

wasting their hours in folly which exposed them to universal derision, Octavius was mustering all his energies for the strife.

Still Antony, through the combined energies of Egypt and the whole western empire, had assembled an enormous force, consisting of one hundred thousand foot, twelve thousand horse, and five hundred ships of war. Octavius had mustered an army of eighty thousand foot, twelve thousand horse, and two hundred and fifty ships. His ships, however, were better built and more efficiently manned than those of his antagonist. With such forces these two imperial men prepared to contend for the mastery of the world. But Octavius was in the prime of youth, and inflamed with a yet unsated ambition. Antony had already passed the meridian of his days, for many years he had tasted both the bitter and the sweets of power, and now he was surrendering himself to voluptuous indulgence, and to all the enervating influences of a sensual and shameful love. A lascivious woman was the ignoble idol of his adoration; and for one who worships at that shrine, final destruction is sure.



## CHAPTER XV.

CÆSAR AUGUSTUS AND MARC ANTONY.

FROM 32 B. C. TO 10 B. C.

BATTLE OF ACTIUM.—FLIGHT OF CLEOPATRA.—ENTIRE VICTORY OF OCTAVIUS.—THE PURSUIT TO ALEXANDRIA.—SUICIDE OF ANTONY.—GUILT OF CLEOPATRA.—HER ENDEAVORS TO WIN OCTAVIUS.—DESPAIR AND SUICIDE OF CLEOPATRA.—TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF OCTAVIUS TO ROME.—HIS WISE MEASURES.—THE TITLE OF AUGUSTUS CONFERRED.—STATE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, ITALY, GAUL, BRITAIN, SPAIN, AFRICA, SYRIA, ASIA MINOR, GREECE.—THE DESOLATIONS OF CIVIL WAR.

ON the coast of the Grecian province of Epirus, there is a noble sheet of water, twenty-five miles in extreme length, and from three to ten miles in breadth, now called the gulf of Arta, but then known as the Ambracian gulf. Within this bay Antony had assembled his fleet, and, in a formidable position, had drawn them up in line of battle. Cleopatra, in alliance, had contributed sixty Egyptian galleys to the armament. Octavius entered the bay, with his fleet, prepared for the decisive encounter. The two armies were upon the opposite shores, where they could not reach each other or take any part in the battle, but in situations in which the whole scene was open before them, and where they could animate the combatants by gestures and shouts.

The hostile ships approached each other, to grapple side to side and to engage in a hand to hand struggle, with all the fury human passion could inspire. Octavius and Antony, in person, were in command of their several fleets. Cleopatra also, in person, assumed the command of her own sixty Egyptian galleys. The voluptuous queen sat canopied in her imperial barge, ridiculously surrounded by her maids of honor.



The morning of the second of September, 31 B. C., dawned clear and cloudless upon the bay, which was covered and surrounded with all the pomp and pageantry of war. The banners of the opposing legions, and the gleam of polished helmet and cuirass, sword and javelin, glittered in the sun's rays, while twenty-four thousand horsemen rode to and fro, impatient to participate in a fight, which, however, they could only witness as a spectacle. Such a gladiatorial scene on such an arena, stands unrivaled in this world's history. In beautiful order and in a long line the two fleets, driven by the arms of the rowers, approached each other. Each ship was in itself a fort, containing its garrison of fighting men; and the business of the rowers was simply to lay them alongside of each other, that the trained soldiers, hand to hand, with sword, javelin and battle-ax, might decide the fray. It was Rome against Rome; Antony against Octavius.

For a long time the horrid butchery continued. The clangor of the battle, as steel met steel, and rang upon coats of mail; the cries and shouts of onset and of death; the huzzas of the legions upon the shore; the cloud of missiles which almost darkened the air; the flash of fire-balls and the smoke and flame of the conflagration, all combined to present a scene which Trafalgar or Aboukir could hardly have surpassed. Cleopatra was struck with a sudden panic, as she saw several of the mammoth quinqueremes of Octavius pierce Antony's center, hurling destruction on all sides. Fearing that her detachment, thus cut off, was doomed to destruction, she gave the signal for retreat. This created a general panic, and, in a few moments, the whole fleet of Antony was in a state of utter rout, the oarsmen straining every nerve to escape as they could, pursued by the exultant galleys of Octavius, hurling destruction upon the fugitives.

Antony joined Cleopatra in her own ship, but at first was so angry with her for her cowardice, so fatal to his cause, that for three days he refused to speak to her, he remaining at the

prow of the ship, with his attendants, and she, with her maids of honor, being at the stern. But love triumphed; and soon, enclosed in each others arms, they approached the coast of Africa. The army of Antony, thus abandoned by its leader, and cut off from retreat, either by sea or by land, by vastly overpowering forces, surrendered to Octavius.

Antony was so transported with mortification and rage, that he resolved to resort to suicide, which seems to have been the Roman remedy for all great misfortunes. With much difficulty he was dissuaded from the cowardly act, and returned to Alexandria with Cleopatra.

