Plutarch *Life of Antony*, translated by John Dryden

*[In the first 21 chapters of the Life Plutarch describes Antony’s background and early accomplishments, including his leadership of the pro-Caesarean party in the aftermath of Julius Caesar’s assassination. Antony is generally described as an able general and politician, who nevertheless has a tendency to fall into dissolute ways once imminent dangers have passed.]

*Our reading begins where Mark Antony and Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (Julius Caesar’s heir and the future emperor Augustus) have crossed over the Adriatic with military forces into Greece in pursuit of the armies of Brutus and Cassius, the main conspirators in the assassination of Julius Caesar]*

22. However, after they had crossed the sea and engaged in operations of war, encamping in front of the enemy, Antony opposite Cassius, and Caesar (i.e. Octavian) opposite Brutus, Caesar did nothing worth relating, and all the success and victory were Antony’s. In the first battle, Caesar was completely routed by Brutus, his camp taken, he himself very narrowly escaping by flight. As he himself writes in his *Memoirs*, he retired before the battle, on account of a dream which one of his friends had. But Antony, on the other hand, defeated Cassius; though some have written that he was not actually present in the engagement, and only joined afterwards in the pursuit. Cassius was killed, at his own entreaty and order, by one of his most trusted freedmen, Pindarus, not being aware of Brutus’s victory. After a few days’ interval, they fought another battle, in which Brutus lost the day, and slew himself; and Caesar being sick, Antony had almost all the honour of the victory. Standing over Brutus’s dead body, he uttered a few words of reproach upon him for the death of his brother Caius, who had been executed by Brutus’s order in Macedonia in revenge of Cicero; but, saying presently that Hortensius was most to blame for it, he gave order for his being slain upon his brother’s tomb, and, throwing his own scarlet mantle, which was of great value, upon the body of Brutus, he gave charge to one of his own freedmen to take care of his funeral. This man, as Antony came to understand, did not leave the mantle with the corpse, but kept both it and a good part of the money that should have been spent in the funeral for himself; for which he had him put to death.

23. But Caesar was conveyed to Rome, no one expecting that he would long survive. Antony, purposing to go to the eastern provinces to lay them under contribution (i.e. make them pay indemnities for supporting Cassius and Brutus, which would then be used to pay his troops), entered Greece with a large force. The promise had been made that every common soldier should receive for his pay five thousand drachmas; so it was likely there would be need of pretty severe taxing and levying to raise money. However, to the Greeks he showed at first reason and moderation enough; he gratified his love of amusement by hearing the learned men dispute, by seeing the games, and undergoing initiation; and in judicial matters he was equitable, taking pleasure in being styled a lover of Greece, but, above all, in being called a lover of Athens, to which city he made very considerable presents. The people of Megara wished to let him know that they also had something to show him, and invited him to come and see their senate-house. So he went and examined it, and on their asking him how he liked it, told them it was “not very large, but extremely ruinous.” At the same time, he had a survey made of the temple of the Pythian Apollo as if he had designed to repair it, and indeed he had
declared to the senate his intention so to do.

