

Roman Accounts of Cleopatra

*The last of the pharaohs, Cleopatra VII, of the Ptolemaic dynasty founded by Alexander's general Ptolemy, is known primarily through her involvement in and accounts of her dealings with Rome, first with Julius Caesar and then with his surviving lieutenant, Mark Antony. Plutarch's accounts date from ca. 100 CE, a century and a half after the events.*¹

Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*

[48.5] As for the war in Egypt, some say that it was not necessary, but due to Caesar's passion for Cleopatra, and that it was inglorious and full of peril for him. But others blame the king's party for it,² and especially the eunuch Potheinus, who had most influence at court, and had recently killed Pompey; he had also driven Cleopatra from the country, and was now secretly plotting against Caesar. [6] On this account they say that from this time on Caesar passed whole nights at drinking parties in order to protect himself. But in his open acts also Potheinus was unbearable, since he said and did many things that were invidious and insulting to Caesar. [7] For instance, when the soldiers had the oldest and worst grain measured out to them, he bade them put up with it and be content, since they were eating what belonged to others; and at the state suppers he used wooden and earthen dishes, on the ground that Caesar had taken all the gold and silver ware in payment of a debt. [8] For the father of the present king owed Caesar seventeen million five hundred thousand drachmas,³ of which Caesar had formerly remitted a part to his children, but now demanded payment of ten millions for the support of his army. [9] When, however, Potheinus bade him go away now and attend to his great affairs, assuring him that later he would get his money with thanks, Caesar replied that he had no need whatever of Egyptians as advisers, and secretly sent for Cleopatra from the country.

[49.1] So Cleopatra, taking only Apollodorus the Sicilian from among her friends, embarked in a little skiff and landed at the palace when it was already getting dark; [2] and as it was impossible to escape notice otherwise, she stretched herself at full length inside a bed-sack, while Apollodorus tied the bed-sack up with a cord and carried it indoors to Caesar. [3] It was by this device of Cleopatra's, it is said, that Caesar was first captivated, for she showed herself to be a bold coquette, and succumbing to the charm of further intercourse with her, he reconciled her to her brother on the basis of a joint share with him in the royal power. ... [10] Then [after killing the eunuch and defeating Ptolemy XIII], leaving Cleopatra on the throne of Egypt (a little later she had a son by him whom the Alexandrians called Caesarion), he set out for Syria.

Plutarch, *Life of Antony*

[25.1] Such, then, was the nature of Antony, where now as a crowning evil his love for Cleopatra supervened, roused and drove to frenzy many of the passions that were still hidden and quiescent in him, and dissipated and destroyed whatever good and saving qualities still offered resistance. And he was taken captive in this manner. As he was getting ready for the Parthian war, he sent to Cleopatra, ordering her to meet him in Cilicia in order to make answer to the charges made against her of raising and giving to Cassius much money for the war. [2] But Dellius, Antony's messenger, when he saw how Cleopatra looked, and noticed her subtlety

¹ Source: Plutarch, and Bernadotte Perrin. 1923. *Parallel Lives*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

² The king being Ptolemy XIII, Cleopatra's brother and co-heir of Ptolemy XII.

³ During Caesar's consulship ([59] B.C.) Ptolemy XII Auletes was declared a friend and ally of the Romans. To secure this honour he both gave and promised money to the state.

and cleverness in conversation, at once perceived that Antony would not so much as think of doing such a woman any harm, but that she would have the greatest influence with him. He therefore resorted to flattery and tried to induce the Egyptian to go to Cilicia “decked out in fine array” (as Homer would say), and not to be afraid of Antony, who was the most agreeable and humane of commanders. [3] She was persuaded by Dellius, and judging by the proofs which she had had before this of the effect of her beauty upon Caius Caesar and Gnaeus the son of Pompey, she had hopes that she would more easily bring Antony to her feet. For Caesar and Pompey had known her when she was still a girl and inexperienced in affairs, but she was going to visit Antony at the very time when women have the most brilliant beauty and are at the acme of intellectual power. [4] Therefore she provided herself with many gifts, much money, and such ornaments as high position and prosperous kingdom made it natural for her to take; but she went putting her greatest confidence in herself, and in the charms and sorceries of her own person.

[26.1] Though she received many letters of summons both from Antony himself and from his friends, she so despised and laughed the man to scorn as to sail up the river Cydnus in a barge with gilded poop, its sails spread purple, its rowers urging it on with silver oars to the sound of the flute blended with pipes and lutes. [2] She herself reclined beneath a canopy spangled with gold, adorned like Venus in a painting, while boys like Loves in paintings stood on either side and fanned her. Likewise also the fairest of her serving-maidens, attired like Nereïds and Graces, were stationed, some at the rudder-sweeps, and others at the reefing-ropes. Wondrous odours from countless incense-offerings diffused themselves along the river-banks. [3] Of the inhabitants, some accompanied her on either bank of the river from its very mouth, while others went down from the city to behold the sight. The throng in the market-place gradually streamed away, until at last Antony himself, seated on his tribunal, was left alone. And

a rumour spread on every hand that Venus was come to revel with Bacchus for the good of Asia.

Antony sent, therefore, and invited her to supper; but she thought it meet that he should rather come to her. [4] At once, then, wishing to display his complacency and friendly feelings, Antony obeyed and went. He found there a preparation that beggared description, but was most amazed at the multitude of lights. For, as we are told, so many of these were let down and displayed on all sides at once, and they were arranged and ordered with so many inclinations and adjustments to each other in the form of rectangles and circles, that few sights were so beautiful or so worthy to be seen as this.

[27.1] On the following day Antony feasted her in his turn, and was ambitious to surpass her splendour and elegance, but in both regards he was left behind, and vanquished in these very points, and was first to rail at the meagreness and rusticity of his own arrangements. Cleopatra observed in the jests of Antony much of the soldier and the common man, and adopted this manner also towards him, without restraint now, and boldly. [2] For her beauty, as we are told, was in itself not altogether incomparable, nor such as to strike those who saw her; but converse with her had an irresistible charm, and her presence, combined with the persuasiveness of her discourse and the character which was somehow diffused about her behaviour towards others, had something stimulating about it. [3] There was sweetness also in the tones of her voice; and her tongue, like an instrument of many strings, she could readily turn to whatever language she pleased, so that in her interviews with Barbarians she very seldom had need of an interpreter, but made her replies to most of them herself and unassisted, whether they were Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes or Parthians. [4] Nay, it is said that she knew the speech of many other peoples also, although the kings of Egypt before her had not even made an effort to learn the native language, and some actually gave up their Macedonian dialect.

