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PLUTARCH

Roman Lives

A selection of eight Roman Lives

Translated by
ROBIN WATERFIELD

With Introductions and Notes by
PHILIP A. STADTER

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ANTONY

INTRODUCTION

The Lives of Pompey and Caesar delineate the rival ambitions of those extraordinary generals, until Julius Caesar was able to defeat Pompey at Pharsalus. Within four years, however, Caesar's assassination on the Ides of March, 44 BC, opened the way to the ambitions of those who had previously been overshadowed. After the defeat of the 'Liberators' Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42, the victors were left to divide the Roman world among themselves. Instead, for the next ten years Antony, one of Caesar's closest associates, and Caesar Octavianus, his great nephew and adopted son, vied for power. Antony controlled the eastern part of the empire, Caesar (as Plutarch calls him) the western. Finally, in 31, they clashed in a naval battle at Actium on the coast of the Adriatic. Antony was defeated and fled to Alexandria; Caesar pursued him to Egypt, where Antony committed suicide rather than surrender. With his death, the civil wars which had tormented Rome since 49 came to an end. Caesar established his autocracy under the cover of a pretended restoration of the republic, and in 28 assumed the title of Augustus. The long years of his rule—he did not die until AD 14—established the monarchy under which Plutarch lived, and which would continue with modifications for centuries.

Plutarch had already written a biography of Augustus in his series of Lives of the Emperors (cf. p. xi in the General Introduction). In *Antony* he focuses rather on how a great leader could lose an empire: what features of his circumstances and his own character could lead Antony to be worsted by a man twenty years his junior? The most obvious cause was his infatuation, growing to an obsession, with Cleopatra: a story which might easily become a standard tale of a man ruined by a bad woman. But Plutarch does not see it so simply. Looking below the surface, he uncovers earlier indications of features of Antony's character which at first appear as virtues, and bring him his success with the troops and his Roman peers, yet gradually reveal themselves as serious flaws, which make him susceptible to flattery, misjudgement, and fatal self-indulgence. Moreover, the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra reveals unexpected depths, and what begins as a dalliance, and the effort of a queen to win privileges for herself and her kingdom, becomes an intimate bonding of souls.

This unusually long life follows a basically chronological format:

- 1-2 Family and youth
- 3-13 Antony's early career, to the death of Caesar
- 14-22 From the Ides of March to Philippi (44-42 BC): the war against the tyrannicides
- 23-36 From 41 to 37: Antony, Cleopatra, and Octavia
- 37-52 The Parthian War (36)
- 53-5 Growing tensions between Antony and Octavian (35-33)
- 56-69 The Actium campaign
- 70-87 Alexandria: the deaths first of Antony, then of Cleopatra

In the early chapters Plutarch gives indications of Antony's character: a good soldier, who gets along well with the troops, but is recklessly extravagant. Particularly revealing is the anecdote of his father, who gave away a silver bowl to a friend (because he had spent all his money) but then had to ask pardon from his wife (1). The traits of generosity, desire to please, extravagance, and submission to a woman revealed in the father will reappear in the son. In particular, Fulvia, Antony's wife, trains him to be docile, preparing him for Cleopatra (10). For Antony, despite all his energy, is surprisingly passive in Plutarch's view, easily led by those who know how to flatter him or respond to his needs. With the death of Julius Caesar, the young Octavian steps on to the stage, and with his coldly rational conduct serves as a foil to Antony's variable moods. Conflicts arise which prepare the reader for the great rift later. After the tyrannicides are defeated, Antony is seen triumphantly proceeding through Asia Minor, like a new Dionysus or Heracles (24). The cost to the provincials, however, is terrible, and Plutarch stops to note that Antony seems unaware and too good-natured to see how his henchmen are robbing all they can get.

At this point, Antony, lord of the eastern empire, summoned Cleopatra from Egypt to his court. Cleopatra's arrival—'the barge she sat in, like a burnished throne, burn'd on the water; the poop was beaten gold, purple the sails'¹—captures Antony, and a new phase of his life begins. From this point he swings back and forth between his obsession with her and with the life of pleasure and self-indulgence which she represents, and the duties of a Roman leader. In lesser hands, this could be a banal story of an unhappy love affair, but Plutarch's narrative searches out in Antony's struggle the complex interplay of weakness and strength, assertion and surrender which reveals his tragic humanity. The qualities which have made him great destroy him, yet the greatness remains.

Shakespeare recognized the drama in this Life, and drew upon Plutarch not only for the plot of *Antony and Cleopatra*, but for some of its best

¹ Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, II. ii. 198-201, cf. Plutarch's c. 26.

scenes and dialogue. The description of Cleopatra's barge, the scene with Sextus Pompey at Misenum, Antony sitting with head in hands after Actium, and a number of other impressive moments closely follow Plutarch's visualization, though not his words. Shakespeare recognized the polar worlds of Rome and Alexandria, one serious, the other playful and luxurious, which are already present in Plutarch. Shakespeare, like Plutarch, allows the comments of other participants and bystanders to reveal the implications of the protagonists' actions. Significantly, Plutarch's Cleopatra, changing from temptress to queen and lover, is the model for Shakespeare's Cleopatra, and Plutarch's final tableau where Octavian's guards burst in upon the dying queen and her ladies-in-waiting, becomes, with the slightest of alterations, that fine moment (v. ii.) when Charmian answers to the question, 'Charmian, is this well done?', 'It is well done, and fitting for a princess.'

Plutarch paired Antony with Demetrius Poliorcetes (336–283). Demetrius, an affable, brilliant young commander, had fought alongside his father Antigonus, one of the Successors of Alexander the Great, to win the empire of Alexander, but they were defeated and Antigonus was killed in the battle of Ipsus in 301. Demetrius showed enormous resilience in re-establishing an empire in Greece and Macedonia, but after many vicissitudes surrendered to Seleucus in 285. Despondent, he drank himself to death two years later.

Plutarch explains their similarities in the introduction to *Demetrius* (c. 1):

They both were lovers, drinkers, soldiers, givers, spenders, outrageous. Their fortunes were similar, since through their lives both experienced great successes and great failures, conquered and lost large territories, unexpectedly lost and unexpectedly recovered. One died as the captive of his enemy, the other almost did.

These parallels do not indicate the richness and subtlety of the portraits, especially in *Antony*, but point the reader where to look: to a kind of energy and excess in all that they do, which leads to both enormous successes and enormous failures. New beginnings seem always possible, and new disasters. Absent, of course, is that sense of moderation, the product of a Hellenic education and the study of philosophy, which Plutarch sees as the ideal. In the same opening chapter of *Demetrius*, Plutarch refers to Plato's dictum (*Republic* 491e), 'If the most gifted minds are subjected to a bad education, they become exceptionally bad.' The context in the *Republic* is the proper education of the guardians: even those fine, carefully selected souls will go sour without the right training.

In the comparatively simple account of *Demetrius*, and the much more subtle narrative of *Antony*, Plutarch examines how these great untrained—or rather, badly trained—natures work out their fortunes. A theme of both Lives is the mutability of fortune: but that mutability is tied directly to the protagonists' own behaviour, and reflects their instability. As Plutarch notes (*Demetr.* 1), even the lives of those who have acted without thinking can be useful to the reader.

As has been seen, Plutarch did his basic source work for *Antony* at the same time as for *Pompey*, *Caesar*, and several other late republican Lives (above, p. xxiv in the General Introduction, and p. 220). For all of these, a major source (probably used directly, though perhaps through an intermediary) seems to have been Asinius Pollio's history of the Civil Wars, which ran from 60 BC down at least to Philippi, and perhaps to Actium. Pollio had been a partisan of Julius Caesar, then of Antony, down to about 40. He probably supplied much of the political detail for this Life. Three other works were especially useful for this Life. Augustus' *Autobiography* narrated in thirteen books his life down to 23 BC, giving the emperor's version of events, some of which could reflect very badly on Antony. Plutarch quotes it (cc. 22 and 68), but it is hard to trace the impact on the Life. Cicero, attacking Antony in his *Second Philippic* (44 BC), refers frequently to events in Antony's early career. Plutarch cites this in his chapter 6 and uses it often for other incidents in chapters 2, 9–14, and 21. He must have known the speech at first hand. Quintus Dellius was another contemporary closely associated with Antony; Plutarch cites his history (c. 59) and seems to use it frequently. It certainly covered the Parthian War, and probably much else, including the description of Cleopatra's visit to Antony (25–7) and his own defection to Caesar (59). Another eyewitness, Olympus, Cleopatra's doctor, whose account Plutarch cites (82), may have provided the details of Antony and Cleopatra's last days in Alexandria.

Plutarch's own family traditions preserved two significant anecdotes: the doctor Philotas' tale to Plutarch's grandfather, Lamprias, of the sumptuous banquets and extravagance in Alexandria (28), and his great-grandfather's story of the hardships involved in supplying Antony's fleet at Actium (68). Antony might have been a favourite of the Greeks, but first his extravagance, then the Civil War, made him a grievous burden. Antony's philhellenism, like so many of his other virtues, was overwhelmed by the dissoluteness of his life.²

² Antony's surprise at the rapacious exactions of his staff in Asia Minor (24) may be taken as an indication of the imbalance between goodwill and action in dealing with the Greeks which would have afflicted the much poorer mainland Greece as well.

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[1] Antony's grandfather was the orator Antonius, who, as a member of Sulla's faction, was killed by Marius, and his father was Antonius surnamed Creticus, who was not particularly well known or distinguished in the public domain,* but was a fair and honourable man, and above all a generous one, as a single example of his behaviour should demonstrate. He was not well off, and so his wife tended to stop him displaying his kindness, but once, when one of his close friends came and asked him for money, although he did not have any actual money on him, he ordered a young slave to pour some water into a silver bowl and bring it to him. When the slave had done so, Antonius splashed water on to his cheeks, as if he were about to shave, but then, once the boy was out of the way on some other errand, he gave the bowl to his friend and told him it was his to dispose of. Later, when the house-slaves were being subjected to a thorough search, Antonius could see that his wife was angry and was prepared to examine each and every one of them under torture, so he confessed and asked her to forgive him.

[2] Antonius' wife was Julia, from the house of the Caesars, as virtuous and modest a woman as any of her day. Their son, Antony, was brought up by her, and after Antonius' death she was married to Cornelius Lentulus, who was put to death by Cicero as one of Catiline's co-conspirators. She is generally thought to have been the prime mover of the extreme hostility Antony felt for Cicero. At any rate, Antony claims that Cicero refused even to hand Lentulus' corpse over to them until his mother had begged Cicero's wife to intercede for them. But this is generally taken to be false, because none of the men who were put to death by Cicero at the time in question were denied burial.*

Antony had developed into a remarkable young man, they say, when he was smitten, as if by a pestilential disease, by his friendship and intimacy with Curio, an uncultured hedonist who, in order to increase his hold over Antony, introduced him to drinking-sessions, women, and all kinds of extravagant and immoderate expenses, as a result of which Antony got heavily into debt—too heavily for his age—until he owed 250 talents. Curio guaranteed the whole sum, but

when Antony's father realized what was going on, he threw Antony out of the house. Next Antony briefly associated himself with the career of Clodius, the most defiant and vile of the popular leaders of the time, who was then throwing the whole constitution into disarray. Before long, however, he had had his fill of Clodius' insane ways and also became afraid of the party that was forming in opposition to Clodius, so he left Italy for Greece, where he spent his time training his body for military contests and learning the art of public speaking. He adopted the so-called Asiatic style of speaking, which was flourishing with particular vigour just then and which bore a considerable resemblance to his life, in that it was a kind of showy whinnying,[†] filled with vain prancing and capricious ambition.*

[3] When Gabinius, an ex-consul, set sail for Syria and tried to persuade Antony to get involved in the expedition, Antony refused to do so without a commission, but joined his campaign once he had been given command of the cavalry. His first mission was against Aristobulus, the leader of a Jewish revolt. Antony drove Aristobulus out of all his strongholds, the largest of which he was the first to scale. Then he engaged the enemy in battle, put them to flight, even though his small force was vastly outnumbered, and killed all but a few of them. Aristobulus and his son were among the captives.

Next there was an attempt by Ptolemy to persuade Gabinius, with a promise of ten thousand talents, to join him in invading Egypt and restoring him to the throne. Most of his officers were opposed to the plan and, despite being completely captivated by the ten thousand talents, Gabinius was hesitant about the war. Antony, however, had his sights set on great exploits. He also wanted to do Ptolemy a favour and see him get his way, so he helped him win Gabinius over and arouse his enthusiasm about the expedition.* The Romans were more afraid of the journey to Pelusium than they were of the war, since their way lay through deep sand and waterless desert, past the Ecregma and the Serbonian marshes. The Egyptians call these marshes the Outbreaths of Typhon, but they are apparently a remnant of the Red Sea, left behind when it receded, and fed by water percolating through to them at the point where a very narrow isthmus separates the marshes and the inner sea.* However, when Antony was dispatched with his cavalry he not only occupied the narrow pass, but also captured Pelusium, which was a large city, and overcame the garrison there. In this way he simultaneously secured the

route for the army and made its commander certain and confident of victory. The enemy too profited from his desire for recognition, in the sense that when Ptolemy reached Pelusium, he was so filled with rage and hatred that he intended to massacre the Egyptians, but Antony intervened and stopped him. And throughout the numerous major battles and fights that followed, Antony frequently displayed great daring and the kind of foresight that marks a leader, most conspicuously on the occasion when he gave victory to the front ranks by encircling the enemy and coming round to take them in the rear. All this gained him battle honours and prizes for valour, but his posthumous kindness to Archelaus was also widely appreciated. Although Archelaus was close to him, and they were guest-friends, he had no choice but to make war on him while he was alive, and then after Archelaus had fallen in battle Antony sought out his body, dressed it up, and gave it a royal burial. As a result he left the people of Alexandria with a very favourable impression, and the Romans involved in the expedition came to regard him as an outstanding soldier.*

[4] On top of these qualities, his appearance was gentlemanly and dignified. His noble beard, broad forehead, and aquiline nose were reminiscent of the virility displayed by Heracles' features in portraits and on statues. There was also an ancient story that the Antonii were descendants of Heracles, originating from Heracles' son Anton, and Antony thought his physical appearance, which I have already mentioned, confirmed the tradition. He also dressed to support the tradition. When he was going to be seen by more than just a few people, he always girded his toga up to his thigh, wore a great sword hanging at his side, and wrapped himself in a rough cloak. Nevertheless, even those aspects of his behaviour which struck other people as vulgar—his boasting and teasing, the habit he had of carousing in full view of everyone, and the way he sat next to someone who was eating and ate standing at the table while out on campaign—aroused an incredible amount of loyalty and longing in his soldiers. He was even somehow charming[†] where love was concerned, and used it as one of his means for gaining popularity, since he helped people in their love-affairs and did not mind being teased about his own affairs. Then his generosity, and the way he did both his friends and the men under his command favours with no mean or niggardly hand, were not only the cause of the outstanding beginning he made

on the road to power, but also raised his power to even greater heights after he had acquired prominence, despite the countless flaws which held him back. I will give one example of his liberality. He gave orders for one of his friends to be given 250,000 drachmas (or a 'decies', as the Romans call it). His steward was astonished and wanted to show Antony how large a sum it was, so he put all the money out on display. When Antony passed by he said, 'What's this?', and the steward explained that it was the money he had ordered to be given away. Antony was not deceived. He understood the malice of the man's intentions and said, 'I thought a decies was more. This is a paltry sum. Double it.'

[5] But this happened at a later time. When Roman political life was divided into two factions, with the aristocrats attaching themselves to Pompey, who was in Rome, and the popularists summoning Caesar from Gaul where he was on active service, Antony's friend Curio, who had changed sides and was supporting Caesar, brought Antony over to Caesar's cause. Curio, who had a great deal of influence with the common people as a result of his abilities as a public speaker, and also made unstinting use of money supplied by Caesar, got Antony elected tribune and then subsequently one of the priests responsible for divining the flights of birds, whom they call 'augurs'.* No sooner had Antony taken up office than he was of considerable help to those who were Caesar's proxies in government. In the first place, when Marcellus the consul was trying not only to hand over to Pompey all the troops which were already mustered, but also to make it possible for him to raise further troops as well, Antony blocked the proposal by issuing an edict to the effect that the forces already assembled should sail to Syria and help Bibulus in his war against the Parthians, and that the troops Pompey was in the process of raising should not be attached to his command.* In the second place, when the senate refused to allow Caesar's letters to be introduced or read out, Antony drew on the authority vested in his office to read them out himself, and so changed a lot of people's minds, since Caesar's demands, as displayed in his letters, seemed fair and reasonable.* Finally, when two questions had been raised in the senate—one asking whether it was the senators' opinion that Pompey should disband his army, the other asking the same question about Caesar—and only a few senators were in favour of Pompey laying down his arms, while almost all of them were in favour of Caesar doing so,

Antony stood up and asked whether it was the view of the senate that both Pompey and Caesar should lay down their arms and disband their armies together. This proposal was unanimously and enthusiastically accepted, and with cries of congratulation they called on Antony to put the question to the vote. The consuls, however, refused to let this happen, so instead Caesar's supporters put forward a new set of apparently reasonable demands—but Cato spoke out strongly against them, and Lentulus, in his capacity as consul, had Antony expelled from the senate. As he left he fulminated against them, and then, dressed as a slave, he hired a chariot along with Quintus Cassius and set out to join Caesar. As soon as they were shown in to him they loudly declared that the government of Rome was in complete chaos, now that even the tribunes were prevented from saying what they wanted and anyone who spoke out on behalf of justice was harassed and in mortal danger.*

[6] At this Caesar took his army and invaded Italy. This is why in the *Philippics* Cicero wrote that just as Helen was the cause of the Trojan War, so Antony was the cause of the Civil War.* But this is obviously false, because Gaius Caesar was not the kind of malleable or pliant man who would have let anger overwhelm reason; if he had not determined to do so a long time previously, he would not have taken the decision to make war on his country on the spur of the moment, just because he saw that Antony and Cassius had taken to a chariot and fled to him, dressed in poor clothes. All this did was provide him with a plausible excuse and pretext for what he had been wanting to do for a long time. What led him to take on the whole world, as it had led Alexander before him, and Cyrus many years before that,* was an insatiable lust for rule and an insane desire to be first in power and importance—for which the downfall of Pompey was a prerequisite.