24. However, leaving Lucius Censorinus in Greece, he crossed over into Asia, and there laid his hands on the stores of accumulated wealth, while kings waited at his door, and queens were rivalling one another, who should make him the greatest presents or appear most charming in his eyes. Thus, whilst Caesar in Rome was wearing out his strength amidst seditions and wars, Antony, with nothing to do amidst the enjoyments of peace, let his passions carry him easily back to the old course of life that was familiar to him. A set of harpers and pipers, Anaxenor and Xuthus, the dancing-man, Metrodorus, and a whole Bacchic rout of the like Asiatic exhibitors, far outdoing in licence and buffoonery the pests that had followed him out of Italy, came in and possessed the court; the thing was past patience, wealth of all kinds being wasted on objects like these. The whole of Asia was like the city in Sophocles, loaded, at one time- "--------with incense in the air, Jubilant songs, and outcries of despair." When he made his entry into Ephesus, the women met him dressed up like Bacchantes, and the men and boys like satyrs and fauns, and throughout the town nothing was to be seen but spears wreathed about with ivy, harps, flutes, and psalteries, while Antony in their songs was Bacchus, the Giver of joy, and the Gentle. And so indeed he was to some but to far more the Devourer and the Savage; for he would deprive persons of worth and quality of their fortunes to gratify villains and flatterers, who would sometimes beg the estates of men yet living, pretending they were dead, and, obtaining a grant, take possession. He gave his cook the house of a Magnesian citizen, as a reward for a single highly successful supper, and, at last, when he was proceeding to lay a second whole tribute on Asia, Hybreas, speaking on behalf of the cities, took courage, and told him broadly, but aptly enough for Antony's taste "if you can take two yearly tributes, you can doubtless give us a couple of summers and a double harvest time;" and put it to him in the plainest and boldest way, that Asia had raised two hundred thousand talents for his service: "If this has not been paid to you, ask your collectors for it; if it has, and is all gone, we are ruined men." These words touched Antony to the quick, who was simply ignorant of most things that were done in his name; not that he was so indolent, as he was prone to trust frankly in all about him. For there was much simplicity in his character; he was slow to see his faults, but when he did see them, was extremely repentant, and ready to ask pardon of those he had injured prodigal in his acts of reparation, and severe in his punishments, but his generosity was much more extravagant than his severity; his raillery was sharp and insulting, but the edge of it was taken off by his readiness to submit to any kind of repartee; for he was as well contented to be rallied, as he was pleased to rally others. And this freedom of speech was, indeed, the cause of many of his disasters. He never imagined those who used so much liberty in their mirth would flatter or deceive him in business of consequence, not knowing how common it is with parasites to mix their flattery with boldness, as confectioners do their sweetmeats with something biting, to prevent the sense of satiety. Their freedoms and impertinences at table were designed expressly to give to their obsequiousness in council the air of being not complaisance, but conviction.

25. Such being his temper, the last and crowning mischief that could befall him came in the love of Cleopatara, to awaken and kindle to fury passions that as yet lay still and dormant in his nature, and to stifle and finally corrupt any elements that yet made resistance in him of goodness and a sound judgment. He fell into the snare thus. When making preparation for the
Parthian war, he sent to command her to make her personal appearance in Cilicia, to answer an accusation that she had given great assistance, in the late wars, to Cassius. Dellius, who was sent on this message, had no sooner seen her face, and remarked her adroitness and subtlety in speech, but he felt convinced that Antony would not so much as think of giving any molestation to a woman like this; on the contrary, she would be the first in favour with him. So he set himself at once to pay his court to the Egyptian, and gave her his advice, "to go," in the Homeric style, to Cilicia, "in her best attire," and bade her fear nothing from Antony, the gentlest and kindest of soldiers. She had some faith in the words of Dellius, but more in her own attractions; which, having formerly recommended her to Caesar and the young Cnaeus Pompey, she did not doubt might prove yet more successful with Antony. Their acquaintance was with her when a girl, young and ignorant of the world, but she was to meet Antony in the time of life when women's beauty is most splendid, and their intellects are in full maturity. She made great preparation for her journey, of money, gifts, and ornaments of value, such as so wealthy a kingdom might afford, but she brought with her her surest hopes in her own magic arts and charms.

26. She received several letters, both from Antony and from his friends, to summon her, but she took no account of these orders; and at last, as if in mockery of them, she came sailing up the river Cydnus, in a barge with gilded stern and outspread sails of purple, while oars of silver beat time to the music of flutes and fifes and harps. She herself lay all along under a canopy of cloth of gold, dressed as Venus in a picture, and beautiful young boys, like painted Cupids, stood on each side to fan her. Her maids were dressed like sea nymphs and graces, some steering at the rudder, some working at the ropes. The perfumes diffused themselves from the vessel to the shore, which was covered with multitudes, part following the galley up the river on either bank, part running out of the city to see the sight. The market-place was quite emptied, and Antony at last was left alone sitting upon the tribunal; while the word went through all the multitude, that Venus was come to feast with Bacchus, for the common good of Asia. On her arrival, Antony sent to invite her to supper. She thought it fitter he should come to her; so, willing to show his good-humour and courtesy, he complied, and went. He found the preparations to receive him magnificent beyond expression, but nothing so admirable as the great number of lights; for on a sudden there was let down altogether so great a number of branches with lights in them so ingeniously disposed, some in squares, and some in circles, that the whole thing was a spectacle that has seldom been equalled for beauty.