[28.1] Accordingly, she made such booty of Antony that, while Fulvia his wife was carrying on war at Rome with Caesar in defence of her husband's interests, and while a Parthian army was hovering about Mesopotamia (over this country the generals of the king had appointed Labienus Parthian commander-in-chief, and were about to invade Syria), he suffered her to hurry him off to Alexandria. There, indulging in the sports and diversions of a young man of leisure, he squandered and spent upon pleasures that which Antiphon calls the most costly outlay, namely, time. . . .

[29.1] But Cleopatra, distributing her flattery, not into the four forms of which Plato speaks, but into many, and ever contributing some fresh delight and charm to Antony's hours of seriousness or mirth, kept him in constant tutelage, and released him neither night nor day. She played at dice with him, drank with him, hunted with him, and watched him as he exercised himself in arms; and when by night he would station himself at the doors or windows of the common folk and scoff at those within, she would go with him on his round of mad follies, wearing the garb of a serving maiden. [2] For Antony also would try to array himself like a servant. Therefore he always reaped a harvest of abuse, and often of blows, before coming back home; though most people suspected who he was. However, the Alexandrians took delight in their graceful and cultivated way; they liked him, and said that he used the tragic mask with the Romans, but the comic mask with them.

[3] Now, to recount the greater part of his boyish pranks would be great nonsense. One instance will suffice. He was fishing once, and had bad luck, and was vexed at it because Cleopatra was there to see. He therefore ordered his fishermen to dive down and secretly fasten to his hook some fish that had been previously caught, and pulled up two or three

of them. But the Egyptian saw through the trick, and pretending to admire her lover's skill, told her friends about it, and invited them to be spectators of it the following day. [4] So great numbers of them got into the fishing boats, and when Antony had let down his line, she ordered one of her own attendants to get the start of him by swimming onto his hook and fastening on it a salted Pontic herring. Antony thought he had caught something, and pulled it up, whereupon there was great laughter, as was natural, and Cleopatra said: "Imperator, hand over thy fishing-rod to the fishermen of Pharos and Canopus; thy sport is the hunting of cities, realms, and continents."

[31.1] These arrangements [dividing the empire with Octavian]⁴ were thought to be fair, but they needed a stronger security, and this security Fortune offered. Octavia was a sister of [Octavian] Caesar, older than he, though not by the same mother; for she was the child of Ancharia, but he, by a later marriage, of Atia. Caesar was exceedingly fond of his sister, who was, as the saying is, a wonder of a woman.⁵ [2] Her husband, Caius Marcellus, had died a short time before, and she was a widow. Antony, too, now that Fulvia was gone, was held to be a widower, although he did not deny his relations with Cleopatra; he would not admit, however, that she was his wife, and in this matter his reason was still battling with his love for the Egyptian. Everybody tried to bring about this marriage. For they hoped that Octavia, who, besides her great beauty, had intelligence and dignity, when united to Antony and beloved by him, as such a woman naturally must be, would restore harmony and be their complete salvation. [3] Accordingly, when both men were agreed, they went up to Rome and celebrated Octavia's marriage, although the law did not permit a woman to marry before her husband had been dead ten months. In this case,

⁴ Julius Caesar's heir was a young man named C. Octavius. When Julius Caesar adopted him, he took his adoptive father's name and became C. Julius Caesar Octavianus, or "Octavian" for short in English, though in ancient writings he was often referred to as Young Caesar or just Caesar when there was no chance of

ambiguity (as here). This Caesar Octavian is the same man who later became the emperor Augustus.

⁵ Octavian's sister, Octavia, was widely admired for her virtue and strength of character, not least because she properly raised not only her own children by Antony, even after she was spurned for Cleopatra, but also those by his previous wife Fulvia.

however, the senate passed a decree remitting the restriction in time.

...

[36.1] But the dire evil which had been slumbering for a long time, namely, his passion for Cleopatra, which men thought had been charmed away and lulled to rest by better considerations, blazed up again with renewed power as he drew near to Syria. And finally, like the stubborn and unmanageable beast of the soul, of which Plato speaks, he spurned away all saving and noble counsels and sent Fonteius Capito to bring Cleopatra to Syria. [2] And when she was come, he made her a present of no slight or insignificant addition to her dominions, namely, Phoenicia, Coele Syria, Cyprus, and a large part of Cilicia; and still further, the balsam-producing part of Judaea, and all that part of Arabia Nabataea which slopes toward the outer sea. These gifts particularly annoyed the Romans. And yet he made presents to many private persons of tetrarchies and realms of great peoples, and he deprived many monarchs of their kingdoms, as, for instance, Antigonus the Jew, whom he brought forth and beheaded, though no other king before him had been so punished. [3] But the shameful of the honours conferred upon Cleopatra gave most offence. And he heightened the scandal by acknowledging his two children by her, and called one Alexander and the other Cleopatra, with the surname for the first of Sun, and for the other of Moon. However, since he was an adept at putting a good face upon shameful deeds, he used to say that the greatness of the Roman empire was made manifest, not by what the Romans received, but by what they bestowed; and that noble families were extended by the successive begettings of many kings. [4] In this way, at any rate, he said, his own progenitor was begotten by Heracles, who did not confine his succession to a single womb, nor stand in awe of laws like Solon's for the regulation of conception, but gave free course to nature, and left behind him the beginnings and foundations of many families. ...

[37.4] And yet we are told that all this preparation and power, which terrified even the Indians beyond Bactria and made all Asia quiver, was made of no avail to Antony by reason of Cleopatra. For so eager was he to spend the winter with her that he began the war before the proper time, and managed everything confusedly. He was not master of his own faculties, but, as if he were under the influence of certain drugs or of magic rites, was ever looking eagerly towards her, and thinking more of his speedy return than of conquering the enemy.

...

[53.1] But at Rome Octavia was desirous of sailing to Antony, and Caesar gave her permission to do so, as the majority say, not as a favour to her, but in order that, in case she were neglected and treated with scorn, he might have plausible ground for war. When Octavia arrived at Athens, she received letters from Antony in which he bade her remain there and told her of his expedition. [2] Octavia, although she saw through the pretext and was distressed, nevertheless wrote Antony asking whither he would have the things sent which she was bringing to him. For she was bringing a great quantity of clothing for his soldiers, many beasts of burden, and money and gifts for the officers and friends about him; and besides this, two thousand picked soldiers equipped as praetorian cohorts with splendid armour. These things were announced to Antony by a certain Niger, a friend of his who had been sent from Octavia, and he added such praises of her as was fitting and deserved.