The queen of Egypt was apprehensive that Octavius, having subjugated all Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria, would urge his conquering legions even to Egypt, and, conscious of her inability to repel him even from her own capital of Alexandria, she adopted the desperate resolve of transporting her fleet across the isthmus of Suez, to the Red sea, and embarking there with her army, to seek a new realm which she would conquer for herself from distant and unknown barbarians. She accordingly, without mercy, robbed her helpless subjects, confiscating estates and pillaging the shrines of the gods and the magazines of the opulent, until she obtained riches sufficient for the enterprise. But the difficulty of transporting a fleet over a sandy waste, eighty miles in width, was found to be insurmountable, and Cleopatra was compelled to remain in Egypt and abide her doom. She had succeeded in transporting a few of her ships across the isthmus, but the Arabs seized and burnt them.

Antony and Cleopatra now combined to place Egypt in the best possible state of defense; for though they had no hope of being able to repel their proud conqueror, it was probable that such formidable preparations would influence Octavius to grant them more favorable terms. Indeed, Cleopatra, whose love for Antony was merely ambition, and the pride of exercising her own powers of fascination, resolved to sacrifice



Antony for a higher ambition, and to offer her person, with all her seductive charms, as a bribe to win the favor of Octavius. She already had thrown herself into the arms of Julius Cæsar and of Antony, and both with eagerness had accepted the gift. Would not Octavius be equally impassioned? But Cleopatra forgot that the charms of girlhood had vanished. Thirty-nine years of voluptuousness had left their traces upon brow, and cheek, and form.

Several embassies were sent by Antony and Cleopatra to Octavius; but with each, Cleopatra treacherously sent a secret messenger with propositions of her own. Octavius did not condescend to pay any attention to any of these combined messages, but strode onward with his legions. He, however, opened secret communications with Cleopatra, and with that perfidy which was so often displayed by the most illustrious men of that day, offered to treat Cleopatra with distinguished favor, if she would expel Antony from her kingdom, or put him to death. History declares, with all her manifold vices, that outside of Christianity, true virtue has rarely been found.

At length Antony discovered this secret correspondence which was passing between Octavius and Cleopatra. But Antony was powerless. He had neither fleet nor army, and his proud mistress had but to utter the word and he was banished, imprisoned, or executed. The unhappy man, inflamed with jealousy and rage, and conscious of utter impotence, was almost frantic. But the days were passing, the armies of Octavius drawing nearer, and the doom of Antony and Cleopatra was soon to be decided.

Octavius reached Pelusium, at the mouth of the most eastern branch of the Nile, about one hundred and fifty miles from Alexandria. The governor of the city, probably at the suggestion of Cleopatra, surrendered without the slightest attempt at defense. There was now no obstacle whatever in the way of the march of Octavius to Alexandria. But Antony resolved not to perish without a struggle. Cleo-

patra had again acquired her accustomed dominion over him, and had beguiled him into the belief that she was attached to his fortunes. As the advance guard of Octavius approached the city, Antony, at the head of a picked body of troops, sallied from the gates, and for a moment resuming his long lost energies, repulsed the division with considerable slaughter. Elated with this trivial victory, he returned to the city, and in a sort of miniature triumph—the last flicker of the dying flame of his fortune—presented to Cleopatra a soldier who had distinguished himself in the fight. The queen, in continuation of her duplicity, magnificently rewarded him with a helmet and breast-plate of gold. But that very night the soldier, with his glittering reward, deserted to the ranks of Octavius.

The next day the whole army of Octavius approached, both by sea and by land. His galleys, almost covering the sea, impelled by vigorous oarsmen and crowded with warriors, entered the harbor. His infantry and his cavalry, marching beneath those eagles which the genius of Julius Cæsar had immortalized, and which ever seemed to lead to victory, invested the city by land. But Antony had aroused the energies of despair. He had collected a large fleet and army, had made all his arrangements for a conflict which he knew full well must prove decisive, and, with a throbbing heart, he took his stand upon an eminence which commanded alike the bay and the shore, that he might watch and guide the fight.

His galleys, in beautiful order, advanced to meet the foe; and just as Antony expected to hear the trumpets peal the charge, and to witness the commencement of the murderous fray, to his amazement and consternation he saw the fleet of Octavius opening to admit his galleys; the two fleets exchanged friendly salutes, and with blending banners and triumphant music, returned to the harbor.

Bewildered and woe-stricken, the unfortunate chieftain



turned his eyes to the land. The same scene was opened to him there. His cavalry, with sheathed swords and waving banners, galloped into the lines of Octavius, where they were received with plaudits which almost shook the temples of Alexandria. The infantry thus abandoned and with no retreat before them, threw down their arms in despair. The duplicity of Cleopatra had been successful, and Antony, betrayed, was ruined beyond all hope of redemption. In a state of ungovernable fury he returned to the city, clamorously inveighing against the perfidy of Cleopatra, and apparently resolved, in his frenzy, to plunge a poniard into her heart and then into his own.

But Cleopatra, anticipating this violence, was prepared to evade it. She had erected a strong citadel, in which she had that morning taken refuge, under the protection of an efficient guard, and it was not in Antony's power to approach her. Still continuing her duplicity while concealed in this retreat, she caused word to be sent to Antony that, in despair, in view of the defection of her troops, and of the utter ruin which awaited both her and Antony, she had refused longer to live, and had committed suicide.