27. The next day, Antony invited her to supper, and was very desirous to outdo her as well in magnificence as contrivance; but he found he was altogether beaten in both, and was so well convinced of it that he was himself the first to jest and mock at his poverty of wit and his rustic awkwardness. She, perceiving that his raillery was broad and gross, and savoured more of the soldier than the courtier, rejoined in the same taste, and fell into it at once, without any sort of reluctance or reserve. For her actual beauty, it is said, was not in itself so remarkable that none could be compared with her, or that no one could see her without being struck by it, but the contact of her presence, if you lived with her, was irresistible; the attraction of her person, joining with the charm of her conversation, and the character that attended all she said or did, was something bewitching. It was a pleasure merely to hear the sound of her voice, with which,
like an instrument of many strings, she could pass from one language to another; so that there were few of the barbarian nations that she answered by an interpreter; to most of them she spoke herself, as to the Ethiopians, Troglydotes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes, Parthians, and many others, whose language she had learnt; which was all the more surprising because most of the kings, her predecessors, scarcely gave themselves the trouble to acquire the Egyptian tongue, and several of them quite abandoned the Macedonian.

28. Antony was so captivated by her that, while Fulvia his wife maintained his quarrels in Rome against Caesar by actual force of arms [Antony was married to the aristocratic widow Fulvia Flacca ca. 46 BCE; this was already his third marriage; in 41 BCE, she and Antony's brother, Lucius Antonius, tried to defend Antony's rights in Italy against Octavian but were defeated in the War of Perusia; all the while, Antony remained in the east.] , and the Parthian troops, commanded by Labienus (the king's generals having made him commander-in-chief), were assembled in Mesopotamia, and ready to enter Syria, he could yet suffer himself to be carried away by her to Alexandria, there to keep holiday, like a boy, in play and diversion, squandering and fooling away in enjoyments that most costly, as Antiphon says, of all valuables, time. They had a sort of company, to which they gave a particular name, calling it that of the Inimitable Livers. The members entertained one another daily in turn, with all extravagance of expenditure beyond measure or belief. Philotas, a physician of Amphissa, who was at that time a student of medicine in Alexandria, used to tell my grandfather Lamprias that, having some acquaintance with one of the royal cooks, he was invited by him, being a young man, to come and see the sumptuous preparations for supper. So he was taken into the kitchen, where he admired the prodigious variety of all things; but particularly, seeing eight wild boars roasting whole, says he, "Surely you have a great number of guests." The cook laughed at his simplicity, and told him there were not above twelve to sup, but that every dish was to be served up just roasted to a turn, and if anything was but one minute ill-timed, it was spoiled; "And," said he, "maybe Antony will sup just now, maybe not this hour, maybe he will call for wine, or begin to talk, and will put it off. So that," he continued, "it is not one, but many suppers must be had in readiness, as it is impossible to guess at his hour." This was Philotas's story; who related besides, that he afterwards came to be one the medical attendants of Antony's eldest son by Fulvia, and used to be invited pretty often, among other companions, to his table, when he was not supping with his father. One day another physician had talked loudly, and given great disturbance to the company, whose mouth Philotas stopped with this sophistical syllogism: "In some states of fever the patient should take cold water; every one who has a fever is in some state of fever; therefore in a fever cold water should always be taken." The man was quite struck dumb, and Antony's son, very much pleased, laughed aloud, and said, "Philotas, I make you a present of all you see there," pointing to a sideboard covered with plate. Philotas thanked him much, but was far enough from ever imagining that a boy of his age could dispose of things of that value. Soon after, however, the plate was all brought to him, and he was desired to get his mark upon it; and when he put it away from him, and was afraid to accept the present. "What ails the man?" said he that brought it; "do you know that he who gives you this is Antony's son, who is free to give it, if it were all gold? but if you will be advised by me, I would counsel you to accept of the value in money from us; for there may be amongst the rest some antique or famous piece of workmanship, which Antony would be sorry to part with." These anecdotes, my grandfather told
us, Philotas used frequently to relate.