So Caesar attacked Rome, conquered it, and drove Pompey out of Italy. He then decided to concentrate first on the Pompeian forces in Spain and afterwards, once he had fitted out a fleet, to make the crossing and attack Pompey. He left Lepidus as military governor of Rome and entrusted Italy and the army to Antony in his capacity as tribune.* Antony immediately won the loyalty of the troops by making it his usual practice to join them in their exercises and at mealtimes, and by rewarding them as much as he could given the circumstances, but everyone else found him highly offensive. He

was too lazy to pay attention to the pleas of injured parties, too bad-tempered to listen to petitioners, and he had a poor reputation as regards other men's wives. In short, Caesar's rule, which turned out not even remotely to resemble a tyranny as far as he himself was concerned, was spoiled by his associates, and Antony was the one who was considered the worst offender, since he had the greatest power and so was held to have gone the furthest astray.

[7] Nevertheless, on his return from Spain Caesar ignored the charges against Antony and was perfectly right to do so, since in war he found him energetic, courageous, and a natural leader. So Caesar set sail across the Ionian Sea from Brundisium with a small force and then sent his transport ships back to Gabinus and Antony with orders to board their men and cross over to Macedonia as quickly as possible. While Gabinus shrank from making the difficult crossing in winter and took his army the long way round by land, Antony was worried about how Caesar had been cut off by large numbers of enemy troops. So he repelled Libo, who was blockading the mouth of the harbour, by surrounding his galleys with numerous light boats, embarked 800 horsemen and 20,000 legionaries, and put to sea. The enemy caught sight of him and gave chase, and although he escaped from this threat when a fresh southerly wind engulfed the enemy ships in heavy seas and a deep swell, his fleet was blown off course towards some cliffs and crags jutting out into deep water, and his situation looked hopeless. But suddenly a strong south-westerly wind blew from the direction of the bay and the waves began to run from the land towards the open sea, so that Antony could change direction away from the land. As he sailed confidently along, he saw that the shoreline was covered with disabled ships, because the wind had driven the galleys that were after him there, and quite a few of them were wrecked. Antony took plenty of prisoners and a great deal of booty, captured Lissus, and greatly boosted Caesar's morale by arriving just in time with such a large force.*

[8] Many battles took place, one after another, and Antony distinguished himself in all of them. Twice, when Caesar's men were in headlong flight, he confronted them, turned them around, made them stop and regroup, and so won the battle. There was more talk about him in the camp than anyone else except Caesar. And Caesar made no secret of his opinion of Antony: when the final battle at Pharsalus was imminent, the battle on which the whole issue

depended, he kept the right wing for himself, but he put Antony in charge of the left wing, on the grounds that he was the best tactician apart from himself.* After the victory Caesar was made dictator and went off after Pompey, but he chose Antony as his cavalry commander and sent him to Rome. This post is the second most important when the dictator is in Rome, but when he is away it is the most important and has more or less sole authority. The tribunate remains in place, but all the other offices are dissolved once a dictator has been elected.*

[9] However, one of the tribunes at the time, Dolabella, a young man who wanted to see constitutional changes, was trying to introduce a decree cancelling all debts, and he set about persuading Antony, who was a friend of his and who was always keen to please the masses, to join him and play a part in trying to get the measure passed. But Asinius and Trebellius advised him to have nothing to do with it, and it so happened that Antony strongly suspected that he had been cuckolded by Dolabella. He was furious about it, threw his wife out of his house (she was his cousin, since she was the daughter of Gaius Antonius, who was consul in the same year as Cicero), sided with Asinius, and took up arms against Dolabella, who had occupied the forum in an attempt to carry his bill by force. The senate voted that the situation called for the use of arms against Dolabella, and Antony advanced on him. In the ensuing skirmish there were losses on both sides.*

The upshot of this was that the masses came to loathe him, while at the same time his general way of life meant that he did not find favour with the upright and moral members of society, as Cicero says.* In fact, they intensely disliked him, and were disgusted by his ill-timed bouts of drunkenness, his oppressive extravagance, his cavorting with women, and the way he spent the days asleep or wandering around in a daze with a hangover, and the nights at parties and shows, and amusing himself at the weddings of actors and clowns. At any rate, it is said that he was a guest at the wedding of the actor Hippias, where he drank all night long, and then the next morning, when the people of Rome summoned him to the forum, he presented himself while he was still suffering from over-indulgence and vomited into the cloak one of his friends held out for him. Then there were the actor Sergius, who had a very great deal of influence over him, and Cytheris, a woman from the same school, of whom he

was fond; he even used to take her around with him on a litter when he visited various cities, and the litter was accompanied by a retinue as large as his mother's. They were also upset by the sight of his golden goblets being carried around on his excursions out of Rome as if they were part of a ceremonial procession, by the pavilions he set up on his journeys, the extravagant feasts spread out by groves and rivers, the lions yoked to chariots, and the way the houses of upright men and women were used to lodge whores and players of the *sambyke*. They were angered by the thought that Caesar himself was out of Italy, camping out in the open and experiencing great hardship and danger mopping up the remnants of the war, while others were taking advantage of his efforts to revel in luxury and treat their fellow citizens with disrespect.

[10] These habits of Antony's are also generally held to have increased the factional schism and encouraged the troops to turn to acts of terrible violence and rapacity. And so, on his return, Caesar pardoned Dolabella and, once he had been elected to his third consulship, chose Lepidus rather than Antony as his colleague. When Pompey's house was up for sale, Antony bought it, but then became indignant when he was asked to pay up. We have his own words for the fact that this is why he did not accompany Caesar on his African campaign, because he had not been recompensed for his earlier successes. But it looks as though Caesar eradicated most of Antony's inane and dissolute habits, by letting it be known that his offences had not gone unnoticed.*

So Antony gave up that way of life and turned to marriage. He married Fulvia, the former wife of the popular leader Clodius. Now, Fulvia was a woman who cared nothing for spinning or housework, and was not interested in having power over a husband who was just a private citizen, but wanted to rule a ruler and command a commander—and consequently Cleopatra owed Fulvia the fee for teaching Antony to submit to a woman, since she took him over after he had been tamed and trained from the outset to obey women. Not that Antony did not try to get Fulvia too to lighten up, by teasing her and fooling around. For instance, after Caesar's victory in Spain, Antony was one of the large number of people who went out to meet him. Suddenly a rumour reached Italy that Caesar was dead and that his enemies were advancing. Antony turned back to Rome, but dressed himself as a slave, and went to his house after nightfall,

saying that he had a letter for Fulvia from Antony. He was shown in to her with his face all covered up. Before taking the letter from him Fulvia asked, in a state of considerable distress, whether Antony was alive. He handed the letter to her without saying a word, and then, as she began to open it, he threw his arms around her and kissed her. Anyway, I have mentioned only this brief tale, but it may serve as an example of many others.*

[11] On Caesar's return from Spain all the leading men of Rome made journeys of many days' duration to meet him, but it was Antony who was conspicuously honoured by him. When journeying through Italy on his chariot he kept Antony with him as his travelling companion, while Brutus Albinus and Octavian (his sister's son, who was later called Caesar and ruled Rome for a very long time) travelled behind him; and when he was made consul for the fifth time, he immediately chose Antony as his colleague.* In fact, however, he planned to resign his consulship in favour of Dolabella, and he went so far as to put this proposal to the senate. Antony spoke out bitterly against the idea; he rained insults down on Dolabella's head and received as good as he gave from the other man, until Caesar was so ashamed at the disruption that he withdrew the motion. Later, when Caesar came forward and proclaimed Dolabella consul, Antony called out that the omens were unfavourable, so Caesar backed down and abandoned Dolabella, who was mightily displeased. As a matter of fact, Caesar seems to have found Dolabella just as loathsome as Antony did, since we are told that once, when someone was criticizing both of them to him, he said that he was not afraid of these overweight, long-haired men, but of those pale, lean ones—by which he meant Brutus and Cassius, who were soon to conspire against him and assassinate him.*

[12] The most plausible pretext for Brutus and Cassius to act was in fact given them accidentally by Antony. It was the time of the festival of the Lycaea at Rome, which the Romans call the Lupercalia, and Caesar, arrayed in his triumphal clothing, was seated on the rostra in the forum watching the runners.* At this festival large numbers of well-born young men, and a lot of the city officials too, thoroughly anoint themselves with oil and run here and there in the forum, playfully touching people they meet with hairy pieces of goatskin. Antony was one of the runners, but he ignored tradition and instead ran over to the rostra with a laurel wreath he had woven

around a diadem. He was lifted up by his fellow runners and put the diadem on Caesar's head, as if to say that he ought to be king. Caesar made a show of turning aside, which so delighted the people that they burst out into applause. Antony urged it on him again, and again Caesar brushed it off. This contest went on for some time, with a few of Antony's friends applauding his attempts to force the diadem on to Caesar, and the whole assembled populace applauding and shouting out their approval of Caesar's refusals. The surprising thing was that although the people behaved as though they tolerated the actual condition of being a king's subjects, they found the mere title offensive, as if it meant the end of their freedom. Be that as it may, Caesar stood up angrily on the rostra, pulled his toga away from his neck, and shouted out that he was baring his throat for anyone who wanted to strike him. Some of the tribunes tore the garland off the statue of Caesar where it had been placed, and the people formed a train behind them, shouting out their approval of what they had done; but Caesar had them removed from office.*

[13] This incident stiffened the resolve of Brutus and Cassius. While they were recruiting into their scheme those of their friends they could trust, Antony's name came up as a possibility. Everyone else was in favour of Antony, but Trebonius spoke out against him and said that Antony had shared his tent and been his travelling companion at the time when they were going out to meet Caesar on his return from Spain; he said that he had broached the subject somewhat delicately and cautiously, and that while Antony had understood what he was getting at, he had not approved of the enterprise. Still, Trebonius pointed out, he had not denounced them to Caesar either, but had faithfully kept the conversation to himself.* The conspirators next began to wonder whether they should murder Antony after killing Caesar, but Brutus put a stop to this plan by arguing that any deed which is undertaken for the sake of law and justice must be pure and untainted by injustice. But they were concerned about Antony's power and the dignity of his official position, so they gave some of their number the job of dealing with him by detaining him outside the senate-house in conversation on some pressing business, once Caesar had gone inside and the deed was about to be done.

[14] This plan was carried out, and Caesar fell in the senate-house. Antony lost no time in changing into slave's clothes and

hiding himself. When he realized that the conspirators were not attacking anyone, but had congregated on the Capitol, he persuaded them to come down by giving them his son as a hostage. Then he took Cassius home and gave him dinner, while Lepidus did the same for Brutus. Antony convened the senate, spoke in favour of an amnesty, and recommended the assignment of a province each to Cassius and Brutus; the senate ratified these proposals and passed a decree to the effect that none of Caesar's measures should be changed. Antony emerged from the senate covered in glory, since he was held to have removed the threat of civil war and to have managed unusually problematic and disturbing events in an extremely sensible and statesmanlike manner.

However, this view of him was soon brought tumbling down by the acclaim of the masses, which led him to think that he could become the undisputed leader of Rome if he could secure Brutus' downfall. Now, it so happened that Antony was due to deliver the customary eulogy in the forum when Caesar's body was brought out for burial. When he saw that the assembled people were extraordinarily moved and beguiled by his words, he tempered his praise with expressions of sorrow and indignation at what had happened, and at the end of his speech he brandished the dead man's bloodstained, sword-slashed clothes, and called the perpetrators of the deed accursed murderers. In this way he whipped the crowd up into such a frenzy of anger that they piled up the benches and tables, cremated Caesar's body there in the forum, and then snatched brands from the pyre and ran to attack the houses of his assassins.*

[15] Brutus therefore left the city, and Caesar's friends united behind Antony. Caesar's wife, Calpurnia, trustingly brought most of the valuables, which altogether were worth four thousand talents, from her house and left them with Antony for safe keeping. Antony was also given Caesar's papers, which contained notes about decisions he had taken and wanted to put into practice. By inserting the names of people of his choosing into these papers Antony managed to get a lot of people elected to offices or to the senate, and he even had some people recalled from exile or freed from prison, making out that this was what Caesar had wanted to do. That is why the Romans scornfully called all these people Charonites, because they were assessed by recourse to the dead man's notebooks.* In general, then, Antony behaved in an autocratic manner, with himself as

consul and his brothers in office along with him—Gaius as praetor and Lucius as tribune.

[16] This was the situation when the young Caesar*—who, as I have already said, was the son of the dead man's sister—came to Rome, as the heir to Caesar's estate. He had been staying in Apollonia at the time of Caesar's murder. He immediately went and greeted Antony as a friend of the family, and reminded him of the property that had been left in his safe keeping, because under the terms of Caesar's will he was obliged to give every Roman citizen seventy-five drachmas. Antony's initial response was to treat him dismissively, thinking that he was hardly more than a boy; he told him he was out of his mind, and warned him of the unbearable burden he was taking on in electing to become Caesar's successor when he was bereft of both good sense and friends. When the young man refused to listen and simply repeated his demand for the money, Antony kept on and on at him with the most insulting language and behaviour. For instance, he opposed him when he was seeking election as a tribune; and when, in accordance with a senatorial decree, he wanted to dedicate his father's golden throne, Antony threatened to haul him off to prison if he did not stop trying to win over the general populace. Eventually, the young man put himself in the hands of Cicero and all the others who hated Antony, and with their help he began to gain the support of the senate, win over the common people, and gather in the troops from the colonies. Now Antony became alarmed and met him on the Capitol for a conference, at which they became reconciled. But then, when he was asleep that night, Antony had a weird dream in which his right hand was struck by a thunderbolt; and a few days later he heard that Caesar was plotting against him. Caesar tried to defend himself, but he could not convince Antony. Their antagonism was renewed at full strength, and both of them rushed around Italy offering enormous financial rewards to the soldiers who had by then settled in the colonies, to try to mobilize them, and each tried to steal a march on the other by being the first to win over to his side the soldiers who were still under arms.*

[17] The most influential man in Rome at the time was Cicero. He kept arousing public opinion against Antony,* until eventually he persuaded the senate to declare him an enemy of the state, to send Caesar the fasces and praetorian insignia, and to dispatch Pansa and

Hirtius, the current consuls, to drive Antony out of Italy. They engaged Antony near the town of Mutina, with Caesar there fighting alongside them, but although they defeated the enemy, they themselves were among the casualties.* Antony's flight was beset with problems, not the least of which was starvation. But it was his nature to excel in difficult situations, and he never got closer to being a good man than when fortune was against him. It is true that it is normal for people to recognize true virtue when difficulties have brought them low, but not everyone is strong enough at these times of reversal to emulate what they admire and avoid what they find distasteful; in fact, some are so weak that they give in to their characteristic flaws all the more readily at such times and cannot keep their rationality intact. On the occasion in question, however, Antony was an incredible example to his men: for all his extravagant and indulgent lifestyle, he did not hesitate to drink stagnant water and eat wild fruits and roots. We even hear that tree-bark was eaten, and that as they crossed the Alps* they resorted to animals which had never before been tasted by human beings.

[18] They were looking forward to linking up with the troops under Lepidus' command on the far side of the Alps, because Lepidus was thought to be friendly towards Antony and thanks to Antony he had derived a great deal of benefit from friendship with Caesar. However, when Antony came and set up camp near by,* he met with a distinct absence of cordiality, and so he decided to take a gamble. His hair was unkempt and ever since his defeat he had allowed his beard to grow long and thick; he put on a dark toga, approached Lepidus' encampment, and began to speak. Many of the men were moved to pity at the sight of him and were stirred by his words—so much so that Lepidus became alarmed and ordered the trumpets to be sounded in order to drown out Antony's voice. But this only made the soldiers feel all the more sorry for him, and they entered into secret talks with him, sending Laelius and Clodius to him disguised as prostitutes.* They told Antony that he could confidently attack the camp, because there were plenty of men there who would welcome him and would kill Lepidus if he wanted. But Antony told them not to lay a finger on Lepidus, and the next day he took his army and tackled the river. He himself was the first to enter the river and make his way towards the far bank, which he could see was already lined with Lepidus' men reaching out their hands to

him and dismantling the fortifications. After entering the camp and making himself master of everything, he treated Lepidus with nothing but kindness: when he greeted him he called him 'father', and although in actual fact he was in total control, he reserved for Lepidus the title and prestige of imperator. This induced Minucius Plancus, who was stationed near by with a sizeable force, to come over to his side as well. And so, having regained power, Antony crossed the Alps into Italy at the head of seventeen infantry legions and ten thousand horsemen. In addition, he left six legions to watch over Gaul under the command of Varius, surnamed Cotylon, a close friend and drinking-companion of his.