[3] But Cleopatra perceived that Octavia was coming into a contest at close quarters with her, and feared lest, if she added to the dignity of her character and the power of Caesar her pleasurable society and her assiduous attentions to Antony, she would become invincible and get complete control over her husband. She therefore pretended to be passionately in love with Antony herself, and reduced her body by slender diet; she put on a look of rapture when Antony drew near, and one of faintness and melancholy when he went away. [4] She would contrive to be often seen in tears, and

then would quickly wipe the tears away and try to hide them, as if she would not have Antony notice them. And she practised these arts while Antony was intending to go up from Syria to join the Medes. Her flatterers, too, were industrious in her behalf, and used to revile Antony as hard-hearted and unfeeling, and as the destroyer of a mistress who was devoted to him and him alone. [5] For Octavia, they said, had married him as a matter of public policy and for the sake of her brother, and enjoyed the name of wedded wife; but Cleopatra, who was queen of so many people, was called Antony's beloved, and she did not shun this name nor disdain it, as long as she could see him and live with him; but if she were driven away from him she would not survive it. [6] At last, then, they so melted and enervated the man that he became fearful lest Cleopatra should throw away her life, and went back to Alexandria, putting off the Medes until the summer season, although Parthia was said to be suffering from internal dissensions. However, he went up and brought the king once more into friendly relations, and after betrothing to one of his sons by Cleopatra one of the king's daughters who was still small, he returned, his thoughts being now directed towards the civil war.

[54.1] As for Octavia, she was thought to have been treated with scorn, and when she came back from Athens Caesar ordered her to dwell in her own house. But she refused to leave the house of her husband, nay, she even entreated Caesar himself, unless on other grounds he had determined to make war upon Antony, to ignore Antony's treatment of her, since it was an infamous thing even to have it said that the two greatest imperators in the world plunged the Romans into civil war, the one out of passion for, and the other out of resentment in behalf of, a woman. [2] These were her words, and she confirmed them by her deeds. For she dwelt in her husband's house, just as if he were at home, and she cared for his children, not only those whom she herself, but also those whom Fulvia had borne him, in a noble and magnificent manner; she also received such friends of Antony as

were sent to Rome in quest of office or on business, and helped them to obtain from Caesar what they wanted. Without meaning it, however, she was damaging Antony by this conduct of hers; for he was hated for wronging such a woman. [3] He was hated, too, for the distribution which he made to his children in Alexandria; it was seen to be theatrical and arrogant, and to evince hatred of Rome. For after filling the gymnasium with a throng and placing on a tribunal of silver two thrones of gold, one for himself and the other for Cleopatra, and other lower thrones for his sons, [4] in the first place he declared Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, and Coele Syria, and she was to share her throne with Caesarion. Caesarion was believed to be a son of the former Caesar, by whom Cleopatra was left pregnant. In the second place, he proclaimed his own sons by Cleopatra Kings of Kings, and to Alexander he allotted Armenia, Media and Parthia (when he should have subdued it), to Ptolemy Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia. [5] At the same time he also produced his sons, Alexander arrayed in Median garb, which included a tiara and upright head-dress, Ptolemy in boots, short cloak, and broad-brimmed hat surmounted by a diadem. For the latter was the dress of the kings who followed Alexander, the former that of Medes and Armenians. [6] And when the boys had embraced their parents, one was given a bodyguard of Armenians, the other of Macedonians. Cleopatra, indeed, both then and at other times when she appeared in public, assumed a robe sacred to Isis, and was addressed as the New Isis.

[55.1] By reporting these things to the senate and by frequent denunciations before the people Caesar tried to inflame the multitude against Antony. Antony, too, kept sending counter-accusations against Caesar. The chief accusations which he made were, in the first place, that after taking Sicily away from Pompey, Caesar had not assigned a part of the island to him; in the second place, that after borrowing ships from him for the war he had kept them for himself; thirdly, that after ejecting his colleague Lepidus from office and degrading him,

he was keeping for himself the army, the territory, and the revenues which had been assigned to Lepidus; [2] finally that he had distributed almost all Italy in allotments, to his own soldiers, and had left nothing for the soldiers of Antony. To these charges Caesar replied by saying that he had deposed Lepidus from office because he was abusing it, and as for what he had acquired in war, he would share it with Antony whenever Antony, on his part, should share Armenia with him; and Antony's soldiers had no claim upon Italy, since they had Media and Persia, which countries they had added to the Roman dominion by their noble struggles under their imperator.

[56.1] Antony heard of this while he was tarrying in Armenia; and at once he ordered Canidius to take sixteen legions and go down to the sea. But he himself took Cleopatra with him and came to Ephesus. It was there that his naval force was coming together from all quarters, eight hundred ships of war with merchant vessels, of which Cleopatra furnished two hundred, besides twenty thousand talents, and supplies for the whole army during the war. [2] But Antony, listening to the advice of Domitius and sundry others, ordered Cleopatra to sail to Egypt and there await the result of the war. Cleopatra, however, fearing that Octavia would again succeed in putting a stop to the war, persuaded Canidius by large bribes to plead her cause with Antony, and to say that it was neither just to drive away from the war a woman whose contributions to it were so large, [3] nor was it for the interest of Antony to dispirit the Egyptians, who formed a large part of his naval force; and besides, it was not easy to see how Cleopatra was inferior in intelligence to anyone of the princes who took part in the expedition, she who for a long time had governed so large a kingdom by herself, and by long association with Antony had learned to manage large affairs. These arguments (since it was destined that everything should come into Caesar's hands) prevailed; and with united forces they sailed to Samos and there made merry. [4] For just as all the kings, dynasts, tetrarchs, nations, and cities

between Syria, the Maeotic Lake, Armenia, and Illyria had been ordered to send or bring their equipment for the war, so all the dramatic artists were compelled to put in an appearance at Samos; and while almost all the world around was filled with groans and lamentations, a single island for many days resounded with flutes and stringed instruments; theatres there were filled, and choral bands were competing with one another. [5] Every city also sent an ox for the general sacrifice, and kings vied with one another in their mutual entertainments and gifts. And so men everywhere began to ask: "How will the conquerors celebrate their victories if their preparations for the war are marked by festivals so costly?"

