready, and, when she had come from the bath, she lay down and was served with an exquisite meal. Presently, there arrived an Egyptian peasant carrying a basket, and when the guards asked him what was in it, he stripped away the leaves at the top and showed them that it was full of figs. The guards were astonished at the size and beauty of the figs, whereupon the man smiled and invited them to take some, and in this way their suspicions were lulled and they allowed him to bring in his fruit to the queen. When Cleopatra had dined, she took a tablet on which she had already written and put her seal, and sent this to Octavius Caesar. Soon afterwards she dismissed all her attendants except for two faithful waiting women, and closed the doors of the monument.

Octavius Caesar opened the tablet, and as soon as he read Cleopatra's prayers and entreaties that she should be buried with Antony, he immediately guessed her intention. His first thought was to go himself to save her life, but he restrained this impulse and sent messengers to hurry to the queen and discover what had happened. But the tragedy had moved too swiftly for them. The messengers rushed to the monument and found the guards still unaware that anything was amiss, but when they opened the doors, they found Cleopatra lying dead upon a golden couch dressed in her royal robes. Of her two women, Iras lay dying at her feet, while Charmian, already tottering and scarcely able to hold up her head, was arranging the crown which encircled her mistress's brow. Then one of the guards cried out angrily, 'Charmian, is this well done?' and she answered, 'It is well done, and fitting for a princess descended of so many royal kings,' and, as she uttered the words, she fell dead by the side of the couch.

86. According to one account, the asp was carried in to her with the figs and lay hidden under the leaves in the basket, for Cleopatra had given orders that the snake should settle on her without her being aware of it. But when she picked up some of the figs, she caught sight of it, so the story goes, and said, 'So here it is', and, baring her arm,

she held it out to be bitten. Others say that it was carefully shut up in a pitcher and that Cleopatra provoked it by pricking it with a golden spindle, until it sprang out and fastened itself upon her arm. But the real truth nobody knows, for there is another story that she carried poison about with her in a hollow comb, which she kept hidden in her hair, and yet no inflammation nor any other symptom of poison broke out upon her body. And indeed the asp was never discovered inside the monument, although some marks which might have been its trail are said to have been noticed on the beach on that side where the windows of the chamber looked out towards the sea. Some people also say that two faint, barely visible punctures were found on Cleopatra's arm, and Octavius Caesar himself seems to have believed this, for when he celebrated his triumph he had a figure of Cleopatra with the asp clinging to her carried in the procession. These are the various accounts of what took place.

Octavius Caesar was vexed at Cleopatra's death, and yet he could not but admire the nobility of her spirit, and he gave orders that she should be buried with royal splendour and magnificence, and her body laid beside Antony's, while her waiting women also received an honourable funeral. When Cleopatra died she was thirty-nine years of age, she had reigned as queen for twenty-two of these, and been Antony's partner in his empire for more than fourteen.* Antony was fifty-six according to some accounts, fifty-three according to others.† All his statues were torn down, but those of Cleopatra were allowed to stand, because Archibius, one of her friends, gave Octavius Caesar two thousand talents to save them from the fate of Antony's.

87. Antony left seven children by his three wives, and of these the eldest son, Antyllus, was the only one to be put to death by Octavius. Octavia took all the rest into her household and brought them up with her own family. For Cleopatra's daughter who bore the same name she arranged a marriage with Juba, the king of Numidia, one of the most gifted rulers of his time, and she brought Antony, another of Fulvia's children, into such high favour with Octavius that, while Agrippa held the first place of honour in his estimation, and the sons

* This figure is difficult to understand. The famous meeting at Cydnus did not take place until 41 B.C., a bare ten years before Actium.

† Antony was born on 14 January 82 or 81 B.C.: he thus died in his fifty-second or fifty-third year.

of Livia the second, Antony was generally regarded as holding the third, and this was no more than the truth. By her first husband, Marcellus, Octavia had two daughters and a son, also named Marcellus. Octavius married his daughter Julia to this boy and adopted him as his son, and he gave one of Octavia's daughters in marriage to Agrippa. But, as the young Marcellus died soon after his marriage, and as Octavius Caesar found it difficult to choose from among his friends a son-in-law in whom he could have full confidence, Octavia proposed that Agrippa should divorce her own daughter and marry Julia himself. First of all she persuaded Octavius Caesar, and then finally Agrippa gave way, whereupon she took her daughter back into her house and married her to her half-brother, the young Antony, while Agrippa married Julia. Antony left two daughters by Octavia, one of whom became the wife of Domitius Ahenobarbus,* while the other, Antonia, who was celebrated for her beauty and her virtue, married Drusus, who was the son of Livia and stepson to Octavius Caesar. Among the children of this marriage the most famous were Germanicus and Claudius. Claudius later became emperor, while of Germanicus's children, Gaius, also known as Caligula, ruled with distinction for a short time before being assassinated with his wife and child, and Agrippina, who had a son by Ahenobarbus named Lucius Domitius, later became the consort of the emperor Claudius. This Lucius Domitius was adopted by Claudius, who gave him the name of Nero Germanicus. He was the Nero who became emperor in my lifetime, murdered his mother, and through his folly and madness brought the Roman empire to the verge of destruction. He was the fifth in descent from Antony.†

* The son of Antony's friend who deserted before Actium.

† Thus the struggle between Octavius and Antony continued, in a sense, to the end of Nero's reign (68 A.D.) when, in the year of the four emperors, the ruling house of the Julian, Claudian, and Antonian families was wiped out.

MAKERS OF ROME

NINE LIVES BY PLUTARCH

CORIOLANUS

FABIUS MAXIMUS

MARCELLUS

CATO THE ELDER

TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

GAIUS GRACCHUS

SERTORIUS

BRUTUS

MARK ANTONY

*Translated with an Introduction by
Ian Scott-Kilvert*

PENGUIN BOOKS