[19] Caesar had broken off his alliance with Cicero because he could see he was a partisan of freedom, and through the intermediacy of friends he invited Antony to resolve their difficulties. The three men met on a small island in the middle of a river and held talks for three days.* For the most part they found it fairly easy to reach agreement, and they divided up the whole empire among themselves as if it were an ancestral estate, but the sticking point was the question of who was to be put to death, since each of them wanted to do away with his enemies and protect his relatives. In the end their anger at those they hated led them to betray both the respect due to relatives and the loyalty due to friends: Caesar gave up Cicero to Antony, while Antony yielded to him Lucius Caesar, who was Antony's uncle on his mother's side, and Lepidus was allowed to kill his brother Paullus (though some say that Lepidus gave up Paullus to Caesar and Antony when they demanded his death). I can think of nothing more savage and cold-blooded than this exchange. In the give-and-take of bargaining one murder for another, they were as responsible for the deaths of those they gave as of those they took; but killing their friends was the worst crime, since in these cases they were not even motivated by hatred.

[20] In addition to these deals the soldiers crowded round and demanded that Caesar cement the friendship with a marriage, and so he took for his wife Clodia, the daughter of Antony's wife Fulvia. Once they had agreed to this as well, three hundred men were proscribed and put to death by them. After Cicero had been struck down, Antony gave orders that his head and his right hand were to be cut off—the hand with which he had written his speeches denouncing him. When the head and the hand were brought to him

he gazed at them in joy and broke out into delighted laughter time and again. Then, when he had had enough, he gave orders for them to be fixed over the rostra, as if he were violating the dead man and not merely displaying his own violation of good fortune and abuse of power.* His uncle, Caesar, took refuge from the men who were harrying and hunting him in his sister's house. When the assassins arrived and tried to force their way into her room, she stood in the doorway with her arms spread out and kept repeating in a loud voice: 'You shall not kill Lucius Caesar without first killing me, the mother of your imperator.' By this stratagem she managed to get her brother out of harm's way and save his life.

[21] By and large, the Romans hated the rule of the triumvirate—a feeling for which Antony was chiefly to blame, since he was older than Caesar and more powerful than Lepidus, and because as soon as he had tossed off his troubles he devoted himself once again to his old life of unrestrained hedonism. His general bad reputation was also supplemented by a considerable amount of loathing generated by the house where he chose to live. This had formerly belonged to Pompey the Great,* a man who was admired as much for the self-control, discipline, and openness of his way of life as he was for his three triumphs. So now people found it horrible to see the house closed against leaders, commanders, and official delegates, who were rudely shoved away from the door, while it was packed with actors, stage magicians, and drunken flatterers, on whom Antony squandered the bulk of the money he raised by the most violent and cruel means. For not only did the triumvirs sell the property of those they murdered, as a result of bringing trumped-up charges against their relatives and wives, and not only did they impose every kind of tax they could think of, but once they found out that the Vestal Virgins occasionally acted as bankers for both foreigners and Roman citizens, they charged in and appropriated all these deposits. Since Antony was insatiable, Caesar made sure that the money was shared between them. They also divided up the army for the campaigns the two of them were to fight against Brutus and Cassius in Macedonia, while Lepidus was left in charge of Rome.

[22] So they sailed across, launched their campaign, and took up positions near the enemy, with Antony's forces arrayed opposite Cassius and Caesar's opposite Brutus.* However, Caesar's achievements amounted to little, and it was Antony who achieved all the

victories and successes. In the first battle, at any rate, Caesar was soundly defeated by Brutus: he lost his camp and only just managed to slip out of the grasp of the troops who were pursuing him, although he wrote in his memoirs that he withdrew before the battle in response to a dream one of his friends had dreamt. Antony defeated Cassius—though some writers claim that Antony did not take part in the battle, but arrived afterwards, when his men were already in pursuit. At his own request and orders Cassius was killed by one of his faithful freedmen, Pindar, because he was unaware that Brutus had been victorious. A few days later battle was joined again, and Brutus was defeated and committed suicide. Credit for the victory went largely to Antony, because Caesar was ill at the time. Antony stood over Brutus' corpse and briefly remonstrated with him for the death of his brother Gaius, whom Brutus had killed in Macedonia in retaliation for Cicero's death. To his mind Hortensius was more to blame for his brother's murder than Brutus was, so he gave orders that Hortensius was to be killed over Gaius' tomb, while he draped his extremely valuable purple cloak over Brutus' body and told one of his own freedmen to see to the burial. Later, when he found out that this man had not cremated the cloak along with the body and had stolen a lot of the money which was supposed to be spent on the burial, he had him put to death.

[23] Caesar was so ill that he was not expected to live long, and he now returned to Rome. Antony left Macedonia at the head of a large force and crossed over into Greece in order to raise money from all the eastern provinces.* The triumvirs had promised every soldier five thousand drachmas, and so they needed to tighten up the collection of tribute and their ways of raising funds. At first Antony behaved with exemplary civility towards the Greeks: he diverted the less serious side of his character by listening to discussions, attending athletic competitions, and being initiated into religious mysteries, and his decisions were fair. He enjoyed being described as a lover of Greece, though not as much as he enjoyed being called a lover of Athens, and he showered the city with gifts. When the Megarians wanted to show him that they too had fine things to rival Athens, they insisted on his seeing their council-house. After he had climbed up the hill and seen it, they asked him what he thought of it. 'Small and rotten,' he said. He also took the measurements of the temple of

Pythian Apollo, since he intended to complete it; in fact, in a speech to the senate he undertook to do so.*

[24] Leaving Lucius Censorinus in charge of Greece, Antony crossed over to Asia and took possession of the wealth there. Kings beat a path to his door, while their wives, rivals in generosity and beauty, let themselves be seduced by him. While Caesar in Rome was exhausting himself with feuds and fighting, Antony was enjoying abundant leisure and peace—so much so that he reverted to his usual way of life. Anaxenor and other players of the lyre, pipe-players like Xuthus, a certain dancer named Metrodorus, and a motley band of similar Asiatic players whose lascivious vulgarity surpassed the pests he had brought from Italy, flooded into his residence and made themselves at home, until the altogether intolerable situation was reached where these activities were all he was interested in. The whole of Asia, like Sophocles' famous city, was filled 'both with the smoke of incense, and with hymns of joy and loud laments'.* At any rate, on his entry into Ephesus he was preceded by women arrayed as Bacchantes, and men and boys as Satyrs and Pans, and the city was filled with ivy, thyrsi, harps, reed-pipes, and wind-pipes, all hailing him as Dionysus the gracious benefactor. And this is certainly what he was like in a few cases, though generally he was Dionysus the cruel, the devourer.* He used to confiscate property from well-born people and give it as a favour to thugs and flatterers. People often pretended that someone was dead when he was not, asked for his property, and were given it. He gave the estate of a man from Magnesia to a cook who had earned his esteem, we are told, for a single meal. Eventually, when he was imposing a second round of tribute on the cities of Asia, Hybreas summoned up the courage to speak out for all Asia. His rhetorical style was low, and appealed to Antony's taste. 'If you can take tribute twice in a single year,' Hybreas said, 'can you also create two summers for us and two harvests?' Then, in a bold and effective conclusion, because Asia had provided Antony with 200,000 talents, he said, 'If you haven't received this money, you should demand it from those who took it; but if you did get it and you no longer have it, we're in a lot of trouble.'*

These words of his affected Antony deeply because he was unaware of most of what went on, not so much because he was lazy as because he was so straightforward that he trusted the people around him. There was a side to him that was naïve and slow off the

mark, although when he did come to realize his mistakes his remorse was profound and he would make a full confession to those he had wronged by his thoughtlessness. He never did things by halves in making compensation or in taking revenge, but he had the reputation of being more likely to go too far when doing a favour than when meting out punishment. Also, his disrespectful jokes and jibes did have the redeeming feature that one could return the jibe with equal disrespect: he enjoyed being laughed at just as much as he enjoyed laughing at others. But this trait of his was invariably his undoing, because he was incapable of imagining that people who were so candid when making a joke were really concerned to flatter him, and so he was easily caught by their compliments. He had no idea that there are people who, so to speak, temper the cloying taste of their flattery with the sharp seasoning of candour; these people use the outspoken remarks they pass over their cups as a means of making their pliancy and submissiveness in affairs of state suggest not sycophancy, but rational submission to superior wisdom.

[25] For a man such as Antony, then, there could be nothing worse than the onset of his love for Cleopatra.* It awoke a number of feelings that had previously been lying quietly buried within him, stirred them up into a frenzy, and obliterated and destroyed the last vestiges of goodness, the final redeeming features that were still holding out in his nature. This is how he was caught. While he was preparing to make war on Parthia,* he wrote to Cleopatra, ordering her to come to meet him in Cilicia, to answer the charge of having helped Cassius with substantial contributions towards his war effort. However, as soon as Dellius,* Antony's messenger, saw what she looked like and observed her eloquence and argumentative cunning, he realized that the idea of harming a woman like her would never occur to Antony, and that she would come to occupy a very important place in his life. He therefore set about ingratiating himself with the Egyptian and encouraging her to come to Cilicia 'dressed up in all her finery', to borrow Homer's words;* and he allayed her worries about Antony, describing him as the most agreeable and kind leader in the world. Since she believed Dellius and also drew on the evidence of her past love-affairs in her youth with Caesar and with Gnaeus the son of Pompey, she readily expected to vanquish Antony.* After all, Caesar and Gnaeus Pompey had known her when she was no more than an unworldly girl, but she would be going to

Antony at the age when the beauty of a woman is at its most dazzling and her intellectual powers are at their height. So she equipped herself with plenty of gifts and money, and the kind of splendid paraphernalia one would expect someone in her exalted position, from a prosperous kingdom, to take. Above all, however, she went there relying on herself and on the magical arts and charms of her person.

[26] Although she received a number of letters from both Antony and his friends demanding her presence, she treated him with such disdain and scorn that she sailed up the river Cydnus on a golden-prowed barge, with sails of purple outspread and rowers pulling on silver oars to the sound of a reed-pipe blended with wind-pipes and lyres. She herself reclined beneath a gold-embroidered canopy, adorned like a painting of Aphrodite, flanked by slave-boys, each made to resemble Eros, who cooled her with their fans. Likewise her most beautiful female slaves, dressed as Nereids and Graces, were stationed at the rudders and the ropes. The wonderful smell of numerous burning spices filled the banks of the river.* Some people formed an escort for her on either side all the way from the river, while others came down from the city to see the spectacle. The crowd filling the city square trickled away, until at last Antony himself was left alone, seated on a dais. The notion spread throughout the city that Aphrodite had come in revelry to Dionysus, for the good of Asia.

Antony sent her an invitation to dinner, but she thought it preferable that he should come to her. Without a moment's hesitation he agreed, because he wanted to show her that he was a good-natured, friendly sort of person. On his arrival he found preparations that beggared description, but he was especially struck by the amazing number of lights. There are said to have been so many lights hanging on display all over the place, and ordered and disposed at such angles to one another and in such arrangements—some forming squares, others circles—that the sight was one of rare and remarkable beauty.

[27] The next day it was his turn to entertain her with a banquet. He desperately wanted to outdo the brilliance and thoroughness of her preparations, but it was in precisely these two respects that he failed and was defeated by her. However, he was the first to make fun of the unappetizing meagreness of what he had to offer. Cleopatra could see from Antony's jokes that there was a wide streak of the

coarse soldier in him, so she adopted this same manner towards him, and now in an unrestrained and brazen fashion. For, according to my sources, in itself her beauty was not absolutely without parallel, not the kind to astonish those who saw her; but her presence exerted an inevitable fascination, and her physical attractions, combined with the persuasive charm of her conversation and the aura she somehow projected around herself in company, did have a certain ability to stimulate others. The sound of her voice was also charming and she had a facility with languages that enabled her to turn her tongue, like a many-stringed instrument, to any language she wanted, with the result that it was extremely rare for her to need a translator in her meetings with foreigners; in most cases she could answer their questions herself, whether they were Ethiopians, Trogodytae, Hebrews, Arabs, Syrians, Medes, or Parthians.* In fact, she was said to have mastered a lot of other languages too, whereas the kings of Egypt before her had not even bothered to learn Egyptian, and some of them even abandoned their Macedonian dialect.

[28] She abducted Antony so successfully that while his wife Fulvia was fighting Caesar in Rome in defence of his affairs,* and while there was a Parthian army hovering near Mesopotamia, with Labienus newly appointed by the Parthian king's generals as commander-in-chief for the planned invasion of Syria,* he was carried off by her to Alexandria where he indulged in the pastimes and pleasures of a young man of leisure, and spent and squandered on luxuries that commodity which Antiphon called the most costly in the world—namely, time. They formed a kind of club called the Society of Inimitable Livers, and every day one of them had to entertain the rest. They spent incredible, disproportionate amounts of money. At any rate, Philotas of Amphissa, the doctor, used to tell my grandfather Lamprias that he was in Alexandria at the time, learning his professional skills, and that he became friendly with one of the royal cooks. Philotas, who was a young man then, was persuaded by his friend the cook to come and see the extravagance involved in the preparations for a feast. So he was surreptitiously brought into the kitchen and when he saw all the food, including eight wild boars roasting on spits, he expressed his surprise at the number of guests who were going to be entertained. The cook laughed and said that there were not going to be many for dinner, only about twelve; but that every dish which was served had to be perfect and it only took a

moment for something to be spoiled. He explained that Antony might call for food immediately and then a short while later might perhaps change tack and ask for a cup of wine, or get interrupted by a discussion. And so, he said, they prepared many meals, not just one, since they could never guess when the exact moment was going to be.

This was the story Philotas used to tell. Some years later, he said, he used to attend Antony's eldest son, whose mother was Fulvia, and often used to join him and his friends for dinner, when the young man was not eating with his father. On one occasion, a certain doctor was becoming rather outspoken and was putting the other guests off their meal, until Philotas shut him up with the following sophism: 'Anyone with a slight fever needs the application of cold; but anyone who has a fever has at least a slight fever; it follows that anyone with a fever needs the application of cold.' The man was so taken aback that he stopped talking, but their young host was delighted. He laughed and said, pointing to a table covered with numerous large goblets, 'Philotas, I'd like you to have all of these.' Philotas acknowledged his goodwill,† but was not at all sure that a mere boy like him had the right to give such a valuable gift; a short while later, however, one of the slaves brought him the goblets sewn into a bag and asked him to put his seal on it. When Philotas refused and expressed a reluctance to take them, the man said, 'Don't be so stupid. There's no need to worry. Don't you realize that this is a present from the son of Antony and that he can give away this much gold if he likes? However, I would suggest that you let us swap you the cups for their worth in money, because it's not impossible that his father might miss some of the cups, which are antiques, valued for their craftsmanship.' These are the stories Philotas used to tell whenever the opportunity arose, according to my grandfather.*

[29] Cleopatra did not restrict her flattery to Plato's four categories,* but employed many more forms of it. She always found some fresh pleasure and delight to apply, whether he was in a serious or a frivolous mood, and so she kept up his training relentlessly, without letting up either by night or by day. She was with him when he was playing dice, drinking, and hunting; she watched him while he exercised with his weapons; at night when he stood at the doors and windows of ordinary folk and mocked the people inside, she wandered aimlessly through the streets by his side. During these

escapades she would dress as a serving-girl, because Antony used to do his best to make himself look like a slave, which would constantly earn him a volley of scorn and not infrequently blows too before he returned home, despite the fact that most people suspected who he was. However, the Alexandrians loved the way he played the fool and joined in his games, though not to a disproportionate or coarse extent. They liked him and said that he adopted the mask of tragedy for the Romans, but the mask of comedy for them.

It would be quite idiotic for me to describe most of the pranks he got up to then, but once, when he was out fishing, he got cross because he was having no luck and Cleopatra was there. So he told the fishermen to swim down and secretly attach one of the fish which had already been caught to his hook. He hauled in two or three fish like this, but the Egyptian queen knew perfectly well what was going on. She pretended to be impressed, but told her friends all about it, and invited them to come and watch the next day. So there were a lot of people on the fishing-boats, and when Antony had cast out she told one of her own slaves to swim over to his hook first and to stick on to it a preserved fish from the Euxine Sea. Antony thought he had caught something and pulled it in, to everyone's great amusement, of course. 'Imperator,' she said, 'hand your rod over to the kings of Pharos and Canobius. It is your job to hunt cities, kingdoms, and continents.'