29. To return to Cleopatra; Plato admits four sorts of flattery, but she had a thousand. Were Antony serious or disposed to mirth, she had at any moment some new delight or charm to meet his wishes; at every turn she was upon him, and let him escape her neither by day nor by night. She played at dice with him, drank with him, hunted with him; and when he exercised in arms, she was there to see. At night she would go rambling with him to disturb and torment people at their doors and windows, dressed like a servant-woman, for Antony also went in servant's disguise, and from these expeditions he often came home very scurvily answered, and sometimes even beaten severely, though most people guessed who it was. However, the Alexandrians in general liked it all well enough, and joined good-humouredly and kindly in his frolic and play, saying they were much obliged to Antony for acting his tragic parts at Rome, and keeping comedy for them. It would be trifling without end to be particular in his follies, but his fishing must not be forgotten. He went out one day to angle with Cleopatra, and, being so unfortunate as to catch nothing in the presence of his mistress, he gave secret orders to the fishermen to dive under water, and put fishes that had been already taken upon his hooks; and these he drew so fast that the Egyptian perceived it. But, feigning great admiration, she told everybody how dexterous Antony was, and invited them next day to come and see him again. So, when a number of them had come on board the fishing-boats, as soon as he had let down his hook, one of her servants was beforehand with his divers and fixed upon his hook a salted fish from Pontus. Antony, feeling his line give, drew up the prey, and when, as may be imagined, great laughter ensued, "Leave," said Cleopatra, "the fishing-rod, general, to us poor sovereigns of Pharos and Canopus; your game is cities, provinces, and kingdoms."

30. Whilst he was thus diverting himself and engaged in this boy's play, two despatches arrived; one from Rome, that his brother Lucius and his wife Fulvia, after many quarrels among themselves, had joined in war against Caesar, and having lost all, had fled out of Italy; the other bringing little better news, that Labienus, at the head of the Parthians, was overrunning Asia, from Euphrates and Syria as far as Lydia and Ionia. So, scarcely at last rousing himself from sleep, and shaking off the fumes of wine, he set out to attack the Parthians, and went as far as Phoenicia; but, upon the receipt of lamentable letters from Fulvia, turned his course with two hundred ships to Italy. And, in his way, receiving such of his friends as fled from Italy, he was given to understand that Fulvia was the sole cause of the war, a woman of a restless spirit and very bold, and withal her hopes were that commotions in Italy would force Antony from Cleopatra. But it happened that Fulvia as she was coming to meet her husband, fell sick by the way, and died at Sicyon, so that an accommodation was the more easily made. For when he reached Italy, and Caesar showed no intention of laying anything to his charge, and he on his part shifted the blame of everything on Fulvia, those that were friends to them would not suffer that the time should be spent in looking narrowly into the plea, but made a reconciliation first, and then a partition of the empire between them, taking as their boundary the Ionian Sea, the eastern provinces falling to Antony, to Caesar the western, and Africa being left to Lepidus. And an agreement was made that everyone in their turn, as they thought fit, should make their friends consuls, when they did not choose to take the offices themselves.
31. These terms were well approved of, but yet it was thought some closer tie would be desirable; and for this, fortune offered occasion. Caesar had an elder sister, not of the whole blood, for Attia was his mother's name, hers Ancharia. This sister, Octavia, he was extremely attached to, as indeed she was, it is said, quite a wonder of a woman. Her husband, Caius Marcellus, had died not long before, and Antony was now a widower by the death of Fulvia; for, though he did not disavow the passion he had for Cleopatra, yet he disowned anything of marriage, reason as yet, upon this point, still maintaining the debate against the charms of the Egyptian. Everybody concurred in promoting this new alliance, fully expecting that with the beauty, honour, and prudence of Octavia, when her company should, as it was certain it would, have engaged his affections, all would be kept in the safe and happy course of friendship. So, both parties being agreed, they went to Rome to celebrate the nuptials, the senate dispensing with the law by which a widow was not permitted to marry till ten months after the death of her husband.