[57.1] When these festivities were over, Antony gave the dramatic artists Priene as a place for them to dwell, and sailed himself to Athens, where sports and theatres again engaged him. Cleopatra, too, jealous of Octavia's honours in the city (for Octavia was especially beloved by the Athenians), tried by many splendid gifts to win the favour of the people. [2] So the people voted honours to her, and sent a deputation to her house carrying the vote, of whom Antony was one, for was he not a citizen of Athens? And standing in her presence he delivered a speech in behalf of the city. To Rome, however, he sent men who had orders to eject Octavia from his house. [3] And we are told that she left it taking all his children with her except his eldest son by Fulvia, who was with his father; she was in tears of distress that she herself also would be regarded as one of the causes of the war. But the Romans felt pity for Antony, not for her, and especially those who had seen Cleopatra and knew that neither in youthfulness nor beauty was she superior to Octavia.

[58.1] When Caesar heard of the rapidity and extent of Antony's preparations, he was much disturbed, lest he should be forced to settle the issue of the war during that summer. For he was lacking in many things, and people were vexed by the exactions of taxes. The citizens were generally compelled to pay one fourth of their income, and the freedmen one

eighth of their property, and both classes cried out against Caesar, and disturbances arising from these causes prevailed throughout all Italy. [2] Wherefore, among the greatest mistakes of Antony men reckon his postponement of the war. For it gave Caesar time to make preparations and put an end to the disturbances among the people. For while money was being exacted from them, they were angry, but when it had been exacted and they had paid it, they were calm. Moreover, Titius and Plancus, friends of Antony and men of consular rank, being abused by Cleopatra (for they had been most opposed to her accompanying the expedition) ran away to Caesar, and they gave him information about Antony's will, the contents of which they knew. [3] This will was on deposit with the Vestal Virgins, and when Caesar asked for it, they would not give it to him; but if he wanted to take it, they told him to come and do so. So he went and took it; and to begin with, he read its contents through by himself; and marked certain reprehensible passages; then he assembled the senate and read it aloud to them, although most of them were displeased to hear him do so. [4] For they thought it a strange and grievous matter that a man should be called to account while alive for what he wished to have done after his death. Caesar laid most stress on the clause in the will relating to Antony's burial. For it directed that Antony's body, even if he should die in Rome, should be borne in state through the forum and then sent away to Cleopatra in Egypt. [5] Again, Calvisius, who was a companion of Caesar, brought forward against Antony the following charges also regarding his behaviour towards Cleopatra: he had bestowed upon her the libraries from Pergamum, in which there were two hundred thousand volumes; at a banquet where there were many guests he had stood up and rubbed her feet, in compliance with some agreement and compact which they had made; he had consented to have the Ephesians in his presence salute Cleopatra as mistress; [6] many times, while he was seated on his tribunal and dispensing justice to tetrarchs and kings, he would receive love-billets from her in tablets of onyx or crystal, and read them; and once when Furnius was

speaking, a man of great worth and the ablest orator in Rome, Cleopatra was carried through the forum on a litter, and Antony, when he saw her, sprang up from his tribunal and forsook the trial, and hanging on to Cleopatra's litter escorted her on her way.

[59.1] However, most of the charges thus brought by Calvisius were thought to be falsehoods; but the friends of Antony went about in Rome beseeching the people in his behalf, and they sent one of their number, Geminius, with entreaties that Antony would not suffer himself to be voted out of his office and proclaimed an enemy of Rome. [2] But Geminius, after his voyage to Greece, was an object of suspicion to Cleopatra, who thought that he was acting in the interests of Octavia; he was always put upon with jokes at supper and insulted with places of no honour at table, but he endured all this and waited for an opportunity to confer with Antony. Once, however, at a supper, being bidden to tell the reasons for his coming, he replied that the rest of his communication required a sober head, but one thing he knew, whether he was drunk or sober, and that was all would be well if Cleopatra was sent off to Egypt. [3] At this, Antony was wroth, and Cleopatra said: "Thou has done well, Geminius, to confess the truth without being put to the torture." Geminius, accordingly, after a few days, ran away to Rome. And Cleopatra's flatterers drove away many of the other friends of Antony also who could not endure their drunken tricks and scurrilities. [4] Among these were Marcus Silanus and Dellius the historian. And Dellius says that he was also afraid of a plot against him by Cleopatra, of which Glaucus the physician had told him. For he had offended Cleopatra at supper by saying that while sour wine was served to them, Sarmenus, at Rome, was drinking Falernian. Now, Sarmenus was one of the youthful favourites of Caesar, such as the Romans call "deliciae."

[60.1] When Caesar had made sufficient preparations, a vote was passed to wage war against Cleopatra, and to take away from Antony the authority which he had surrendered to a woman.

And Caesar said in addition that Antony had been drugged and was not even master of himself, and that the Romans were carrying on war with Mardion the eunuch, and Potheinus, and Iras, and the tire-woman of Cleopatra, and Charmion, by whom the principal affairs of the government were managed.

[2] The following signs are said to have been given before the war. Pisaurum, a city colonized by Antony situated near the Adriatic, was swallowed by chasms in the earth. From one of the marble statues of Antony near Alba sweat oozed for many days, and though it was wiped away it did not cease. In Patrae, while Antony was staying there, the Heracleium was destroyed by lightning; and at Athens the Dionysus in the Battle of the Giants was dislodged by the winds and carried down into the theatre. [3] Now, Antony associated himself with Heracles in lineage, and with Dionysus in the mode of life which he adopted, as I have said, and he was called the New Dionysus.⁶ The same tempest fell upon the colossal figures of Eumenes and Attalus at Athens, on which the name of Antony had been inscribed, and prostrated them, and them alone out of many. Moreover the admiral's ship of Cleopatra was called Antonius, and a dire sign was given with regard to it. Some swallows, namely, made their nest under its stern; but other swallows attacked these, drove them out and destroyed their nestlings.

[61.1] When the forces came together for the war, Antony had no fewer than five hundred fighting ships, among which were many vessels of eight and ten banks of oars, arrayed in pompous and festal fashion; he also had one hundred thousand infantry soldiers and twelve thousand horsemen. Of subject kings who fought with him, there were Bocchus the king of Libya, Tarcondemus the king of Upper Cilicia, Archelaüs of Cappadocia, Philadelphus of Paphlagonia, Mithridates of Commagene, and Sadalas of Thrace. [2] These were with him, while from Pontus Polemon sent an army, and Malchus from Arabia, and Herod the Jew, besides Amyntas

the king of Lycaonia and Galatia; the king of the Medes also sent an auxiliary force. Caesar had two hundred and fifty ships of war, eighty thousand infantry, and about as many horsemen as his enemies. [3] Antony's authority extended over the country from the Euphrates and Armenia to the Ionian sea and Illyria; Caesar's over the country reaching from Illyria to the Western Ocean and from the ocean back to the Tuscan and Sicilian seas. Of Libya, the part extending opposite to Italy, Gaul, and Iberia as far as the pillars of Hercules, belonged to Caesar; the part extending from Cyrene as far as Armenia, to Antony.