[30] While Antony was occupied with this kind of childish nonsense, two messages reached him. The first, from Rome, told how his brother Lucius and his wife Fulvia had first fallen out with each other, but had then made war unsuccessfully on Caesar and fled into exile from Italy.* The other message was just as bleak: it told how Labienus and his army of Parthians were conquering all Asia from the Euphrates and Syria up to Lydia and Ionia.* Like a man struggling to wake up on the morning after a drunken night, Antony set out to resist the Parthians and had reached Phoenicia when he received a thoroughly miserable letter from Fulvia, as a result of which he headed for Italy with a fleet of two hundred ships. During the course of the voyage, however, he picked up some exiled friends and learnt that the war had been Fulvia's fault: not only was she a headstrong woman who liked to dabble in politics, but she hoped to draw Antony away from Cleopatra by stirring up trouble in Italy. Coincidentally, however, Fulvia fell ill and died in Sicyon while she

was on her way to him by sea, which created an even better opportunity for reconciliation with Caesar. When he reached Italy, and Caesar made it plain that he did not blame him for anything, while at the same time Antony himself was inclined to hold Fulvia responsible for the crimes with which he was charged, their friends refused to let them look too closely at the whys and wherefores. They arranged a truce between the two of them and divided up the areas of command, with the Ionian Sea forming a boundary such that everything to the east went to Antony and everything to the west to Caesar, while they let Lepidus have Africa and organized matters so that when neither Antony nor Caesar wanted to be consul, the post should go to their friends one by one.*

[31] While this all seemed fine, it needed firmer assurances, and fortune provided them in the person of Octavia, who was Caesar's elder sister, although they did not have the same mother, since hers was Ancharia, while his was Atia.* Caesar was very fond of his sister, who was, we are told, a marvel of womankind. Her husband, Gaius Marcellus, had recently died, so she was a widow; and Antony was generally held to be a widower, now that Fulvia had passed away, since although he made no attempt to deny that he had Cleopatra, he refused to call her his wife. To this extent his rational mind was still resisting his love for the Egyptian. Everyone wanted to see this marriage take place, since they hoped that once Octavia was united with Antony and had won the place in his affections one would expect of a woman like her, with all her dignity and intelligence, as well as her great beauty, she would prove to be the saviour and moderator of all Rome's affairs. So when both men had agreed on this course of action, they went up to Rome and married Octavia to Antony, even though by Roman law a woman was not allowed to remarry within ten months of her husband's death. But in their case the senate passed a decree waiving the time limit.

[32] Now, thanks to Sextus Pompey, who was the master of Sicily and used to raid Italy with his large fleet of pirate vessels under the command of Menas the Pirate and Menecrates, the sea was unsafe for shipping.* But Pompey was generally held to have shown himself to be well disposed towards Antony by taking his mother in when she was banished from Rome with Fulvia, and so they decided to come to terms with him too. The meeting took place on the pier at Cape Misenum,* with Pompey's fleet lying at anchor near by, and Antony's

and Caesar's troops drawn up close at hand. Under their agreement Pompey was to retain Sardinia and Sicily, keep the sea free of pirates, and send a stipulated quantity of grain to Rome. Once this was settled, they invited one another to dinner and after drawing lots it was Pompey's turn to entertain the others first. When Antony asked him where they would have the meal, Pompey pointed to his massive flagship and said, 'There, because that's the only family home Pompey has left'—which was his way of rebuking Antony for occupying the house which had belonged to his father. He stabilized the ship on its anchors, made a kind of gangplank for people to cross from the cape, and welcomed them on board. At the height of the party, when the jokes about Antony and Cleopatra were flying thick and fast, Menas the Pirate came up to Pompey and whispered in an undertone, 'Shall I cut the ship's cables and make you master of Rome, not just Sicily and Sardinia?' Pompey thought in silence for a little while about what he had said and then replied, 'Menas, you should have done it without telling me about it first. For now, let's be content with things as they are. It's not my way to break a promise.' And so, after he had been entertained in his turn by Antony and Caesar, he sailed back to Sicily.

[33] After this settlement Antony sent Ventidius on ahead to Asia, to block the Parthians' advance,* while as a favour to Caesar he let himself be appointed to the priesthood which the elder Caesar had earlier held. In general, they co-operated and behaved civilly towards each other where matters of government and other particularly important issues were concerned. However, Antony was upset by the fact that whenever he and Caesar clashed in some recreational pursuit he always came off worst. Now, among his entourage was a certain diviner from Egypt, who drew up natal horoscopes. Perhaps as a favour to Cleopatra, or perhaps because he wanted to tell the truth, he spoke out bluntly to Antony and told him that for all the great brilliance and importance of his fortune he was being eclipsed by Caesar, and he advised him to put as much distance as possible between himself and the young man. 'Your guardian spirit is afraid of his,' he explained, 'and although it prances with head held high when it is by itself, at the approach of his it is cowed and humbled.' And in fact events did seem to confirm what the Egyptian had said. For instance, it is said that whenever for fun they drew lots or threw dice in any situation, whatever it might be at the time, Antony came

off worst. And again, they often used to pit cocks or fighting quails against one another, and Caesar's would always win.

All this irritated Antony, though he did not show it, and since he was increasingly inclined to listen to the Egyptian, he entrusted his private affairs to Caesar and left Italy. His first stop was Greece, and Octavia, who had given birth to a baby daughter, went there with him. While he was spending the winter in Athens he received news of the first of Ventidius' successes: the report said that Ventidius had won a battle against the Parthians and had killed Labienus and Phranipates, who was the best of King Orodes' military commanders. To mark this victory Antony put on a public feast for the Greeks and acted as gymnasiarch at Athens. Leaving at home the insignia of his military command, he would appear in public wearing a Greek tunic and white shoes, and carrying the gymnasiarch's rods, and would grab the attention of the young men and turn their heads.*

[34] Just before setting out for the war, he took a garland from the sacred olive-tree, and in obedience to a certain oracle filled a jar with water from the Clepsydra* and took it with him. Meanwhile Ventidius was faced with a fresh invasion of Syria by a huge Parthian army under the king's son, Pacorus. When the two sides met in Cyrrhestica, the Parthians were overwhelmed and lost very many men, including, most importantly, Pacorus himself. This was one of the most celebrated achievements in Roman history; the Romans now felt fully repaid for the disasters under Crassus, and the Parthians were confined once more within Media and Mesopotamia, since they had now been soundly defeated in three successive battles.* Ventidius was worried about incurring Antony's jealousy, so he chose not to pursue the Parthians any further and turned instead against those who had rebelled against Rome. He defeated them and also besieged Antiochus of Commagene in the city of Samosata.* When Antiochus asked permission to pay a thousand talents and to make whatever restitution Antony required, Ventidius told him to send a message to that effect to Antony in person, who was now not far away. But Antony refused to allow Ventidius to make a treaty with Antiochus, since he wanted his name attached to at least this one victory, rather than the credit for every success going to Ventidius. However, the siege dragged on, and once the inhabitants of Samosata gave up the idea of compromise, they concentrated on defence. Antony could not achieve anything; he felt stupid and regretted his earlier

intransigence. In the end he had to be content with entering into a treaty with Antiochus by which Antiochus paid him three hundred talents. Then, after settling some minor matters in Syria he returned to Athens and sent Ventidius back to Rome, laden with fitting honours, to celebrate a triumph.

Ventidius is the only man so far to have celebrated a triumph over the Parthians.* He was a man of humble origins, but he took advantage of his friendship with Antony to seize opportunities to achieve great things. In fact, he made such good use of these opportunities that he confirmed what was commonly said about Antony and Caesar—that as military leaders they were more successful through others' efforts than they were through their own. For example, Antony's commander, Sosius, achieved a great deal in Syria, and Canidius, whom Antony left in Armenia, conquered not only the Armenians, but also the kings of the Iberians and Albanians, and advanced as far as the Caucasus.* These successes led to Antony's name and fame spreading far and wide among the peoples of the east.

[35] Antony himself, however, was furious once again with Caesar and his criticisms, so he took a fleet of three hundred ships and sailed for Italy.* The people of Brundisium refused to let his fleet in, so he sailed round the coast and anchored at Tarentum. Here, at her own request, he sent Octavia, who had accompanied him on his voyage from Greece, to her brother. She was pregnant, and had already borne him a second baby daughter.* She met Caesar on the road, and once she had enlisted the support of his friends Agrippa and Maecenas, she spoke with him at length, begging and beseeching him not to connive at her downfall from a state of perfect happiness to one of complete misery. As things were, she said, she was an object of universal admiration, since of the two commanders-in-chief she was the wife of one and the sister of the other. 'But if matters degenerate,' she went on, 'and war breaks out, there is no telling which of you is destined to win and which to lose, but in either case my situation becomes wretched.' Caesar was moved to pity by her appeal and he went to Tarentum with no hostile intentions.* Witnesses saw the wonderful spectacle of a sizeable army lying idle on land and a substantial fleet resting quietly off shore, while the commanders and their associates met on good terms. Antony gave the first dinner, and Caesar let him do so for his sister's sake. They agreed that Caesar

should give Antony two legions for the Parthian War, and that Antony should give Caesar a hundred bronze-rammed warships; but then Octavia made her own separate deal, whereby she requested twenty light ships from her husband for her brother, and a thousand soldiers from her brother for her husband. As soon as they had separated on these terms, Caesar, who wanted to take Sicily, launched his campaign against Pompey, and Antony entrusted Octavia and his children by both her and Fulvia to Caesar's care, and then sailed across to Asia.*

[36] But the awful calamity which had been dormant for a long time, his love for Cleopatra, which seemed to have been lulled and charmed to sleep by better notions, flared up again and regained its confidence the nearer he got to Syria. Eventually, in the manner of the disobedient, intemperate member of the mind's chariot team in Plato's book,* he kicked out of his way everything admirable, everything that might have saved him, and sent Fonteius Capito to bring Cleopatra to Syria. When she arrived he presented her, as a favour, with no slight or trivial addition to her possessions: he gave her Phoenicia, Coele Syria, Cyprus, a great deal of Cilicia, and also the part of the land of the Jews which produces balsam, and that part of the Arabia of the Nabataeans which slopes down towards the outer sea.* These gifts infuriated the Romans, despite the fact that he often used to present even private citizens with tetrarchies and important kingdoms, and that it was far from being the first time that he had deprived someone of his kingdom either. For instance, there was Antigonus of Judaea, whom he had publicly beheaded, even though no other king before him had ever been punished in this way. But what was particularly infuriating about the honours he conferred on Cleopatra was the shame of it all. And he only made things worse by recognizing the twin children she had borne him, whom he called Alexander and Cleopatra, surnamed respectively Sun and Moon. But he was good at glossing over disgraces, and so he used to say that the greatness of the Roman empire showed not in what they took, but in what they gave, and that the more royal blood contributed towards the next generation of a family's children, the more that family enhanced its nobility. At any rate, he used to say that his own ancestor was fathered by Heracles, a man who did not rely on just a single womb for the continuation of his line, and was not cowed by laws like Solon's which tried to regulate conception,* but followed his

natural inclinations and left behind him the origins and foundations of many families.

[37] After Phraates had killed his father, Orodes, and taken over the kingdom,* quite a few Parthians fled the country, including Monaeses, a prominent and influential Parthian, who sought refuge with Antony. Antony was struck by the similarity between Monaeses' misfortunes and those of Themistocles, compared his own prosperity and liberality with those of the Persian kings, and gave Monaeses three cities—Larissa, Arethusa, and Hierapolis, which had once been called Bambyce.* But when the Parthian king made friendly overtures towards Monaeses, Antony was happy to let him go back. His plan was to trick Phraates into thinking there would be peace, and at the same time he demanded the return of the standards which had been captured under Crassus and of any surviving Roman prisoners from the time. Then he sent Cleopatra back to Egypt, before making his way through Arabia and Armenia to the place where his army was to join up with the forces of the allied kings. There were a great many such kings, but the most important of all was Artavasdes of Armenia, who supplied 6,000 horsemen and 7,000 foot soldiers. Antony conducted a review of the army: there were 60,000 Roman foot soldiers and 10,000 Spanish and Gallic horsemen, who were under Roman command; and other tribes and peoples provided 30,000 men, all told, counting both cavalry and infantry. According to our sources, however, this enormous army and all these resources, which terrified even the Indians living beyond Bactria and made the whole of Asia tremble with fear, turned out to do him no good at all, thanks to Cleopatra. He was in such a hurry to spend the winter with her that he launched his attack prematurely and conducted the whole affair in a haphazard fashion. He was not in his right mind, but was constantly gazing in her direction as if he had been drugged or bewitched, and he was more concerned with returning quickly than with defeating the enemy.*

[38] In the first place, then, what he should have done is spend the winter in Armenia, rest his men, who were exhausted after a march of eight thousand stades, and then occupy Media at the beginning of spring, before the Parthians stirred from their winter quarters; but he could not wait and so he set out straight away, leaving Armenia on his left and skirting the territory of Atropatene, which he plundered. In the second place, although there were included in his train, on

three hundred wagons, all the devices required for a siege, including a battering-ram eighty feet long, and although none of these siege-engines could be replaced in time if destroyed, because in the interior no wood grew of sufficient length or hardness, he was in such a hurry that he left them behind, arguing that they were slowing him down. He did leave men to guard the engines, under the command of Statianus, but then he laid siege to Phraata, a large city which held the children and wives of the Median king.* The extent of the mistake he had made in abandoning the siege-engines was immediately exposed by his need for them there; instead he had to come right up close to the city and set about building a mound, which took a long time and a lot of effort. Meanwhile, Phraates came down at the head of a large army, and when he heard that the wagons transporting the siege-engines had been abandoned, he sent a sizeable body of horsemen to attack them. Statianus and his troops were surrounded by these horsemen and ten thousand of them were cut down, including Statianus himself. Once the easterners had possession of the siege-engines, they destroyed them. They also took large numbers of prisoners, among whom was King Polemo.*

[39] Of course, this unexpected blow right at the beginning disheartened all Antony's men, and the Armenian, Artavasdes, gave up on the Roman cause and left, taking his forces with him, even though he was chiefly responsible for the war in the first place.* When the Parthians appeared, flushed with their success and calling out threats and taunts, Antony wanted to avoid perpetuating and increasing the dejection and consternation of his men by leaving them inactive in the face of this, so he took ten legions and three praetorian cohorts of legionaries, and all his cavalry, and led them out in a foraging expedition, the idea being that this would be the best way to draw the enemy into a pitched battle. One day's journey out of the camp, he saw that the Parthians were swarming around him, trying to find a way to attack him on the march. He displayed to his men the signal for attack, but broke camp as if he were intending to withdraw rather than fight, and then marched past the crescent-shaped array of the eastern troops. His orders were that as soon as the front line of the enemy seemed close enough for the heavy infantry to attack, the cavalry should charge at them. The Parthians, drawn up there in battle array, were dumbfounded by the Romans' discipline; they just watched them marching past, keeping the intervals between ranks

and files regular, in perfect control and silence, with their spears at the ready. When the signal was given and the cavalry wheeled and bore down on them yelling and screaming, the Parthians managed to absorb the attack and beat it off, despite the fact that the Romans were too close for them to be able to use their bows and arrows; but when the Roman legionaries engaged them, shouting and clashing their weapons, the Parthians' horses panicked and fell back, and the Parthians themselves turned tail and fled before hand-to-hand combat was joined.

Antony pursued them hard because he had high hopes of ending the whole war, more or less, with that one battle. But after the infantry had given chase for fifty stades, and the cavalry for three times the distance, they counted the enemy dead or captured and found only thirty prisoners and eighty corpses, which made everyone both puzzled and depressed.* On reflection it seemed a grim prospect if in victory they should kill so few of the enemy, but in defeat they should lose as many as they did in the battle over the transport wagons. The next day they packed up and set off for their camp at Phraata, but on the way they met at first a few of the enemy, and then more and more, until eventually they were faced with the whole army which challenged and harassed them from all sides, as if they were a fresh body of men who had never known defeat. It was only with considerable difficulty and effort that they got back safe to the camp. Then the Medes made a sortie from the city against the Romans' mound, and panicked the men defending it into flight. Antony was furious and employed the punishment known as 'decimation' on those who had lost their nerve. What he did was divide the whole lot of them into groups of ten, and then he killed one from each group, who was chosen by lot; the rest, on his orders were given barley rations instead of wheat.*

[40] Both sides were finding the war hard and had reason to fear its next phase. Antony anticipated a famine because it was no longer possible for him to gain provisions without taking considerable losses and casualties;† Phraates knew that the last thing the Parthians were capable of doing was enduring winter outdoors, and he was afraid that if the Romans stuck it out where they were his troops might desert, since the autumn equinox had passed and the air was already beginning to grow heavy. He therefore devised the following cunning scheme. His most notable troops decreased the effort they put into

attacking the Romans when they were out foraging or whenever else they clashed; they allowed them to get hold of some supplies, expressed admiration of their bravery, and said that they were superb fighters and that it was no wonder that their king, Phraates, was impressed by them. Next they began to ride up closer to the Romans and even bring their horses quietly up on a parallel course, and criticized Antony for refusing to allow Phraates the opportunity, which he was eager to take, to make a truce and spare men like them; instead, they said, he just sat there waiting for the assault of those cruel and formidable enemies, famine and winter, who would make it difficult for them to escape with their lives even with the Parthians escorting them on their way. A number of the Romans reported this news to Antony, and although his hopes inclined him to yield to the temptation, he did not send any heralds to Phraates until he had asked these friendly-seeming Parthians whether what they were saying reflected the king's thinking. They assured him that it did and told him he need have no worries or doubts. He sent some of his companions to the king to renew his demand for the return of the standards and the prisoners, because he did not want it thought of him that his sole concern was to get away safe and sound, but when in response the Parthian told him to forget about that, and promised him a safe passage and a cessation of hostilities as soon as he began to leave, he packed up and broke camp in just a few days. But although he was a persuasive public speaker and although no one in those days could rival his ability to move an army by words, in his shame and dejection he chose to forgo boosting the morale of his troops and gave the job to Domitius Ahenobarbus.* While some of his men took this as a sign of his contempt for them and were annoyed, the majority understood the reason and were deeply moved, and so felt all the more inclined to repay his respect for them by respecting his sense of shame and obeying him as their commander.