[32-34. In these chapters, Antony and Octavian meet at the port of Misenum in southern Italy and renew their alliance in 39 BCE]

35. Antony, however, once more, upon some unfavourable stories, taking offence against Caesar, set sail with three hundred ships for Italy, and, being refused admittance to the port of Brundusium, made for Tarentum [in 37 BCE]. There his wife Octavia, who came from Greece with him, obtained leave to visit her brother, she being then great with child, having already borne her husband a second daughter; and as she was on her way she met Caesar, with his two friends Agrippa and Maecenas, and, taking these two aside, with great entreaties and lamentations she told them, that of the most fortunate woman upon earth, she was in danger of becoming the most unhappy; for as yet everyone's eyes were fixed upon her as the wife and sister of the two great commanders, but, if rash counsels should prevail, and war ensue, "I shall be miserable," said she, "without redress; for on what side soever victory falls, I shall be sure to be a loser." Caesar was overcome by these entreaties, and advanced in a peaceable temper to Tarentum, where those that were present beheld a most stately spectacle; a vast army up by the shore, and as great a fleet in the harbour, all without the occurrence of friends, and other expressions of joy and kindness, passing from one armament to the other. Antony first entertained Caesar, this also being a concession on Caesar's part to his sister; and when at length an agreement was made between them, that Caesar should give Antony two of his legions to serve him in the Parthian war, and that Antony should in return leave with him a hundred armed galleys, Octavia further obtained of her husband, besides this, twenty light ships for her brother, and of her brother, a thousand foot for her husband. So, having parted good friends, Caesar went immediately to make war with Pompey to conquer Sicily. And Antony, leaving in Caesar's charge his wife and children, and his children by his former wife Fulvia, set sail for Asia.

36. But the mischief that thus long had lain still, the passion for Cleopatra, which better thoughts had seemed to have lulled and charmed into oblivion, upon his approach to Syria gathered strength again, and broke out into a flame. And, in fine, like Plato's restive and rebellious horse of the human soul, flinging off all good and wholesome counsel, and breaking fairly loose, he sends Fonteius Capito to bring Cleopatra into Syria. To whom at her arrival he made no small or
trifling present, Phoenicia, Coele-Syria, Cyprus, great part of Cilicia, that side of Judaea which produces balm, that part of Arabia where the Nabathaeans extend to the outer sea; profuse gifts which much displeased the Romans. For although he had invested several private persons in great governments and kingdoms, and bereaved many kings of theirs, as Antigonus of Judaea, whose head he caused to be struck off (the first example of that punishment being inflicted on a king), yet nothing stung the Romans like the shame of these honours paid to Cleopatra. Their dissatisfaction was augmented also by his acknowledging as his own the twin children he had by her, giving them the name of Alexander and Cleopatra, and adding, as their surnames, the titles of Sun and Moon. But he, who knew how to put a good colour on the most dishonest action, would say that the greatness of the Roman empire consisted more in giving than in taking kingdoms, and that the way to carry noble blood through the world was by begetting in every place a new line and series of kings; his own ancestor had thus been born of Hercules; Hercules had not limited his hopes of progeny to a single womb, nor feared any law like Solon’s or any audit of procreation, but had freely let nature take her will in the foundation and first commencement of many families.

[37-52. Antony invades Armenia and Parthia but suffers major defeats, losing as many as 36,000 men.]

53. 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. 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. 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. 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 practiced these arts while Antony was intending to go up from Syria to join the Mede. 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. 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. 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 Mede 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. 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. 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. 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, 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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, 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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; 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. 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. 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. 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. 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, Sarmentus, at Rome, was drinking Falernian. Now, Sarmentus was one of the youthful favourites of Caesar, such as the Romans call "deliciae."

60. 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. 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. 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.

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.

[61-84. Antony and Cleopatra face Octavian at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE; Antony’s superiority lies in land forces, but Cleopatra insists on a naval engagement; Antony and Cleopatra have brought massive five-banked warships which are, nevertheless, outnumbered and outmaneuvered by those of Octavian; Cleopatra flees for the open sea in her ship in the heat of battle; Antony follows and his forces are defeated; Antony and Cleopatra both flee to Egypt and mount a feeble defense; Antony is defeated by Octavian and commits suicide]

85 After such lamentations, she wreathed and kissed the urn [containing Antony’s ashes], 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. 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. But Caesar opened the tablet, and when he found there lamentations and supplcations 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. 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 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.