[62.1] But to such an extent, now, was Antony an appendage of the woman that although he was far superior on land, he wished the decision to rest with his navy, to please Cleopatra, and that too when he saw that for lack of crews his trierarchs were haling together out of long-suffering Greece wayfarers, mule-drivers, harvesters, and epebi,^[50] and that even then their ships were not fully manned, but most of them were deficient and sailed wretchedly. [2] Caesar's fleet, on the other hand, was perfectly equipped, and consisted of ships which had not been built for a display of height or mass, but were easily steered, swift, and fully manned. This fleet Caesar kept assembled at Tarentum and Brundisium, and he sent to Antony a demand to waste no time, but to come with his forces; Caesar himself would furnish his armament with unobstructed roadsteads and harbours, and would withdraw with his land forces a day's journey for a horseman from the sea-shore, until Antony should have safely landed and fixed his camp. [3] This boastful language Antony matched by challenging Caesar to single combat, although he was an older man than Caesar; and if Caesar declined this, Antony demanded that they should fight out the issue at Pharsalus, as Caesar and Pompey had once done. But while Antony was lying at anchor off Actium, where now Nicopolis stands, Caesar got the start of him by crossing the Ionian

⁶ As Cleopatra was called the New Isis ([54.6]).

sea and occupying a place in Epirus^o called Toruné (that is, ladle); and when Antony and his friends were disturbed by this, since their infantry forces were belated, Cleopatra, jesting, said: "What is there dreadful in Caesar's sitting at a ladle?"

[63.1] But Antony, when the enemy sailed against him at daybreak, was afraid lest they should capture his ships while they had no fighting crews, and therefore armed the rowers and drew them up on the decks so as to make a show; then he grouped his ships at the mouth of the gulf near Actium, their ranks of oars on either side lifted and poised as for the stroke, and their prows towards the enemy, as if they were fully manned and prepared to fight. [2] Caesar, thus outwitted and deceived, withdrew. Antony was also thought to have shown great skill in enclosing the potable water within certain barriers and thus depriving the enemy of it, since the places round about afforded little, and that of bad quality. He also behaved with magnanimity towards Domitius, contrary to the judgment of Cleopatra. For when Domitius, who was already in a fever, got into a small boat and went over to Caesar, Antony, though deeply chagrined, nevertheless, sent off to him all his baggage, together with his friends and servants. [3] And Domitius, as if repenting when his faithlessness and treachery became known, straightway died.

There were also defections among the kings, and Amyntas and Deiotarus went over to Caesar. Besides, since his navy was unlucky in everything and always too late to be of assistance, Antony was again compelled to turn his attention to his land forces. Canidius also, the commander of the land forces, changed his mind in presence of the danger, and advised Antony to send Cleopatra away, to withdraw into Thrace or Macedonia, and there to decide the issue by a land battle. [4] For Dicomus the king of the Getae promised to come to their aid with a large force; and it would be no disgrace, Canidius urged, for them to give up the sea to Caesar, who had practised himself there in the Sicilian war; but it would be a strange thing for Antony, who was most experienced in land

conflicts, not to avail himself of the strength and equipment of his numerous legionary soldiers, but to distribute his forces among ships and so fritter them away.

[5] However, Cleopatra prevailed with her opinion that the war should be decided by the ships, although she was already contemplating flight, and was disposing her own forces, not where they would be helpful in winning the victory, but where they could most easily get away if the cause was lost. Moreover, there were two long walls extending down to the naval station from the camp, and between these Antony was wont to pass without suspecting any danger. [6] But a slave told Caesar that it was possible to seize Antony as he went down between the walls, and Caesar sent men to lie in ambush for him. These men came near accomplishing their purpose, but seized only the man who was advancing in front of Antony, since they sprang up too soon; Antony himself escaped with difficulty by running.

...

[66.1] Though the struggle was beginning to be at close range, the ships did not ram or crush one another at all, since Antony's, owing to their weight, had no impetus, which chiefly gives effect to the blows of the beaks, while Caesar's not only avoided dashing front to front against rough and hard bronze armour, but did not even venture to ram the enemy's ships in the side. [2] For their beaks would easily have been broken off by impact against vessels constructed of huge square timbers fastened together with iron. The struggle was therefore like a land battle; or, to speak more truly, like the storming of a walled town. For three or four of Caesar's vessels were engaged at the same time about one of Antony's, and the crews fought with wicker shields and spears and punting-poles and fiery missiles; the soldiers of Antony also shot with catapults from wooden towers.

[3] And now, as Agrippa was extending the left wing with a view to encircling the enemy, Publicola was forced to advance against him, and so was separated

from the centre. The centre falling into confusion and engaging with Arruntius, although the sea-fight was still undecided and equally favourable to both sides, suddenly the sixty ships of Cleopatra were seen hoisting their sails for flight and making off through the midst of the combatants; for they had been posted in the rear of the large vessels, and threw them into confusion as they plunged through. [4] The enemy looked on with amazement, seeing that they took advantage of the wind and made for Peloponnesus. Here, indeed, Antony made it clear to all the world that he was swayed neither by the sentiments of a commander nor of a brave man, nor even by his own, but, as someone in pleasantry said that the soul of the lover dwells in another's body, he was dragged along by the woman as if he had become incorporate with her and must go where she did. [5] For no sooner did he see her ship sailing off than he forgot everything else, betrayed and ran away from those who were fighting and dying in his cause, got into a five-oared galley, where Alexas the Syrian and Scellius were his only companions, and hastened after the woman who had already ruined him and would make his ruin still more complete.

[67.1] Cleopatra recognized him and raised a signal on her ship; so Antony came up and was taken on board, but he neither saw nor was seen by her. Instead, he went forward alone to the prow and sat down by himself in silence, holding his head in both hands. [2] At this point, Liburnian ships were seen pursuing them from Caesar's fleet; but Antony ordered the ship's prow turned to face them, and so kept them off, except the ship of Eurycles the Laconian, who attacked vigorously, and brandished a spear on the deck as though he would cast it at Antony. And when Antony, standing at the prow, asked, "Who is this that pursues Antony?" the answer was, "I am Eurycles the son of Lachares, whom the fortune of Caesar enables to avenge the death of his father." [3] Now, Lachares had been beheaded by Antony because he was involved in a charge of robbery. However, Eurycles did not hit Antony's ship, but smote the other admiral's ship

(for there were two of them) with his bronze beak and whirled her round, and one of the other ships also, which contained costly equipment for household use. [4] When Eurycles was gone, Antony threw himself down again in the same posture and did not stir. He spent three days by himself at the prow, either because he was angry with Cleopatra, or ashamed to see her, and then put in at Taenarum. Here the women in Cleopatra's company at first brought them into a parley, and then persuaded them to eat and sleep together.