[41] So Antony was poised to retrace his route. Now, the road led through land which was flat and treeless, and a certain Mardian who was an expert on Parthian practices, and had proved his loyalty to the Romans during the battle over the siege-engines, approached Antony and recommended keeping the mountains close on his right as he retreated, and not exposing an army of heavy-armed men, laden down with baggage, to such a large force of cavalry and archers in bare and open territory. He told him that this was exactly what

Phraates had planned when he beguiled him with a friendly deal to raise the siege, and said that he would show him a short cut which was more plentifully supplied with provisions. On hearing what the man said, Antony paused for thought. Now that he had made a truce with the Parthians, he was reluctant to give them the impression that he did not trust them, but on the other hand he liked the idea of a short cut which would take them past inhabited villages. He asked the Mardian for some assurance of his good faith, and the Mardian offered to let himself be tied up as a prisoner until he had brought the army to Armenia. Bound with chains, then, he proceeded to guide the army, and for two days nothing happened. On the third day, however, by which time Antony had completely forgotten about the Parthians and was marching along in a relaxed and confident mood, the Mardian noticed that a dam blocking a river had recently been demolished and that the water was flooding the road they had to march along. He realized that this was the Parthians' doing, and that they were using the river as an obstacle to make life difficult for them and slow them down, and he warned Antony to watch out and be careful, since the enemy were near by. And just as Antony was deploying his legionaries in line of battle, leaving gaps in their formation for the javelineers and slingers to make their forays against the enemy, the Parthians appeared and rode all around the Romans in an attempt to surround them, and so to confuse them by attacking on all sides at once. The light-armed troops charged out against the Parthians and gave with their slingshot and javelins as good as they got from the enemy's arrows, until they forced them back. But then the Parthians kept returning to the attack, until the Gauls charged with their horses in a tight formation and scattered the Parthians, who were too frightened to renew the battle that day.

[42] Antony learnt his lesson well. He strengthened both his rear and his flanks with large numbers of javelineers and slingers, and had his men adopt a square formation as they continued on their way. He also told his cavalry that after they had repulsed an attack they were not to pursue the enemy for any distance. The outcome of these new tactics was that for four successive days the Parthians suffered at least as many casualties as they inflicted. This took the edge off their enthusiasm, and they began to make winter an excuse for thoughts of leaving.

On the fifth day Flavius Gallus, a skilled and effective officer,*

approached Antony and asked for the command of a fair number of light-armed troops from the rear and some horsemen from the van, with whom he intended to achieve a major victory. Antony gave him the men he asked for, and when the Parthians attacked, Gallus beat them back, but instead of employing the normal tactics of withdrawing and enticing them on to the Roman heavy infantry, he took the more risky option of standing his ground and engaging the enemy. The officers in command of the rear saw that he was being cut off and got a message to him calling him back, but he refused to listen. They say that the quaestor, Titius, grabbed hold of the standards and tried to turn them back, while raging against Gallus for causing the deaths of so many brave men. Gallus, however, merely raged back at him and ordered his men to stand firm—while Titius retreated to the Roman lines. As Gallus pushed his way into the Parthians facing him, he failed to notice that large numbers of the enemy were coming round to take him in the rear. With missiles raining down on him from all sides he sent a courier asking for reinforcements. At this point Canidius—a man who wielded a great deal of influence with Antony—and the other officers in charge of the heavy infantry are generally held to have made a serious mistake. Instead of directing the entire body of the heavy infantry *en masse* against the enemy, as they should, they sent only a few men at a time to help Gallus. As one lot were defeated they kept dispatching others until they gradually came close, without even noticing it, to spreading defeat and retreat throughout the whole army. This would have happened if Antony had not personally brought his troops up at the double from the van to confront the fugitives, and if the third legion had not rapidly forced its way through them and stopped the enemy chasing them any further.

[43] At least three thousand men lost their lives, and five thousand more were carried back wounded to their tents. Among the injured was Gallus, who had four arrows sticking into the front of his body. Gallus did not recover from his wounds, but Antony visited the survivors in their tents and tried to cheer them up. He was in tears, deeply moved, and the wounded men grasped his hand, with radiant smiles on their faces, and urged him not to worry about them, but to leave and take care of himself; they addressed him as imperator and said that they were safe as long as he was well. To put it briefly, no other commander of the day seems to have assembled an army which

was more remarkable for its strength, resilience or energy. Their respect for him as their leader, their loyal obedience, the fact that all of them equally, however famous or insignificant they were, and whether they were officers or rank-and-file soldiers, would have sacrificed their lives and safety to win acclaim or rewards from Antony—all this left even the ancient Romans behind. There were a number of reasons for this, as I have already said: his high birth, his eloquence, his straightforward manner, his prodigious generosity, his sense of humour, and his geniality. On the occasion in question, by sympathizing with the pain and distress of the suffering and by giving them whatever they asked for, he made the sick and wounded more wholeheartedly committed to the enterprise than their fit comrades.

[44] However, the victory raised the morale of the enemy so much, cancelling out their earlier reluctance and exhaustion, and made them feel such contempt for the Romans, that they even pitched their tents for the night close to the Romans' camp, since they fully expected at any moment to be plundering deserted tents and valuables whose owners had turned and fled. At dawn they massed in far larger numbers than before; in fact, there are said to have been at least forty thousand horsemen, since the king (who never took part in any battles himself) had sent even his regular bodyguard for what was apparently an assured and easy victory. Antony wanted to address his men and he asked for a dark cloak, to make himself appear more pitiful, but his friends argued him out of it. So he stepped forward in his commander's purple cloak and made a speech in which he praised those of his men who the day before had been victorious and condemned those who had fled the field of battle. The first group then told him not to worry, while the others apologized and said that they would submit to decimation or any other kind of punishment he cared to impose; all they wanted, they said, was for him to stop being so despondent and gloomy. In response he raised his arms and prayed to the gods that if any retribution were due as a result of his previous successes, it should fall on him alone, and that they should grant the rest of the army safety and victory.

[45] The next day they set out with more effective protection, and the Parthians were stunned by what they encountered when they attacked. They rode up under the impression that booty and plunder awaited them, not a battle, but they met with a hail of missiles and could see that the Romans were reinvigorated, refreshed, and

committed. As a result, the Parthians began once again to lose their appetite for battle. At one point the Romans were descending a steep hill with the Parthians attacking them and shooting at them as they slowly extricated themselves from danger. Then the Roman shield-bearers wheeled round and enclosed the light-armed troops within their ranks, dropped down on to one knee, and held their shields out as a defensive barrier. The men behind them held their shields over the heads of the first rank, while the third rank did the same for the second rank. The resulting shape, which is a remarkable sight, looks very like a roof, and is the surest protection against arrows, which just glance off it.* The Parthians, however, mistook the Romans' falling on to one knee as a sign of exhausted weariness, so they put down their bows, grabbed their javelins, and joined battle. But the Romans suddenly leapt to their feet with a shout and lunged forward with their spears. They killed the front ranks of the Parthians and made all the rest fall back. The same thing happened on the following days too, as the Romans made their gradual way along the road.

Famine gripped the Roman army too, since even after a fight they could supply themselves with little grain and were short on implements for grinding it into flour. Such implements had mostly been abandoned because some of the yoke-animals had died and others were being used for transporting the sick and the wounded. It is said that an Attic choenix of wheat sold for fifty drachmas, and that barley loaves cost their weight in silver.* The men turned to vegetables and roots, but they found few with which they were familiar and were forced to experiment also with some they had never tasted before. There was one particular herb they tried which induced madness and ultimately death; anyone who ate it became fixated on the single task of moving and overturning every stone, as if he were achieving something of great importance. The plain was filled with men hunched over close to the ground, digging up and removing stones. Eventually they would vomit bile and die, since they had run out of the only antidote, wine. Many men died in this way, and the Parthians kept on harassing them, until Antony—so the story goes—would often cry out loud, 'Oh, the Ten Thousand!', in awe at Xenophon's men, whose march back from Babylon to the sea had been even longer and who had won their way to safety fighting far greater numbers of enemies.*

[46] Now that the Parthians were incapable of disturbing the army

or disrupting their formation, and had often been defeated and pushed back, they once again began to make peaceful overtures to the Romans who came out after fodder for the animals or grain. Making sure the Romans could see that their bows were unstrung, they told them that they had had enough of resistance and were returning to their homes—except that a few Medes would continue to follow the Romans for a day or two, not to harass them, but to protect their more remote villages. They accompanied these words with so many expressions of goodwill and friendliness that the Romans became hopeful once more, and Antony, when he heard the news, was inclined to take to the plains, since there was rumoured to be no water on the route through the mountains. Just as he was poised to put this plan into effect, however, a man called Mithridates, a cousin of the Monaeses who had been with Antony and had received from him the gift of the three cities,* arrived at the Roman camp from the enemy. Mithridates asked for an audience with someone who could speak Parthian or Syrian, and a close friend of Antony's, Alexander of Antioch, came to see him. After introducing himself and explaining that they had Monaeses to thank for this favour he was doing them, he asked Alexander whether he could see in the distance a range of high hills. When Alexander said he could, Mithridates went on: 'The Parthians are hidden in those hills at full strength, waiting to ambush you. The great plains begin at the foot of those hills and they are expecting you to leave the mountain road and turn in that direction, since you have fallen for their trick. It is true that the mountain road involves thirst and the usual difficulties, but Antony should know that if he takes the route through the plains he will meet the same fate as Crassus.'

[47] Mithridates left after imparting this information. The report thoroughly disturbed Antony, and he called his friends together for a meeting, to which he also summoned his Mardian guide. The Mardian agreed with Mithridates, since he knew that, even if there were no enemy to deal with, they would find no proper road for their journey across the plains and would have to make their way indirectly, using awkward, convoluted routes, and he explained that the mountain road involved nothing more problematic than a single day without sources of water. So Antony chose this route and, once he had given the command that his men were to carry water with them, he led them out under cover of darkness. Most of the men

were hard put to find vessels for the water, however: some had skins they could use, but others had to fill their helmets and bring it like that. However, the Parthians received information about Antony's movements while he was still on the march, and contrary to their usual practice they set out after him in the dark. At sunrise they caught up with the tail-enders. The Romans were exhausted from having missed their sleep and having worked hard, since they had covered 240 stades during the night. They had not expected the enemy to catch up with them so quickly, so the arrival of the Parthians disheartened them. Another problem was that they now had to keep the enemy at bay while advancing, and the fighting increased their thirst. The soldiers in the front reached a river whose water was cold and clear, but brackish and poisonous.* Anyone who drank it was immediately racked by the pain of stomach cramps and an inflamed thirst. The Mardian had warned them about this river, but men still pushed aside those who were trying to stop them getting to it and drank the water. Antony went around begging them to hold on for just a little longer, since there was another river, a drinkable one, not far ahead, and he told them that after that their way lay over terrain which was too rugged for cavalry, so that the enemy would have no choice but to turn back. He also ordered those who were fighting to break off, and gave the signal for pitching camp, so that his men would at least have some shade.

[48] As soon as the Romans began to fix their tents in place, the Parthians, typically, began to pull back. Mithridates came to the camp again and when Alexander joined him he recommended letting the army rest for only a short while before moving out at the double and heading for the river; he told them that the Parthians would chase them only up to the river, but would not cross it. After repeating this information to Antony, Alexander brought back, as a gift from Antony, a great many golden cups and bowls. Mithridates hid as many of these as he could inside his clothing and then rode off. The Romans broke camp while there was still daylight and set out, and although the enemy did not harass them, the Romans needed no help in making that night the most grim and terrifying night of all for themselves. They murdered and robbed anyone who had any gold or silver and plundered the baggage-train of its valuables; they ended up attacking even Antony's own baggage-carriers, cutting up goblets and precious tableware, and distributing the pieces among

themselves. The whole army was seized by confusion and chaos, because they thought they were being routed and dispersed by an enemy onslaught. Antony even summoned one of his bodyguards, a freedman called Rhamnus, and made him swear that, on his command, he would run him through with his sword and cut off his head, to prevent his being captured alive by the enemy or recognized when dead. His friends were in tears, but the Mardian told him not to be disheartened; he knew the river was near by because there was moisture in the air blowing from that direction and the cooler air in their faces was making it easier to breathe; and he added that the time they had been on the road—night was now drawing to a close—confirmed that there was not far to go. At the same time, others brought the news that the disturbance had been caused by criminality and greed from within their own ranks. And so, in order to organize his men and put an end to their confusion and dispersal, he ordered the signal for pitching camp to be sounded.

[49] Day was already dawning and the army was beginning to calm down and regain some kind of order when Parthian arrows started to strike the tail-enders and the signal was given for the light-armed troops to go into action. The heavy-armed troops repeated the manoeuvre whereby they covered one another with their shields, and so stood their ground against the archers, who did not dare to approach them. The front ranks crept forward like this, until the river came into sight. Antony deployed the cavalry on the river bank facing the enemy and sent his disabled men across first. Before long, however, even the Romans who were still at battle had the time and leisure to drink, because when the Parthians saw the river they unstrung their bows, told the Romans that they could cross the river with impunity, and congratulated them effusively on their courage. So the Romans crossed over unmolested, rested, and then resumed their march, still keeping a wary eye out for the Parthians.

On the sixth day after their final battle with the Parthians they reached the river Araxes, which divides Media from Armenia. The river looked formidably deep and fast-flowing, and there was a rumour among the men that the enemy were lying in wait for them there and would attack them as they were crossing. But they made the crossing in safety, and when they stepped on to Armenian soil their reaction resembled that of sailors who have just sighted land from the open sea: they fell to their knees, burst into tears, and threw

their arms around one another from sheer joy. However, as they advanced through prosperous land, where after all their hardship there was plenty of everything for them, they began to suffer from diarrhoea and stomach complaints.

[50] In Armenia Antony conducted a review of his troops, and found that 20,000 foot soldiers and 4,000 horsemen had died. They had not all been killed by the enemy: over half had died of illness. They had marched for twenty-seven days away from Phraata, and had defeated the Parthians eighteen times, but these victories had not been decisive or secure, because they had never pursued the enemy far enough to finish things off. This fact made it absolutely undeniable that it was Artavasdes of Armenia who had made it impossible for Antony to bring the war to a close. The sixteen thousand horsemen he had taken home with him from Media had been equipped very like the Parthians and had often fought them before.* If they had been there, the Romans could have engaged the enemy and overpowered them, the Armenians could have taken the fugitives, and then it would not have been possible for the Parthians to recover from their defeats and resume their efforts so often. So everyone was furious with the Armenian and tried to get Antony to punish him. But Antony declined to reproach him for his treachery or alter his usual friendly and respectful attitude towards him, which was sensible, because he was now low on numbers and in need of supplies. Later, however, when he invaded Armenia again, he held out all sorts of promises and proposals to Artavasdes, persuaded him to come within his reach, and then seized him and took him in chains down to Alexandria, where he celebrated a triumph.* This† was something the Romans found particularly offensive, because to please Cleopatra he gratified the Egyptians with the noble and solemn ceremonies proper to his homeland. But I have got ahead of my story.

[51] He now pressed on, despite the fact that it was deep winter and there were incessant snowstorms. Eight thousand men fell by the wayside. He himself came down to the sea, with the few men remaining to him, at a place called White Village, which was situated between Berytus and Sidon.* There he waited for Cleopatra, who took her time in arriving. He missed her terribly, and wandered around aimlessly. Before long he devoted his time to drinking himself into a stupor, although he could not recline at the table for long,

but would often leap to his feet in the middle of drinking and go to look for her. At last she sailed in, with plenty of clothing and money for his soldiers. But some say that although he got the clothing from her, the money he handed out came from his own resources, and he only pretended that it was her gift.

[52] A dispute arose between the Median king* and Phraates of Parthia, apparently over the Roman spoils, and it made the Mede suspicious of Phraates and afraid that he might try to take his kingdom from him. He therefore wrote a letter to Antony, inviting him to come and promising to support him with his own forces in a war against Parthia. Now, the only thing which had stopped Antony defeating the Parthians before was, to his mind, that he had gone there with too few horsemen and archers. He now saw this deficiency being remedied without his having to ask for it, and even in a way which made him the benefactor, and so it was in a very confident frame of mind that he began to make preparations to return inland through Armenia, meet up with the Mede at the Araxes, and then make war.

[53] Back in Rome Octavia wanted to sail to Antony, and Caesar gave her permission to go, though according to most sources this was not meant as a kindly gesture: he wanted her to provide him with a plausible excuse for declaring war if Antony treated her with disrespect and ignored her.* When she reached Athens there were letters waiting there for her from Antony, telling her to stay there and explaining that he was planning an expedition inland. Although she was angry—she was not taken in by his excuses—she wrote asking where he wanted her to send the things she had brought with her for him. She had brought a great deal of clothing for his soldiers, large numbers of yoke-animals, money, and gifts for his officers and friends. Apart from all this, she also had with her two thousand picked troops, equipped as praetorian cohorts, with magnificent armour. Niger, a friend of Antony's, was sent with this message from her, and he added his own praise of her undoubted virtues.

Cleopatra realized that Octavia was coming to take her on in hand-to-hand combat. She was afraid that the combination of Octavia's characteristic dignity with the threat of Caesar's power, as well as the pleasure of her company and her solicitous attentions to Antony, would make Octavia invincible and enable her to gain complete control over her husband. She therefore made a great pretence

of passionate love for Antony. She allowed her body to waste away on a meagre diet, looked ecstatic whenever he came near, and when he went away gave just a hint of forlorn sadness. She managed things so that he often saw her weeping, but then she would quickly wipe the tears from her face and conceal them, as if she did not want Antony to notice them. She kept this up throughout the time he was planning his expedition from Syria to join the Median king. Flatterers also worked hard on her behalf. They told Antony off for being so hard-hearted and insensitive that he was destroying the woman who was utterly devoted to him and him alone. They said that although Octavia enjoyed the name of his wife, it was a political marriage, arranged by her brother; Cleopatra, however, a queen with countless subjects, was called Antony's mistress, and yet she did not reject the name or disown it, as long as she could see him and live with him. But if she were driven away, they said, she would not survive the shock. They eventually made him so soft and effeminate that he became afraid of Cleopatra wasting away, so he went back to Alexandria and told the Mede to wait until summer, even though there was a rumour that the Parthians were at one another's throats. Nevertheless, when he did go up to Media,* he won the king over to renew their friendship, and after arranging the marriage between one of the Mede's daughters, who was still a child, and one of Cleopatra's sons, he returned to the coast, with his mind now focused on the civil war.

[54] Octavia did seem to have been treated with disrespect, so when she returned from Athens Caesar told her she should live in her own house. But she refused to leave her husband's house, and she even begged Caesar in person, if it was not too late and he had not already decided on other grounds to go to war with Antony, to make nothing of her situation. After all, she said, it would be a terrible thing if the two greatest commanders in the world were said to have plunged Rome into civil war, one because he loved a woman and the other out of protectiveness. And her actions only showed how much she meant these words. She lived in Antony's house as if he were there, and cared for not only their children, but also his children by Fulvia, in an admirable and even exemplary fashion. She also welcomed any of Antony's friends who were sent to Rome on matters such as taking up some official position, and helped them succeed in getting what they wanted from Caesar. By doing all this, however,

she was hurting Antony without meaning to, because he became hated for wronging a woman of her fine quality.

He also incurred people's hatred for the provisions he made for his children in Alexandria, which seemed to be theatrical, overdone, and anti-Roman. He filled the Gymnasium with a crowd of people, had two golden thrones placed on a silver stage, one for himself and one for Cleopatra, with further thrones, of a more humble design, arranged there for his sons. Then he proclaimed Cleopatra queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Africa, and Coele Syria, with Caesarion as her joint ruler. Caesarion was generally held to be the son of the previous Caesar, who had left Cleopatra pregnant. Next, he proclaimed his sons by Cleopatra 'kings of kings', and assigned Armenia, Media, and Parthia (looking ahead to when he had gained it) to Alexander, and Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia to Ptolemy.* While making this announcement, he brought his sons forward for all to see; Alexander was dressed in Median clothes and wore a *tiara* and an upright *kitaris*, while Ptolemy was attired in military boots, a cavalryman's cloak, and a *kausia* supporting a diadem. That is, Ptolemy was dressed in the manner adopted by all the kings since Alexander the Great, and Alexander was fitted out like the Median and Armenian kings.* After the children had greeted their parents, Alexander was given a guard of honour consisting of Armenians, and Ptolemy was given one of Macedonians. On this occasion, and at other times when Cleopatra appeared in public before a large crowd, she appropriated a robe which was sacred to Isis, and assumed the title 'New Isis'.

[55] By disclosing all this to the senate and often denouncing Antony before the Roman people, Caesar tried to incite the masses against Antony. In response, Antony sent counter-accusations against Caesar. The most important charges he brought were, first, that after taking Sicily away from Pompey Caesar had not given him his share of the island; second, that Caesar had never returned the ships he had lent him for the war; third, that after depriving his fellow triumvir, Lepidus, of his office and his rights, Caesar hung on to the army, the territory, and the revenue which had been assigned to Lepidus; finally, and above all, that Caesar had colonized almost all Italy for his own soldiers and left nothing for Antony's men.* Caesar defended himself against these charges by saying that he had removed Lepidus from office because he was abusing his power; and

that he would share with Antony what he had taken in war just as soon as Antony shared Armenia with him. Likewise, Antony's soldiers had no claims on Italy, because they had Media and Parthia, which they had annexed for the Roman empire by their fine efforts in war under their imperator.

[56] Antony received the news of Caesar's reply while he was in Armenia, and he immediately ordered Canidius to take sixteen legions and go down to the coast, while he collected Cleopatra and went to Ephesus, where his fleet was assembling from all quarters.* There were eight hundred ships, including merchantmen; Cleopatra had supplied two hundred of them, as well as twenty thousand talents and provisions for the whole army for the duration of the war. Antony followed the advice of Domitius and some others and told Cleopatra to set sail for Egypt and wait out the war there. But she was afraid that Octavia would again arrange a reconciliation, so she won Canidius over, with the help of a large bribe, to talk to Antony about her and say that, in the first place, it was wrong to exclude from the war a woman who had contributed so much towards his war effort, and, in the second place, that he would regret lowering the morale of the Egyptians, who constituted a substantial proportion of his naval force. And besides, he was to say, he certainly could not see that Cleopatra was the intellectual inferior of any of the allied kings: she had governed a vast kingdom all on her own for many years, and she had also been with him for a long time and had learnt to manage important matters. It was fated that everything should fall into Caesar's hands,* and so these arguments prevailed.

The assembled force sailed to Samos where they relaxed and indulged themselves.* For just as every king, ruler, tetrarch, tribe, and community from the lands between Syria, Lake Maeotis, Armenia, and Illyricum had been ordered to send or bring men and *matériel* for the war, so every craftsman in the arts sacred to Dionysus had been compelled to congregate on Samos; and while, all around, almost the whole inhabited world was filled with sighs and groans, a single island resounded, day after day, with the music of pipes and lyres, as the theatres were packed and choruses competed with one another. Every city also sent an ox for a communal sacrifice, and kings entered into rivalry over the parties they held and gifts they gave. The upshot of all this was that the question began to circulate: 'If their preparations for war are treated as an occasion for such

extravagant festivities, what kind of victory celebrations will they put on when they win?"

[57] Once these festivities were over, Antony gave the artists of Dionysus Priene to live in, and then sailed to Athens, where he again amused himself with diversions and theatrical performances. Now, Octavia was particularly loved by the Athenians and had been awarded a number of privileges there; this made Cleopatra jealous, and she set about winning the people over by putting on a number of extravaganzas. So the Athenians decreed privileges for her and sent a delegation to her house with a copy of the decree. The delegation included Antony, who was, after all, an Athenian citizen; he stood before her and delivered a speech on behalf of the city. Meanwhile, he sent men to Rome to throw Octavia out of his house.* She left with all Antony's children, except for the eldest of Fulvia's sons, who was with his father, and they say that she was in tears, upset by the idea that people might take her to be one of the causes of the war. The Romans felt sorry for Antony rather than her, especially those of them who had seen Cleopatra and knew that she was no more beautiful or attractive than Octavia.

[58] Caesar was deeply concerned when he heard about the speed and size of Antony's preparations; he did not want to have to fight out the war that summer, since he was nowhere near ready. Moreover, the taxes he had imposed were proving unpopular: people in general were required to give up a quarter of their income, and freedmen an eighth of their capital. They felt this was outrageous of him, and it led to turmoil throughout Italy. Antony's tardiness in starting the war is therefore held to be one of his greatest mistakes. He allowed Caesar time to get ready and let the turmoil die down, since people were angry only while the money was being exacted, but once it had been exacted and they had handed it over, they calmed down. Then again, Titius and Plancus, two ex-consuls who were on Antony's side and had spoken out very strongly against Cleopatra's staying during the campaign, were treated with such insolence by her that they fled over to Caesar and revealed to him the content of Antony's will, with which they were familiar. The will was lodged with the Vestal Virgins,* who refused to give it up when Caesar asked for it, and told him that if he really wanted it he should come and get it himself. So he did just that. First he read it through by himself, marking various discreditable sections, and then he

convened the senate and read it out to them. This did not go down well with most of the senators, who considered it weird and awful to call a man to account while he was still alive for what he wanted to happen after his death. Caesar particularly latched on to the will's provisions regarding Antony's burial. Antony had given instructions that, even if he died in Rome, his body should be ceremonially escorted through the forum and then sent to Cleopatra in Egypt. Calvisius, a companion of Caesar's,* also brought forward further charges regarding Antony's relationship with Cleopatra. He said that to please her Antony had given her the contents of the library of Pergamum, which consisted of 200,000 individual book-rolls; that at a banquet, in front of all the guests, he had got up and massaged her feet to fulfil some wager or compact; that he had let her get away with having the Ephesians greet her as their mistress, while he was right there beside her; that often, in the middle of hearing the pleas of tetrarchs and kings from his seat on a dais, he had received from her billets-doux written on tablets of onyx and crystal, and read them there and then; and that once, in the middle of a speech by Furnius, one of the most eloquent and highly regarded men in Rome, Antony saw Cleopatra being carried through the forum on a litter, and he leapt to his feet, left the court in mid-session, and accompanied Cleopatra on her way, with his hand resting on the litter.

[59] In fact, though, it was generally believed that most of the charges Calvisius brought up were false. But Antony's friends in Rome did their best to intercede with the people on his behalf, and sent one of their number, Geminius, to beg Antony not to stand by while his authority was officially removed and he was declared an enemy of Rome. Geminius sailed to Greece, but Cleopatra suspected he was acting in Octavia's interests, so at dinners he became the constant butt of jokes, and was insulted by being allocated the least prestigious couches. He put up with everything, however, and waited for a chance to have a meeting with Antony. Eventually he was told to deliver his message in the middle of a meal. He said that most of the discussions he had come for required a clear head, but that, drunk or sober, there was one thing he was sure of, and that was that all would be well if Cleopatra were sent back to Egypt. Antony lost his temper at his, and Cleopatra said, 'Geminius, you have done well to confess the truth without having it tortured out of you.' A few days later, then, Geminius fled back to Rome. He was far from being

the only one of Antony's friends who was driven away by the intolerable drunkenness and coarse humour of Cleopatra's flatterers. The same thing happened to Marcus Silanus, for instance, and to Dellius the historian. Dellius adds that he was also afraid that Cleopatra was hatching a plot against him, which Glaucus, the doctor, told him about. What happened was that Dellius got on the bad side of Cleopatra by remarking once at dinner that while they were being served sour wine, in Rome Sarmentus was drinking Falernian. Sarmentus was one of Caesar's little boyfriends, for whom the Roman word is *deliciae*.

[60] Once Caesar had got far enough with his preparations, a decree was passed declaring war on Cleopatra and depriving Antony of the authority which he had surrendered to a woman.* In his speech Caesar added that Antony was under the influence of drugs and had no authority over even himself, and that their opponents in the war would be Mardion the eunuch, Pothinus, Iras (Cleopatra's hairdresser), and Charmion, who were in charge of the most important aspects of Antony's administration.*

It is said that certain portents occurred before the war. Pisaurum, a colony established by Antony on the Adriatic, was swallowed up by chasms which opened up in the earth. Sweat oozed from a stone statue of Antony in Alba for a number of days and wiping it away did not make it stop. While he was in Patrae the Heracleum was struck by thunderbolts and burnt to the ground. The figure of Dionysus in the Gigantomachy in Athens was shaken loose by high winds and crashed down into the theatre. Now, Antony linked himself to Heracles by birth and, as I have already said, to Dionysus by his life-style, and was called a new Dionysus. The same storm also struck the huge statues of Eumenes and Attalus, which had been inscribed with Antony's name, and knocked them over, while leaving all the other statues safe. Cleopatra's flagship, which was called the *Antonias*, was also the object of a terrifying portent: some swallows made their nest under the stern, but others attacked them, drove them away, and killed the baby birds.*

[61] So the two sides assembled their forces for the war. Antony had at least 500 warships, quite a few of which were octaremes and decaremes,* fitted out in a splendid and ostentatious fashion, while his army consisted of 100,000 foot soldiers and 12,000 horsemen. The subject kings who fought alongside him were Bogus of Africa,

Tarcandemus of upper Cilicia, Archelaus of Cappadocia, Philadelphus of Paphlagonia, Mithridates of Commagene, and Sadalas of Thrace. These kings were actually there in person, while Polemo sent an army from Pontus, as did Malchas from Arabia and Herod of Judaea, as well as Amyntas, the king of the Lycaonians and Galatians. The king of the Medes also sent a force of auxiliaries. Caesar had 250 warships, 80,000 foot soldiers, and almost the same size cavalry contingent as the enemy. Antony's domain extended from the Euphrates and Armenia to the Ionian Sea and Illyricum, while Caesar's stretched from Illyricum to the Western Ocean and from there back down again to the Tyrrhenian and Sicilian Sea. Africa was divided: the parts opposite Italy, Gaul and Spain, all the way to the Pillars of Heracles, were under Caesar's control, while Antony held the parts from Cyrene to Ethiopia.*

[62] However, Antony was more or less entirely an appendage of Cleopatra by now—so much so that, although he had a definite advantage on land, for her sake he wanted victory to go to the fleet, despite being able to see that, in order to supplement his inadequate crews, the trierarchs were seizing and carrying off from 'long-suffering' Greece* travellers, muleteers, harvest labourers, and youths just out of childhood, and that even then the ships lacked their full complements, and were undermanned and incompetently handled. Caesar's ships, however, had not been built as showpieces for their height or mass; they were manoeuvrable, fast, and fully manned. With his fleet gathered at a perfect state of readiness in Tarentum and Brundisium, he sent a message to Antony calling on him to stop wasting time, but to come and bring his forces with him. He said that he would personally guarantee Antony's fleet unhindered access to havens and harbours, and would pull his army back a day's ride from the coast, until he had safely disembarked his troops and established a camp. Antony responded in kind to this boastful talk by challenging Caesar to single combat, despite the fact that he was an older man, and by insisting, if Caesar declined to take up this offer, that the armies should fight it out at Pharsalus, as Caesar and Pompey once had many years before.* However, Caesar made the first move, and while Antony was lying at anchor off Actium, in the place where Nicopolis now stands, he crossed the Ionian Sea and landed at a village in Epirus called Toryne, or 'stirring-spoon'. Antony was worried, because his land forces had not yet arrived, but Cleopatra made

a joke out of it and said, 'What's so terrible about Caesar sitting on the stirring-spoon?'

[63] When the enemy sailed against him early the next day, Antony was afraid that his ships would prove easy prey because they still had no marines on board, so he armed the oarsmen and lined them up on the decks where they could be plainly seen, and then he had the ships raise their oars in the air like wings on both sides and he deployed them in a tight formation in the mouth of the strait near Actium with their prows pointing out to sea, as if they were fully manned and ready to resist any attack. Defeated by Antony's superior tactics, Caesar withdrew. Another scheme of Antony's which is generally held to have been ingenious was his depriving the enemy of fresh water by enclosing the sources within certain barricades, since the villages thereabouts had little water, and it was not of a good quality. He also treated Domitius* with generosity, contrary to Cleopatra's wishes. Domitius, despite suffering from a fever, had taken a small boat and gone over to Caesar, which upset Antony a great deal, but he still sent him all his gear, along with his friends and attendants. But no sooner had Domitius changed sides than he died, apparently at the shame of his disloyalty and treachery being exposed.

Domitius' was not the only defection: among the kings, Amyntas and Deiotarus went over to Caesar's side.* Since his fleet never enjoyed any success and was always too late to offer any real assistance, Antony had no choice but to turn his attention back to his land forces. But Canidius, the commander of the land forces, changed his mind in the light of the riskiness of their situation; he recommended sending Cleopatra home and pulling back to Thrace or Macedonia, where they could let a land battle decide the issue. Dicomus, the king of the Getae, was promising to come to their help with substantial reinforcements, and Canidius added the argument that there was no disgrace in their yielding control of the sea to Caesar now that the Sicilian War* had given him all the practice he might have needed at naval warfare, whereas it would be shocking if Antony, who was far more experienced in land battles, did not make use of the strength and preparedness of his vast force of legionaries, but squandered this great resource by dividing it up among the ships. However, Cleopatra prevailed with the view that the war should be decided at sea, although her mind was already turning to thoughts of flight, and she

was deploying her forces in positions from which they could most easily extricate themselves in the event of defeat, rather than where they would contribute towards victory.

There were long walls stretching down to the docks from the camp, and Antony often made his way between these walls without a care in the world. But a slave alerted Caesar to the possibility of capturing Antony as he walked down towards the sea there, and Caesar sent men to lie in wait for him. These men came very close to fulfilling their mission, but in fact they succeeded only in abducting the man who had been walking in front of Antony, since they emerged from their hiding-place too soon. Antony himself only just managed to escape by running away.