[5] Presently not a few of their heavy transport ships and some of their friends began to gather about them after the defeat, bringing word that the fleet was destroyed, but that, in their opinion, the land forces still held together. So Antony sent messengers to Canidius, ordering him to retire with his army as fast as he could through Macedonia into Asia; [6] he himself, however, since he purposed to cross from Taenarum to Libya, selected one of the transport ships which carried much coined money and very valuable royal utensils in silver and gold, and made a present of it to his friends, bidding them divide up the treasure and look out for their own safety. They refused his gift and were in tears, but he comforted them and besought them with great kindness and affection, and finally sent them away, [7] after writing to Theophilus, his steward in Corinth, that he should keep the men in safe hiding until they could make their peace with Caesar. This Theophilus was the father of Hipparchus, who had the greatest influence with Antony, was the first of Antony's freedmen to go over to Caesar, and afterwards lived in Corinth.

[68.1] This, then, was the situation of Antony. But at Actium his fleet held out for a long time against Caesar, and only after it had been most severely damaged by the high sea which rose against it did it reluctantly, and at the tenth hour, give up the struggle. There were not more than five thousand dead, but three hundred ships were captured, as Caesar himself has written. [2] Only a few were aware that Antony had fled, and to those who heard of it the story was at first an incredible one, that he

had gone off and left nineteen legions of undefeated men-at-arms and twelve thousand horsemen, as if he had not many times experienced both kinds of fortune and were not exercised by the reverses of countless wars and fightings. [3] His soldiers, too, had a great longing for him, and expected that he would presently make his appearance from some quarter or other; and they displayed so much fidelity and bravery that even after his flight had become evident they held together for seven days, paying no heed to the messages which Caesar sent them. But at last, after Canidius their general had run away by night and forsaken the camp, being now destitute of all things and betrayed by their commanders, they went over to the conqueror.

...

[73.1] Caesar would not listen to the proposals for Antony, but he sent back word to Cleopatra that she would receive all reasonable treatment if she either put Antony to death or cast him out. He also sent with the messengers one of his own freedmen, Thyrsus, a man of no mean parts, and one who would persuasively convey messages from a young general to a woman who was haughty and astonishingly proud in the matter of beauty. [2] This man had longer interviews with Cleopatra than the rest, and was conspicuously honoured by her, so that he roused suspicion in Antony, who seized him and gave him a flogging, and then sent him back to Caesar with a written message stating that Thyrsus, by his insolent and haughty airs, had irritated him, at a time when misfortunes made him easily irritated. "But if thou dost not like the thing," he said, "thou has my freedman Hipparchus;^[58] hang him up and give him a flogging, and we shall be quits." [3] After this, Cleopatra tried to dissipate his causes of complaint and his suspicions by paying extravagant court to him; her own birthday she kept modestly and in a manner becoming to her circumstances, but she celebrated his with an excess of all kinds of splendour and costliness, so that many of those who were bidden to the supper came poor and went away rich. Meanwhile Caesar was being called home by Agrippa, who frequently

wrote him from Rome that matters there greatly needed his presence.

[74.1] Accordingly, the war was suspended for the time being; but when the winter was over, Caesar again marched against his enemy through Syria, and his generals through Libya. When Pelusium was taken there was a rumour that Seleucus had given it up, and not without the consent of Cleopatra; but Cleopatra allowed Antony to put to death the wife and children of Seleucus, and she herself, now that she had a tomb and monument built surpassingly lofty and beautiful, which she had erected near the temple of Isis, [2] collected there the most valuable of the royal treasures, gold, silver, emeralds, pearls, ebony, ivory, and cinnamon; and besides all this she put there great quantities of torch-wood and tow, so that Caesar was anxious about the reason, and fearing lest the woman might become desperate and burn up and destroy this wealth, kept sending on to her vague hopes of kindly treatment from him, at the same time that he advanced with his army against the city. [3] But when Caesar had taken up position near the hippodrome, Antony sallied forth against him and fought brilliantly and routed his cavalry, and pursued them as far as their camp. Then, exalted by his victory, he went into the palace, kissed Cleopatra, all armed as he was, and presented to her the one of his soldiers who had fought most spiritedly. Cleopatra gave the man as a reward of valour a golden breastplate and a helmet. The man took them, of course, — and in the night deserted to Caesar.

[75.1] And now Antony once more sent Caesar a challenge to single combat. But Caesar answered that Antony had many ways of dying. Then Antony, conscious that there was no better death for him than that by battle, determined to attack by land and sea at once. And at supper, we are told, he bade the slaves pour out for him and feast him more generously; [2] for it was uncertain, he said, whether they would be doing this on the morrow, or whether they would be serving other masters, while he himself would be lying dead, a mummy

and a nothing. Then, seeing that his friends were weeping at these words, he declared that he would not lead them out to battle, since from it he sought an honourable death for himself rather than safety and victory.

[3] During this night, it is said, about the middle of it, while the city was quiet and depressed through fear and expectation of what was coming, suddenly certain harmonious sounds from all sorts of instruments were heard, and the shouting of a throng, accompanied by cries of Bacchic revelry and satyric leaping, as if a troop of revellers, making a great tumult, were going forth from the city; [4] and their course seemed to lie about through the middle of the city toward the outer gate which faced the enemy, at which point the tumult became loudest and then dashed out. Those who sought the meaning of the sign were of the opinion that the god to whom Antony always most likened and attached himself was now deserting him.

[76.1] At daybreak, Antony in person posted his infantry on the hills in front of the city, and watched his ships as they put out and attacked those of the enemy; and as he expected to see something great accomplished by them, he remained quiet. But the crews of his ships, as soon as they were near, saluted Caesar's crews with their oars, and on their returning the salute changed sides, and so all the ships, now united into one fleet, sailed up towards the city prows on. [2] No sooner had Antony seen this than he was deserted by his cavalry, which went over to the enemy, and after being defeated with his infantry he retired into the city, crying out that he had been betrayed by Cleopatra to those with whom he waged war for her sake. But she, fearing his anger and his madness, fled for refuge into her tomb and let fall the drop-doors, which were made strong with bolts and bars; then she sent messengers to tell Antony that she was dead. [3] Antony believed that message, and saying to himself, "Why doest thou longer delay, Antony? Fortune has taken away thy sole remaining excuse for clinging to life," he went into his chamber. Here, as he unfastened his breastplate and

laid it aside, he said: "O Cleopatra, I am not grieved to be bereft of thee, for I shall straightway join thee; but I am grieved that such an imperator as I am has been found to be inferior to a woman in courage."

[4] Now, Antony had a trusty slave named Eros. Him Antony had long before engaged, in case of need, to kill him, and now demanded the fulfilment of his promise. So Eros drew his sword and held it up as though he would smite his master, but then turned his face away and slew himself. And as he fell at his master's feet Antony said: "Well done, Eros! though thou wast not able to do it thyself, thou teachest me what I must do"; and running himself through the belly he dropped upon the couch. [5] But the wound did not bring a speedy death. Therefore, as the blood ceased flowing after he had lain down, he came to himself and besought the bystanders to give him the finishing stroke. But they fled from the chamber, and he lay writhing and crying out, until Diomedes the secretary came from Cleopatra with orders to bring him to her in the tomb.

[77.1] Having learned, then, that Cleopatra was alive, Antony eagerly ordered his servants to raise him up, and he was carried in their arms to the doors of her tomb. Cleopatra, however, would not open the doors, but showed herself at a window, from which she let down ropes and cords. To these Antony was fastened, and she drew him up herself, with the aid of the two women whom alone she had admitted with her into the tomb. [2] Never, as those who were present tell us, was there a more piteous sight. Smearred with blood and struggling with death he was drawn up, stretching out his hands to her even as he dangled in the air. For the task was not an easy one for the women, and scarcely could Cleopatra, with clinging hands and strained face, pull up the rope, while those below called out encouragement to her and shared her agony. [3] And when she had thus got him in and laid him down, she rent her garments over him, beat and tore her breasts with her hands, wiped off some of his blood upon her face, and called him master, husband, and imperator; indeed, she almost forgot

her own ills in her pity for his. But Antony stopped her lamentations and asked for a drink of wine, either because he was thirsty, or in the hope of a speedier release. [4] When he had drunk, he advised her to consult her own safety, if she could do it without disgrace, and among all the companions of Caesar to put most confidence in Proculeius, and not to lament him for his last reverses, but to count him happy for the good things that had been his, since he had become most illustrious of men, had won greatest power, and now had been not ignobly conquered, a Roman by a Roman.

[78.1] Scarcely was he dead, when Proculeius came from Caesar. For after Antony had smitten himself and while he was being carried to Cleopatra, Dercetaeus, one of his body-guard, seized Antony's sword, concealed it, and stole away with it; and running to Caesar, he was the first to tell him of Antony's death, and showed him the sword all smeared with blood. [2] When Caesar heard these tidings, he retired within his tent and wept for a man who had been his relation by marriage, his colleague in office and command, and his partner in many undertakings and struggles. Then he took the letters which had passed between them, called in his friends, and read the letters aloud, showing how reasonably and justly he had written, and how rude and overbearing Antony had always been in his replies. [3] After this, he sent Proculeius, bidding him, if possible, above all things to get Cleopatra into his power alive; for he was fearful about the treasures in her funeral pyre, and he thought it would add greatly to the glory of his triumph if she were led in the procession. Into the hands of Proculeius, however, Cleopatra would not put herself; [4] but she conferred with him after he had come close to the tomb and stationed himself outside at a door which was on a level with the ground. The door was strongly fastened with bolts and bars, but allowed a passage for the voice. So they conversed, Cleopatra asking that her children might have the kingdom, and Proculeius bidding her be of good cheer and trust Caesar in everything.

[79.1] After Proculeius had surveyed the place, he brought back word to Caesar, and Gallus was sent to have another interview with the queen; and coming up to the door he purposely prolonged the conversation. Meanwhile Proculeius applied a ladder and went in through the window by which the women had taken Antony inside. Then he went down at once to the very door at which Cleopatra was standing and listening to Gallus, and he had two servants with him. [2] One of the women imprisoned with Cleopatra cried out, "Wretched Cleopatra, thou art taken alive," whereupon the queen turned about, saw Proculeius, and tried to stab herself; for she had at her girdle a dagger such as robbers wear. But Proculeius ran swiftly to her, threw both his arms about her, and said: "O Cleopatra, thou art wronging both thyself and Caesar, by trying to rob him of an opportunity to show great kindness, and by fixing upon the gentlest of commanders the stigma of faithlessness and implacability." [3] At the same time he took away her weapon, and shook out her clothing, to see whether she was concealing any poison. And there was also sent from Caesar one of his freedmen, Epaphroditus, with injunctions to keep the queen alive by the strictest vigilance, but otherwise to make any concession that would promote her ease and pleasure.

[80.1] And now Caesar himself drove into the city, and he was conversing with Areius the philosopher, to whom he had given his right hand, in order that Areius might at once be conspicuous among the citizens, and be admired because of the marked honour shown him by Caesar. After he had entered the gymnasium and ascended a tribunal there made for him, the people were beside themselves with fear and prostrated themselves before him, but he bade them rise up, and said that he acquitted the people of all blame, first, because of Alexander, their founder; second, because he admired the great size and beauty of the city; and third, to gratify his companion, Areius. [2] This honour Caesar bestowed upon Areius, and pardoned many other persons also at his request. Among these was

Philostratus, a man more competent to speak extempore than any sophist that ever lived, but he improperly represented himself as belonging to the school of the Academy. Therefore Caesar, abominating his ways, would not listen to his entreaties. [3] So Philostratus, having a long white beard and wearing a dark robe, would follow behind Areius, ever declaiming this verse:—

“A wise man will a wise man save, if
wise he be.”

When Caesar heard of this, he pardoned him, wishing rather to free Areius from odium than Philostratus from fear.

[81.1] As for the children of Antony, Antyllus, his son by Fulvia, was betrayed by Theodorus his tutor and put to death; and after the soldiers had cut off his head, his tutor took away the exceeding precious stone which the boy wore about his neck and sewed it into his own girdle; and though he denied the deed, he was convicted of it and crucified. [2] Cleopatra’s children, together with their attendants, were kept under guard and had generous treatment. But Caesarion, who was said to be Cleopatra’s son by Julius Caesar, was sent by his mother, with much treasure, into India, by way of Ethiopia. There Rhodon, another tutor like Theodorus, persuaded him to go back, on the ground that Caesar invited him to take the kingdom. But while Caesar was deliberating on the matter, we are told that Areius said:—

“Not a good thing were a Caesar too many.”