[64] Once he had decided to fight at sea, Antony burnt all but sixty of the Egyptian ships and manned the best and largest of the Roman ships, which ranged from triremes to decaremes, with a complement of 20,000 legionaries and 2,000 archers. It was at this point, as the story goes, that an infantry officer, a scarred veteran of very many battles fought for Antony, burst into tears as Antony was passing by and said, 'Imperator, why do you despise these wounds and this sword of mine, and pin your hopes on wretched planks of wood? Leave sea battles to Egyptians and Phoenicians, but give us land: that is where we are accustomed to stand; that is where we either die or defeat the enemy.' Antony made no reply, but merely gestured with his hand and composed his features as if to tell the man not to be disheartened, and walked on by. In fact, though, he was not particularly confident himself, since he insisted on the ships' captains taking their sails on board with them, when they were intending to leave them behind. The reason he gave was that not a single one of the enemy should be allowed to make good his escape.*

[65] No fighting could take place that day, or for the next three days, because a strong wind whipped up the sea, but on the fifth day, with the weather fine and the sea calm, battle was joined.* Antony and Publicola were in command of the right wing, with Coelius on the left and Marcus Octavius and Marcus Insteius in the centre. Caesar put Agrippa in command of his left wing and reserved the right wing for himself. The land forces—that of Antony under Canidius and that of Caesar under Taurus—lined the shore in silence. Of the two commanders, Antony made the rounds of all his ships in a rowing-boat. His advice to his men was to trust in the weight of the ships and

so to stand firm and fight exactly as if they were on land, while he ordered the captains to maintain their positions when the enemy launched ramming attacks without moving, as if their ships were lying at anchor, and to guard the narrows at the mouth of the strait. As for Caesar, there is a story that he left his tent while it was still dark and was walking towards the ships when he met a man driving a donkey. He asked the man's name, and the man, who recognized Caesar, said, 'My name is Lucky and my donkey's name is Victor.' And that is why when Caesar later erected a display of ships' prows on the spot, he also set up a bronze statue of a donkey and a man.* After undertaking a general survey of his array of ships, he was taken to the right wing in a boat. He was astonished to see how still the enemy ships were keeping in the strait. It was as if they were riding at anchor, and for a long time that is what he believed they were doing, and so he kept his own ships about eight stades away from the enemy. But at midday a sea wind began to blow, and Antony's men became impatient at the delay. They were sure that ships as tall and large as theirs would be invincible, and so they started the left wing forward. Caesar was delighted to see this happen. He had his right wing back water, because he wanted to draw the enemy even further out of the bay and away from the strait, until he could surround them with his own manoeuvrable ships and then join battle with ships which were too bulky and undermanned to have much agility or speed.

[66] Even when the battle was getting to the stage of close engagement, no ramming or crushing took place. Antony's ships were too slow to generate the momentum necessary to make the impact of ramming effective, and Caesar's ships were not just wary of a head-on collision with hard and cruel bronze-armoured prows, but were also not so foolhardy as to attempt to ram the enemy ships in the side, because their beaks were easily broken off wherever they crashed into the ships, which were made of large squared-off beams joined together with iron and lashed to one another. So the fight resembled a land battle or, to use a more precise image, an assault on a walled town. For three or four of Caesar's ships would cluster around one of Antony's, while the marines wielded mantlets, spears, javelins, and flaming missiles; the troops on Antony's ships even shot at the enemy with catapults mounted on wooden towers.*

Agrippa began to extend the left wing in order to come round

behind the enemy, and so Publicola was forced to respond by moving against him, but in doing so he became separated from the centre. The ships in the centre were thrown into confusion and were engaged by the enemy ships under Arruntius. Although the battle was still undecided and could have gone either way, suddenly Cleopatra's sixty ships were seen hoisting their sails for flight and breaking away through the mass of fighting ships; they had been deployed behind the large warships and caused chaos as they forced their way through. The enemy looked on in amazement as the ships took advantage of the wind to head for the Peloponnese. This was the point at which Antony showed beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was not governed by the considerations proper to a ruler or to a true man—in fact that he was not governed by his own mind at all. Someone once said as a joke that a lover's mind lives in someone else's body, and by the same token Antony was pulled away by Cleopatra as if he were grafted on to her and had to go wherever she went. As soon as he spotted her ship sailing away, he forgot everything else. In an act of treachery, he ran away from the men who were fighting and dying for him, transferred over to a quinquereme, allowing only Alexas of Syria and Scellius to board with him, and set out after the woman who had already destroyed him and would merely add to his ruin.

[67] Once she recognized him, she had a signal of acknowledgement raised on her ship, and so Antony drew up alongside and was taken on board. But he did not see her, nor was he seen by her: he went forward alone to the prow and sat in silent self-absorption, holding his head in his hands. Just then, however, Liburnian ships from Caesar's fleet were sighted in hot pursuit. Antony gave orders that the ship was to be turned around to face them prow on, and this checked all their pursuers except for Eurycles of Laconia, who bore confidently down on him, brandishing a spear from the deck of his ship as if he intended to hurl it at Antony. Standing in the prow, Antony asked, 'Who is it who pursues Antony?' 'I am Eurycles the son of Lachares,' he replied, 'and thanks to Caesar's good fortune I have the chance to avenge my father's death.' (Lachares had been beheaded by Antony after being caught up in a charge of piracy.) However, Eurycles did not ram Antony's ship, but the other of the two flagships, which spun around when he struck it with his bronze beak and fell foul of his, broadside on. So he captured this ship, and

one other, which was carrying valuable household equipment. As soon as Eurycles was out of the way, Antony resumed his position, sitting silently in the prow. He spent three days there on his own, perhaps because he was angry with Cleopatra, or perhaps because he was ashamed to face her, but then, when they landed at Taenarum, Cleopatra's ladies-in-waiting managed to get them to talk to each other, and then persuaded them to share a meal and go to bed together.

Soon quite a few of their transport ships and some of their friends who had survived the rout began to rally around them. The news they brought was that the fleet was lost, but that the land forces still held together, as far as they knew. So Antony sent messengers to Canidius with orders that he was to pull back with the army through Macedonia and into Asia as quickly as possible, while he planned to cross over to Africa from Taenarum. First, however, he selected a single transport ship, with its rich cargo of coined money and valuable royal paraphernalia in gold and silver, and presented it publicly to his friends, for them to share and use to keep themselves safe. They refused his gift with tears in their eyes, but he spoke to them in a kind and friendly tone of voice, telling them to cheer up and begging them to accept the gift. Then he sent them on their way, with a letter from him to Theophilus, his procurator in Corinth, instructing him to ensure that the men stayed safe and in hiding until they had negotiated a reconciliation with Caesar. This Theophilus was the father of Hipparchus, who had a very great deal of influence with Antony, but was the first of his freedmen to go over to Caesar's side, and later settled in Corinth.

[68] This was how things stood with Antony. At Actium the fleet held out against Caesar for a long time, and it was only after it had sustained serious damage from the high seas that arose and battered it head on that they gave up, after nine hours of fighting. At the most, about five thousand men lost their lives, but, as Caesar himself has recorded, three hundred ships were captured. Antony's flight was not common knowledge, and at first, when people found out, they found the story incredible. They could not understand how he could have gone off and left nineteen legions of undefeated infantry soldiers and twelve thousand cavalymen too. After all, he had often experienced both good and bad fortune, and had been trained by the vicissitudes of countless battles and wars. His men missed him and

expected him suddenly to appear from somewhere, and the extent of their trust and courage is shown by the fact that even after his flight had become undeniable they held together for seven days, ignoring the messages Caesar's heralds delivered to them. But in the end, once their commander, Canidius, had sneaked away under cover of darkness and abandoned the camp,* they found that they were leaderless and had been betrayed by all their senior officers, so they surrendered to the victor.

Caesar next sailed to Athens. After coming to terms with the Greeks he distributed the grain he had left from the war among the cities, which were in a bad way because their money, slaves, and yoke-animals had been stolen. At any rate, my great-grandfather Nicarchus used to tell how he and all his fellow citizens were forced to carry a stipulated measure of wheat on their shoulders down to the sea at Anticyra, and how whips were used to keep them moving at a brisk pace. They had taken one such load, and the second was already measured out and ready for transporting, when news arrived of Antony's defeat. This saved the city, because Antony's procurators and soldiers fled straight away, and the citizens divided the grain among themselves.*

[69] Antony landed at Paraetonium in Africa and sent Cleopatra on ahead to Egypt. That left him with nothing but solitude to enjoy, and he wandered around aimlessly here and there with two friends—a Greek, the orator Aristocrates, and a Roman, Lucilius. Elsewhere I have described how at Philippi Lucilius helped Brutus escape from his pursuers by convincing them that he was Brutus and surrendering to them, and how Antony spared his life. Lucilius was so grateful to Antony for sparing him that he became a loyal and trustworthy friend, and stayed with him right up to the bitter end.*

When the man to whom he had entrusted his forces in Africa defected with them to the enemy, Antony determined to kill himself, but his friends stopped him and he went to Alexandria, where he found Cleopatra engaged in a major and extraordinary enterprise. The isthmus separating the Red Sea from the sea off Egypt, which is regarded as the border between Asia and Africa, is three hundred stades wide at its narrowest point, where the two seas squeeze it most. Cleopatra had undertaken to lift her fleet on to dry land and drag it across the isthmus at this point, with the intention of launching it in the Arabian Gulf, taking a great deal of money and

a substantial army, and finding somewhere away from Egypt to settle and live, far from the dangers of slavery and war. But the first ships were burnt by the Arabs living around Petra as they were being dragged along, and Antony was still under the impression that his army at Actium was holding together, so she gave up this attempt and guarded the approaches to Egypt instead.

Antony left the city and the company of his friends and moved to Pharos, where he ran a jetty out into the water and built himself a house by the sea. He spent his time there, an exile from the world of men, claiming to find Timon's way of life both satisfying and admirable. After all, he said, his experiences had been similar to Timon's: he too had been wronged and treated with ingratitude by his friends, and so had come to mistrust and hate the whole human race.

[70] Timon was an Athenian who lived round about the time of the Peloponnesian War, as we can infer from the plays of Aristophanes and Plato, where he is made fun of as a bad-tempered misanthrope.* He avoided and actively resisted all social intercourse, but he enjoyed the company of Alcibiades, who was then a brash young man, and used to shower him with kisses. When Apemantus expressed his surprise and asked him the reason for this, Timon replied that he liked the young man because he knew that he would cause the Athenians no end of trouble. Apemantus was the only one who was occasionally allowed to join him, on the grounds that he felt much the same way as him and admired his way of life. Once, during the Festival of the Pitchers, the two of them were having their own feast off by themselves, and Apemantus said, 'Timon, what an excellent party we're having!' 'It would be,' Timon replied, 'if you weren't here.' There is a story that once he ascended the speaker's platform in the Athenian Assembly. This was so unusual that the crowd fell silent with intense anticipation. Then Timon said, 'Men of Athens, I own a small plot of land, which has a fig-tree growing on it; and in the past many of my fellow citizens have hanged themselves from this tree. Now, I'm intending to build a house there, and I wanted to give you advance notice of this, so that any of you who feel so inclined can hang themselves before the fig is cut down.'

After Timon's death, he was buried by the sea at Halae, but the part of the shore in front of the grave collapsed, and the sea washed around the tomb so that nobody could get near or approach it. The inscription on the tomb was as follows:

Here I lie, having brought to its final end an ill-starred life of misery. My name is no business of yours. I wish for you vile people nothing but a vile death.

They say that he composed this inscription himself while he was alive, but there is another one, which has achieved wide circulation, by Callimachus:

This tomb houses Timon. I loathed mankind, so walk on by.
Curse me all you like, just so long as you walk on by.

These are a few of the many stories about Timon.

[71] Canidius brought Antony the news of the loss of his forces at Actium in person, rather than entrusting it to anyone else, and at the same time Antony heard that Herod of Judaea had gone over to Caesar, taking with him a number of legions and cohorts. Reports also began to arrive that the defection to Caesar by the client kings was becoming general, and that his forces outside Egypt were all falling apart. None of this news upset him, however: it was as if he was pleased to have relinquished his hopes, since that meant he could also relinquish his cares. He left his beach-house, which he called the Timoneum, found accommodation in Cleopatra's palace, and then set the city on a course of eating, drinking, and displays of generosity. For instance, he had the son of Cleopatra and Caesar enrolled among the young men who had come of age and conferred the *toga virilis* on Antyllus, his son by Fulvia, and to mark the occasion Alexandria was filled for many days with symposia and revelry and celebrations.* Antony and Cleopatra dissolved their club, the Society of Inimitable Livers, and formed another one instead. This new club was just as devoted to sensuality, self-indulgence, and extravagance as the other one, but they called it the Society of Partners in Death. Their friends registered themselves as those who would die together, and they all spent their time in a hedonistic round of banquets. Cleopatra was putting together a collection of various types of lethal poisons, and she tested each of them to see which of them was painless, by giving them to prisoners who had been sentenced to death. When she saw that the fast-acting ones brought a swift but painful death, whereas the gentler ones were slow to take effect, she started experimenting with wild animals, and watched as her men set various creatures on one prisoner after another. This became her

daily routine, and she found that in almost every case only the bite of the asp induced a sleepy lethargy without any convulsions or groans; their faces covered with a sheen of light sweat and their senses dulled, the men painlessly lost the use of their limbs and resisted all attempts to stir them and wake them up, just like people who are fast asleep.

[72] They also sent a delegation to Caesar in Asia to ask, on Cleopatra's behalf, that her children might be allowed to inherit the rulership of Egypt, and, on Antony's behalf, that he might live as a private citizen in Athens, if Caesar did not want him to do so in Egypt.* Because they had so few friends left, and were in any case mistrustful of them because so many others had defected, they sent the children's tutor, Euphronius, as their spokesman. Alexas of Laodicea, who had been introduced into Roman society by Timagenes, had formerly been the most influential Greek in Antony's entourage—and had also been the most violent of the tools Cleopatra had set to work against Antony, to eradicate any thoughts he might entertain in Octavia's favour. But after he had been sent to King Herod to curb his impulse to defect, he had stayed there and betrayed Antony. Later, he had the effrontery to seek an audience with Caesar, relying on Herod's influence to keep him safe. But Herod was no help to him at all, and he was immediately thrown into prison and taken in chains to his homeland, where he was put to death on Caesar's orders. And so Antony was repaid while he was still alive for Alexas' treachery.

[73] Caesar rejected Antony's request, and told Cleopatra that she would meet with decent treatment provided she either put Antony to death or threw him out of Egypt. He also sent, as a personal messenger from himself to Cleopatra, a freedman called Thyrsus, who was a man of considerable intelligence, with the ability to speak persuasively on a young commander's behalf to a haughty woman with an astonishingly high opinion of her own beauty. Thyrsus had longer meetings with her than any of the other delegates, and was treated with remarkable respect, which made Antony wonder what was going on. In the end he seized Thyrsus and had him flogged, before letting him return to Caesar with a letter from him, saying that Thyrsus' arrogant and supercilious ways had infuriated him at a time when his temper was short because of all his troubles. 'If you find what I've done intolerable,' he said, 'you've got my freedman,

Hipparchus. You can string him up and flog him, and then we'll be quits.* Cleopatra next tried to redeem herself in Antony's eyes and allay his suspicions by paying him an excessive amount of solicitous attention. She celebrated her own birthday in an unpretentious way that suited their unfortunate circumstances, but she marked his with extremely flashy and costly festivities. In fact, a lot of the guests arrived at the banquet poor, but left rich. Meanwhile, however, Caesar was receiving a stream of letters from Agrippa in Rome urging him to return, since affairs there demanded his presence.

[74] This meant that war was postponed for the time being, but at the end of the winter Caesar again made his way through Syria while his commanders advanced through Africa.* Pelusium fell, and despite a rumour that Seleucus had surrendered the city with Cleopatra's connivance, she let Antony put Seleucus' wife and children to death. By now Cleopatra had built for herself, near the temple of Isis,* a wonderfully imposing and beautiful tomb and monument, and she collected there the most valuable of the royal treasures—gold, silver, emeralds, pearls, ebony, ivory, cinnamon—and also a great deal of firewood and tow. This made Caesar worried about the possibility of the woman getting desperate and burning up all the treasure, so he was constantly sending her friendly messages designed to keep her hopes up, even while he was advancing on the city with his army. Finally, he took up a position near the Hippodrome,* but Antony came out against him and fought a brilliant battle, in which Caesar's cavalry was routed and had to retreat back to their camp with Antony in pursuit. Antony felt good after this victory. He marched into the palace, went up to Cleopatra with his armour still on, kissed her, and introduced to her the man from his army who had fought with the greatest distinction. As the prize for valour, Cleopatra gave the man a golden breastplate and helmet—which he took with him when he deserted over to Caesar's camp in the night.

[75] Antony repeated to Caesar his earlier challenge to single combat, but Caesar replied that there were all sorts of routes for Antony to take to death. Antony realized that there was no better way for him to die than in battle, so he decided to launch a combined land and sea attack on Caesar. At dinner, we hear, he told his house-slaves to serve him food and wine with a more lavish hand than usual, since there was no way of knowing whether they would be able to do so tomorrow, or whether they would be serving other masters,

while he lay a lifeless, non-existent husk. When he saw that these words of his had brought tears to the eyes of his friends, he told them that he would not be leading them into the battle, since what he wanted from it was a glorious death rather than life and victory. Round about the middle of that night, the story goes, with fearful anticipation of the future keeping the city quiet and subdued, there were suddenly heard the harmonious sounds of all kinds of musical instruments, and the loud voices of a crowd of people making their way with Bacchic cries and prancing feet; it was as if a troop of Dionysian revellers were noisily making their way out of the city. Their course seemed to lie more or less through the centre of the city and towards the outer gate which faced the enemy forces, where the noise climaxed and then died down. The general interpretation of this portent was that Antony was being deserted by the god with whom he had always felt a strong similarity and affinity.*

[76] At daybreak Antony posted his land forces on the high ground in front of the city and watched as his ships put to sea and bore down on the enemy fleet. Since he expected to see his fleet win, he kept the land forces inactive. When his crews got close to the enemy, however, they raised their oars to salute Caesar's men, who returned their greeting. At this signal Antony's men changed sides, and all the ships combined to form a single fleet and sailed directly for the city. No sooner had Antony been confronted with this spectacle than his cavalry abandoned him and went over to the enemy. Following the defeat of his infantry, Antony retreated back to the city, crying out that Cleopatra had betrayed him to his enemies, when he had made war on them in the first place only for her sake. Cleopatra was afraid of what he might do in his anger and desperation, so she took refuge in her tomb, released the portcullises, which were reinforced by bolts and bars, and sent men to Antony with instructions to tell him that she was dead. Antony believed this report and said to himself, 'Antony, why wait? Fortune has robbed you of the only remaining reason for life to be dear to you.' He went into his room, where undid his breastplate and took it off. 'Cleopatra!' he cried. 'It is not the loss of you that hurts, because I shall be joining you very soon. What hurts is that for all my great stature as a commander I have been shown to have less courage than a woman.'

Now, Antony had a faithful slave called Eros, to whom he had long ago entrusted the job of killing him in an emergency. He now asked

him to keep his word. Eros drew his sword and held it out as though to strike Antony, but then averted his face and killed himself. Seeing Eros on the ground at his feet, Antony said, 'You have done well, Eros. Although you were not able to do it yourself, you have taught me what I must do.' He stabbed himself in his belly and fell back on the couch. But the blow was not immediately fatal, and his position on his back on the couch stopped the blood pouring from the wound. When he recovered consciousness, then, he asked the people there to finish him off, but they ran out of the room, leaving him crying out and writhing in pain, until the scribe Diomedes came from Cleopatra. She wanted him brought to her in the tomb.

[77] At the news that she was still alive, Antony eagerly ordered his slaves to lift him up, and he was carried in their arms to the door of her burial chamber. Cleopatra refused to open the door, but she appeared at a window and let down ropes and lines, with which the slaves made Antony secure. Then Cleopatra and two ladies-in-waiting, the only people she had allowed into the tomb with her, hauled him up. Witnesses say that this was the most pitiful sight imaginable. Up he went, covered with blood and in the throes of death, stretching his arms out towards her as he dangled in the air beside the wall of the tomb. It was not an easy job for a woman: clinging to the rope, with the strain showing on her face, Cleopatra struggled to bring the line up, while on the ground below people called out their encouragement and shared her anguish. At last she got him inside and laid him down. She tore her clothes in grief over him, beat her breast with her hands, and raked it with her nails. She smeared some of his blood on her face, and called him her master, husband, and emperor. For a while her pity for him almost made her forget her own troubles. But Antony asked her to calm down and give him a drink of wine: perhaps he was thirsty, or perhaps he was hoping for a speedier release. After drinking, he advised her to look to her own safety, if she could do so without disgrace, and of all Caesar's companions to trust Proculeius most; and he begged her not to mourn his recent misfortune, but to think of all the good luck he had enjoyed and count him happy. After all, supreme fame and power had been his, and now he had been honourably defeated by a fellow Roman.

[78] He had just breathed his last when Proculeius arrived on a mission from Caesar. After Antony had stabbed himself and been

taken off to Cleopatra, one of his bodyguards, Dercetaeus, had picked up the sword, hidden it under his clothing, and made his way stealthily out of the building. He ran to Caesar and, with the bloody sword as evidence, was the first to bring the news of Antony's death. When Caesar heard the news, he withdrew further into his tent and wept for a man who had been his brother-in-law, his colleague in office, and his partner in numerous military and political enterprises. Then he took their correspondence, called in his friends, and read the letters out to them, to show that while he had written politely and fairly, Antony had always been rude and arrogant in his replies. After this he dispatched Proculeius on his mission, which was to take Cleopatra alive, if possible, not only because he was worried about her treasure, but also because he thought it would add significantly to the glory of his triumph if he were to bring her back with him. She refused to give herself up to Proculeius, but she did talk to him, after he had approached the burial chamber and was standing outside one of the doors at ground level, through which their voices could carry, for all that they remained securely bolted and barred. The gist of their conversation was that she asked for her children to be allowed to inherit the kingdom, and he told her that she could trust Caesar absolutely, with no need to worry about a thing.

[79] Proculeius looked the place over and returned to deliver his report to Caesar. Then Gallus was sent to engage Cleopatra in conversation again. He went up to the door and deliberately prolonged the discussion. Meanwhile, Proculeius put a ladder up against the wall and climbed in through the window which the women had used to bring Antony in by. He lost no time in going down, accompanied by two slaves he had brought with him, to the door where Cleopatra was standing listening to Gallus. One of the two women who had been locked inside the burial chamber with Cleopatra shouted out, 'Oh no, Cleopatra, they're going to get you alive!' Cleopatra turned around, saw Proculeius, and made an attempt to stab herself with the little dagger—the kind robbers use—that she happened to have tucked into her belt. But Proculeius ran up, wrapped his arms around her, and said, 'No, Cleopatra, that would be wrong. It would be a crime against you, and it would be a crime against Caesar, since you would deprive him of an excellent opportunity to display his kindness, and you would be implicitly accusing the most even-tempered of leaders of dishonesty and intransigence.' While saying

this he took her dagger away from her and shook out her clothes to see if she had any poison hidden there. Another person Caesar sent was a freedman, Epaphroditus, with instructions to keep a very close watch on her to make sure she stayed alive, but otherwise to do everything to keep her comfortable and happy.

[80] Now Caesar himself rode into the city, conversing with the philosopher Arius, whom he had riding on his right: this was a way of immediately raising Arius' profile in Alexandria and of making people admire him, as someone who was held in such conspicuously high regard by Caesar. He entered the Gymnasium and ascended a dais that had been built for him. The people there were terrified out of their wits and were prostrating themselves before him, but he told them to get up and said that he gave the city of Alexandria an absolute pardon, for three reasons: first, in memory of its founder, Alexander; second, because he admired the beauty and grandeur of the city; and, third, as a favour to his friend Arius.* In addition to receiving this signal honour from Caesar, Arius also successfully interceded for the lives of a large number of people, including Philostratus, whose skill at impromptu speaking was unrivalled by any other sophist of the time, and who illegitimately claimed affiliation with the Academy. This led Caesar to loathe the man's character and to refuse to listen to his pleas, so with his long white beard and draped in a dark cloak he used to traipse along behind Arius, constantly reciting the line, 'If the wise are wise they save the wise.' When Caesar found out what he was doing, he gave him his pardon, but not so much because he wanted to relieve Philostratus' fear, as because he did not want people to think badly of Arius.

[81] Among Antony's children, his son by Fulvia, Antyllus, was betrayed by his tutor, Theodorus, and beheaded. During the execution Theodorus stole a very valuable gem which the boy used to wear around his neck and sewed it into his belt; he denied the theft, but was found out and crucified. Cleopatra's children were kept under lock and key along with their servants, but otherwise had a relaxed regime. Caesarion, however, who was rumoured to be Caesar's son, had been sent abroad by his mother, plentifully supplied with money, to travel to India via Ethiopia. But Rhodon—another tutor from the same mould as Theodorus—persuaded him to return, on the grounds that Caesar had invited him back to take up his kingdom. The story goes that when Caesar was wondering what to do with

him, Arius remarked, 'A plurality of Caesars is not a good thing.*' And so Caesarion was put to death by Caesar, but this happened later, after Cleopatra's death.

[82] Permission to bury Antony was sought by a number of kings and commanders, but Caesar would not deprive Cleopatra of the body, and she gave it a sumptuous, royal burial with her own hands. Caesar allowed her every facility she wanted for the occasion. But as a result of all the mental and physical suffering she had endured—her breast was inflamed and ulcerated where she had beaten it in her grief—she contracted a fever, and she welcomed this as a chance to stop eating and to release herself from life without anyone interfering. One of her close friends, Olympus, was a doctor, and she confided the truth to him. He became her confidant and helped her waste her body, as he himself has recorded in the account he published of these events.* But Caesar became suspicious, and used threats and her fears for her children as a weapon against her. These threats and fears undermined her resolution as if they were siege-engines, until she put her body in the hands of those who wanted to tend it and care for it.

[83] A few days later Caesar made a personal visit to talk to her and put her mind at ease. She was lying dejectedly on a straw mattress, but as soon as he came in she leapt up, despite wearing only a tunic, and prostrated herself on the ground before him. Her hair and face were unkempt and wild, her voice trembled, and her eyes were puffy and swollen; there was even plenty of visible evidence of the way she had lacerated her breast. In short, her body seemed to be in just as bad a state as her mind. Nevertheless, her famous charisma and the power of her beauty had not been completely extinguished, but shone through her wretchedness from somewhere inside and showed in the play of her features. Caesar told her to recline on her mattress, while he sat down beside her. She began to try to justify her actions, blaming them on necessity and saying that she was afraid of Antony, but Caesar raised objections and disproved every point, so soon she adopted the pitiful, pleading tone of a woman who wanted nothing more than to go on living. In the end, however, she gave him an inventory she had taken of all her valuable possessions—but one of her stewards, a man called Seleucus, proved that she was making away with some of her things and hiding them. At this, she leapt to her feet, grabbed Seleucus by the hair, and pummelled his

face with her fists, until Caesar stopped her with a smile. 'But Caesar,' she said, 'it just isn't right, is it? You don't mind coming to talk to me even when I'm in such a terrible state, and yet my slaves denounce me for keeping aside a little of my jewellery. And I'm not even doing it for myself, of course—I'm too wretched for that. It's so that I can give a few things to Octavia and your Livia, and ask them to make you more compassionate and kind towards me.' Caesar liked this speech of hers and was completely convinced that life was still dear to her. Before going away, he told her that he left it up to her to look after her valuables and that he would treat her more gloriously than she could ever have expected. He was sure he had taken her in, when actually it was she who had taken him in.*

[84] One of Caesar's companions was a young man of distinction called Cornelius Dolabella. He was quite attracted to Cleopatra and so, when she asked him to let her know what was going on, as a favour to her, he got a message secretly to her with information that Caesar was planning to break camp and march by land through Syria, and had decided to send her and her children away in two days' time. As soon as she heard this news, she asked Caesar for permission to pour libations for Antony. He said she could, and so, accompanied by her ladies-in-waiting, she was carried to his tomb. She fell on his coffin and said, 'Antony, my darling, just recently I buried you with hands that were still free, but now I pour libations as a prisoner of war. As a captive, I cannot disfigure this body of mine with the rites of mourning and lamentation; my body is a slave, closely watched and preserved for the triumph to be celebrated over your defeat. So expect no further honours or libations: you will receive no more from Cleopatra now that she is a slave. In life nothing could come between us, but now in death it seems that we will change places: you, the Roman, will lie here, and I—ah, poor me, I will lie in Italian soil, and never possess more of your land than that. I do not appeal to the gods here, because they have let us down, but I implore you, by any of the gods of the underworld with the power and potency to grant my prayer, not to abandon your wife* while she is alive, and not to let me be the centrepiece of a triumph celebrated over you. No, bury me here in this tomb beside you, knowing that the worst and most terrible of all the countless miseries I have borne has been this brief period of life without you.'

[85] After this lament she garlanded and embraced the coffin, and

then ordered her slaves to prepare a bath for her. Once she had finished bathing, she reclined on her couch and proceeded to eat a spectacular midday meal, in the middle of which a man arrived from the countryside with a basket. The guards asked what he had brought, so he opened the lid and showed that under the leaves the basket was filled with figs. He smiled when the guards expressed astonishment at the size and beauty of the fruit, and asked them to help themselves. They were not at all suspicious of him, and they told him he could go in. After her meal Cleopatra took a writing-tablet which she had already written on and sealed, and sent it to Caesar. Then she ordered everyone out of the room except her two ladies-in-waiting, and shut the door behind them.

Once Caesar had unsealed the writing-tablet, he found inside a passionate and emotional plea that she should be buried with Antony. It did not take him long to guess what she had done. His first thought was to go there in person and see if he could help, but then he ordered some of his men to go as quickly as possible and investigate the situation. But the tragedy had unfolded rapidly. His men ran there and found the guards unaware that anything had happened. They opened the door, and saw Cleopatra lying dead on a golden couch, dressed like a queen, with one of her two ladies-in-waiting, Iras, dying at her feet. The other, Charmion, was so weak that she could hardly stay upright or stop her head from slumping forward, but she was trying to arrange the diadem which adorned Cleopatra's brow. One of the men hissed in anger, 'A fine day's work, Charmion!', and she replied: 'Yes, nothing could be finer. It is no more than this lady, the descendant of so many kings, deserves.' These were her last words, and she fell where she was, beside the couch.

[86] The asp is said to have been smuggled in with the basket of figs and leaves, hidden underneath them, exactly as Cleopatra had commanded; and the story goes that the creature struck at her body without her being aware of it. Then, after removing some of the figs, she spotted the snake and said, 'Here it is, then,' and made sure that the snake could bite her naked arm. However, others say that the asp was kept shut inside a water jar, and that as Cleopatra was trying to get it to come out by provoking it with a golden distaff, it lunged at her and fastened on to her arm. But no one knows the true story: after all, it was also said that she carried poison around inside a

hollow hairpin, which was hidden in her hair, despite the fact that there were no marks on her body, and there were no other indications that she had taken poison either. However, there were also no sightings of the snake inside the room, although people said they saw its trail on the part of the shore overlooked by the windows of the room. Some people do in fact say that two faint puncture marks were seen, though they were barely visible, on Cleopatra's arm. This is the version Caesar seems to have believed, because he had a picture of Cleopatra carried along in his triumphal procession, with the snake clinging on to her. Anyway, these are the various versions of what happened.

Caesar was annoyed that the woman was dead, but, impressed by her nobility, he gave orders that her body was to be buried alongside Antony's with the kind of splendid ceremony suitable for a queen. He also arranged for her attendants to receive an honourable burial. Cleopatra was 39 years old when she died, and she had been queen for twenty-two of these years, with Antony as her co-ruler for fourteen of them.* Some writers have Antony aged 56, others 53, at the time of his death.* Antony's statues were pulled down, but Cleopatra's stayed in place, because one of her friends, a man called Archibius, paid Caesar a thousand talents to keep them from sharing the fate of Antony's statues.

[87] Antony left seven children by three wives. Only the oldest, Antyllus, was put to death by Caesar, while Octavia took in the rest and brought them up along with his children by her. She arranged for Cleopatra, his daughter by Cleopatra, to be married to Juba, one of the most cultured kings ever, and thanks to her Antonius, the son of Antony and Fulvia, became so important that while Caesar's particular favourites were Agrippa and then Livia's sons, the third place was held to be, and genuinely was, occupied by Antonius.

Now, Octavia had had two daughters by Marcellus, and one son, also called Marcellus. Caesar adopted this Marcellus as his son, and had him marry his daughter as well, while he arranged for Agrippa to marry one of the two daughters. But Marcellus died tragically soon after his marriage, and Caesar was finding it difficult to choose another trustworthy son-in-law from among his friends. Under these circumstances, Octavia proposed that Agrippa should divorce his present wife and marry Caesar's daughter instead. Caesar thought this was a good idea, and then she won Agrippa round to it too, so

she took back her daughter and married her to Antonius, while Agrippa married Caesar's daughter.

Of the two surviving daughters from Antony's marriage to Octavia, one was married to Domitius Ahenobarbus, and the other—Antonia, famous for her virtue and her beauty—was married to Drusus, who was the son of Livia and therefore Caesar's stepson. The sons of Drusus and Antonia were Germanicus and Claudius: Claudius later became emperor, and of Germanicus' children, Gaius reigned for a few brief and demented years before being put to death along with his children and wife, while Agrippina had a son, Lucius Domitius, by Ahenobarbus, before marrying Claudius Caesar. Claudius adopted her son and changed his name to Nero Germanicus; and Nero Germanicus became emperor in my lifetime. He killed his mother and came very close to destroying the Roman empire with his capricious and insane ways. He was the fifth in descent from Antony.*

ROMAN MONEY AND MEASURES

Money

10 asses or 4 sesterces = 1 denarius

1,000,000 sesterces or 250,000 denarii = 1 decies

Plutarch considers 1 denarius = 1 drachma; 6,000 denarii or 24,000 sesterces = 1 talent

Capacity, dry

1 medimnus = 51.8 l. (91.2 pt., 11.4 gal., 1.5 bushels)

Length/Distance/Area

1 Greek stade = 600 Greek feet or 177.6 m. (582.7 ft.)

1 Roman foot = 296 mm. (11.65 in.)

1 Roman mile (5,000 Roman feet) = 1,480 m., 1,618.5 yds. (= 4,855.5 ft.)

1 iugerum = 28,800 square feet (Roman)

Plutarch considers 1 Roman mile = 8 stades

Plutarch speaks of the Greek plethron as equivalent to the Roman iugerum, although the plethron is usually only 10,000 square feet.