[82.1] As for Caesarion, then, he was afterwards put to death by Caesar, — after the death of Cleopatra; but as for Antony, though many generals and kings asked for his body that they might give it burial, Caesar would not take it away from Cleopatra, and it was buried by her hands in sumptuous and royal fashion, such things being granted her for the purpose as she desired. But in consequence of so much grief as well as pain (for her breasts were wounded and inflamed by the blows she gave them) a fever assailed her, and she welcomed it as an

excuse for abstaining from food and so releasing herself from life without hindrance. [2] Moreover, there was a physician in her company of intimates, Olympus, to whom she told the truth, and she had his counsel and assistance in compassing her death, as Olympus himself testifies in a history of these events which he published. But Caesar was suspicious, and plied her with threats and fears regarding her children, by which she was laid low, as by engines of war, and surrendered her body for such care and nourishment as was desired.

[83.1] After a few days Caesar himself came to talk with her and give her comfort. She was lying on a mean pallet-bed, clad only in her tunic, but sprang up as he entered and threw herself at his feet; her hair and face were in terrible disarray, her voice trembled, and her eyes were sunken. There were also visible many marks of the cruel blows upon her bosom; in a word, her body seemed to be no better off than her spirit. [2] Nevertheless, the charm for which she was famous and the boldness of her beauty were not altogether extinguished, but, although she was in such a sorry plight, they shone forth from within and made themselves manifest in the play of her features. After Caesar had bidden her to lie down and had seated himself near her, she began a sort of justification of her course, ascribing it to necessity and fear of Antony; but as Caesar opposed and refuted her on every point, she quickly changed her tone and sought to move his pity by prayers, as one who above all things clung to life. [3] And finally she gave him a list which she had of all her treasures; and when Seleucus, one of her stewards, showed conclusively that she was stealing away and hiding some of them, she sprang up, seized him by the hair, and showered blows upon his face. [4] And when Caesar, with a smile, stopped her, she said: “But is it not a monstrous thing, O Caesar, that when thou hast deigned to come to me and speak to me though I am in this wretched plight, my slaves denounce me for reserving some women’s adornments, — not for myself, indeed, unhappy woman that I am, — but that I may make trifling gifts to Octavia and thy Livia, and through

their intercession find thee merciful and more gentle?" [5] Caesar was pleased with this speech, being altogether of the opinion that she desired to live. He told her, therefore, that he left these matters for her to manage, and that in all other ways he would give her more splendid treatment than she could possibly expect. Then he went off, supposing that he had deceived her, but he rather deceived by her.

[84.1] Now, there was a young man of rank among Caesar's companions, named Cornelius Dolabella. This man was not without a certain tenderness for Cleopatra; and so now, in response to her request, he secretly sent word to her that Caesar himself was preparing to march with his land forces through Syria, and had resolved to send off her and her children within three days. [2] After Cleopatra had heard this, in the first place, she begged Caesar that she might be permitted to pour libations for Antony; and when the request was granted, she had herself carried to the tomb, and embracing the urn which held his ashes, in company with the women usually about her, she said: "Dear Antony, I buried thee but lately with hands still free; now, however, I pour libations for thee as a captive, and so carefully guarded that I cannot either with blows or tears disfigure this body of mine, which is a slave's body, and closely watched that it may grace the triumph over thee. [3] Do not expect other honours or libations; these are the last from Cleopatra the captive. For though in life nothing could part us from each other, in death we are likely to change places; thou, the Roman, lying buried here, while I, the hapless woman, lie in Italy, and get only so much of thy country as my portion. [4] But if indeed there is any might or power in the gods of that country (for the gods of this country have betrayed us), do not abandon thine own wife while she lives, nor permit a triumph to be celebrated over myself in my person, but hide and bury me here with thyself, since out of all my innumerable ills not one is so great and dreadful as this short time that I have lived apart from thee."

[85.1] After such lamentations, she wreathed and kissed the urn, and then ordered a bath to be prepared for herself. After her bath, she reclined at table and was making a sumptuous meal. And there came a man from the country carrying a basket; and when the guards asked him what he was bringing there, he opened the basket, took away the leaves, and showed them that the dish inside was full of figs. [2] The guards were amazed at the great size and beauty of the figs, whereupon the man smiled and asked them to take some; so they felt no mistrust and bade him take them in. After her meal, however, Cleopatra took a tablet which was already written upon and sealed, and sent it to Caesar, and then, sending away all the rest of the company except her two faithful women, she closed the doors.

[3] But Caesar opened the tablet, and when he found there lamentations and supplications of one who begged that he would bury her with Antony, he quickly knew what had happened. At first he was minded to go himself and give aid; then he ordered messengers to go with all speed and investigate. But the mischief had been swift. For though his messengers came on the run and found the guards as yet aware of nothing, when they opened the doors they found Cleopatra lying dead upon a golden couch, arrayed in royal state. [4] And of her two women, the one called Iras was dying at her feet, while Charmion, already tottering and heavy-handed, was trying to arrange the diadem which encircled the queen's brow. Then somebody said in anger: "A fine deed, this, Charmion!" "It is indeed most fine," she said, "and befitting the descendant of so many kings." Not a word more did she speak, but fell there by the side of the couch.

[86.1] It is said that the asp was brought with those figs and leaves and lay hidden beneath them, for thus Cleopatra had given orders, that the reptile might fasten itself upon her body without her being aware of it. But when she took away some of the figs and saw it, she said: "There it is, you see," and baring her arm she held it out for the bite. [2] But others say that the asp was kept carefully shut up in

a water jar, and that while Cleopatra was stirring it up and irritating it with a golden distaff it sprang and fastened itself upon her arm. But the truth of the matter no one knows; for it was also said that she carried about poison in a hollow comb and kept the comb hidden in her hair; and yet neither spot nor other sign of poison broke out upon her body. [3] Moreover, not even was the reptile seen within the chamber, though people said they saw some traces of it near the sea, where the chamber looked out upon it with its windows. And some also say that Cleopatra's arm was seen to have two slight and indistinct punctures; and this Caesar also seems to have believed. For in his triumph an image of Cleopatra herself with the asp clinging to her was carried in the procession. These, then, are the various accounts of what happened.

[4] But Caesar, although vexed at the death of the woman, admired her lofty spirit; and he gave orders that her body should be buried with that of Antony in splendid and regal fashion. Her women also received honourable interment by his orders. When Cleopatra died she was forty years of age save one, and had shared her power with Antony more than fourteen. [5] Antony was fifty-six years of age, according to some, according to others, fifty-three. Now, the statues of Antony were torn down, but those of Cleopatra were left standing, because Archibius, one of her friends, gave Caesar two thousand talents, in order that they might not suffer the same fate as Antony's.