The tale, so plausible, again deceived the deluded old man, whose energies of mind as well as of body, voluptuous indulgence had enfeebled. All his former passion for Cleopatra returned with the violence of a flood. Bitterly he condemned himself for his unjust suspicions.

"Miserable man that I am," he cried, "what is there now worth my living for. All that could render life attractive to me is gone. O, Cleopatra! thou hast taught me the way, and the only way, to escape the misery which is now my lot."

Calling a faithful attendant to his side, a man named Eros, who had been his slave, but whom he had freed, Antony placed a poniard in his hand and ordered him to plunge it into his heart. The devoted man, who had promised to perform this deed for his former master, should fortune drive

him to this last resource, took the dagger, and plunging it into his own bosom fell dead at the feet of Antony. For a moment the Roman chieftain hung in admiration over the corpse of his faithful attendant; then seizing the blood-stained weapon, he thrust it into his own body, inflicting a fatal wound, but one which did not cause immediate death.

Writhing in anguish and deluged in blood, and yet without sufficient fortitude to repeat the blow, he entreated his friends to put an end to his life. With fright and horror they recoiled from the deed. In the meantime Cleopatra had heard that Antony had stabbed himself and was dying. The scene in Alexandria, at that hour, no imagination conceive. A hostile fleet was entering the harbor, Roman legions, with shouts of victory were crowding in at the gates. Antony was dying. Rumors of every kind filled the streets with regard to Cleopatra. The vast population of the city surged to and fro, in the wildest turmoil and dismay.

Cleopatra did not dare leave her retreat. But she sent one of secretaries with a body of men to bring Antony to her presence. He was taken upon a litter, and carried through the tumultuous streets to the citadel. But even then the queen was afraid to allow the gates to be opened, and cords were let down from a window by which the litter, containing the body of the dying man, was drawn up to her apartment. Antony, pallid, faint, and bathed in blood, gazed feebly upon Cleopatra, and endeavored to reach forth his arms as if to embrace her. The queen, either with love revived by the sight, or continuing the dissimulation which had ever been so prominent in her character, wept and bemoaned bitterly. She tore her hair, beat her breast, and frantically kissed the pale lips of the dying man, calling him her husband, her lord, her emperor.

"Moderate your grief," exclaimed Antony, "and still live, if you can do so with honor. As for me, weep not over my misfortunes, but congratulate me upon the happiness which I



have enjoyed. I have lived the greatest and the most powerful of men. Though I now fall, my death is not inglorious. I am a Roman, and by a Roman only have I been vanquished."

He had but just uttered these words when he fell back in his litter, and the spirit of the Roman warrior departed to God who gave it.

One of the generals of Octavius, named Proculeius, now approached the citadel with propositions for Cleopatra. She, however, justly fearful of treachery, refused to admit him; but, aided by his soldiers, he effected an entrance by means of a ladder, at the window through which Antony had been drawn. Cleopatra, alarmed at finding herself a prisoner, drew a poniard and attempted to stab herself, but Proculeius snatched the dagger from her hand. She was then conveyed, with the respect to which her rank entitled her, to the palace where Octavius had established his head-quarters, but was guarded with the utmost circumspection.

Octavius, now undisputed master of the world, was dreaming of the splendid triumph which awaited him in Rome; and the presence of Cleopatra, the renowned queen of Egypt, to lead in the train of the captives, would be one of the most conspicuous ornaments of the triumph. Conscious of the degradation which awaited her, she watched for an opportunity to commit suicide. Octavius with almost equal interest guarded his captive, that she might not thus escape him. Her fetters were truly those of silk and gold, for she was treated with the most profound deference, surrounded with all her accustomed luxuries, and all her wants were abundantly supplied.

Octavius indulged himself with a triumphal entrance into Alexandria, endeavoring by humanity and condescension to secure the favor of the people. Yet cruelly, it would seem, he caused the eldest son of Antony, and also Cæsario, Cleopatra's son by Julius Cæsar, to be put to death. Fearing nothing from any of the other children of Cleopatra, he treated them

all as princes, providing them with teachers that they might receive an education suitable to their rank.

At length Octavius visited Cleopatra in person. She received him artistically languishing upon a couch, draped in gauze-like robes which scarcely concealed her voluptuous beauty; for though the freshness of youth had departed, she was still a woman of rare loveliness. No one knew better than Cleopatra how to magnify her charms, by tones of softness, and that artlessness of manner which is the highest achievement of art. Her beautiful eyes were filled with tears, her cheek flushed with emotion, and rising from her couch she fell, half-fainting, prostrate at the feet of Octavius. The young conqueror lifted the exquisitely moulded, drooping form and placed her on the couch by his side, supporting her against his own bosom. A queen whose renown filled the world, beautiful, graceful, pliant, had thrown herself into his arms. How could he treat her cruelly! Had Cleopatra been nineteen instead of thirty-nine, the decision might have been different, and, by facile divorce, the way might have been made easy for Cleopatra to share the throne of universal empire with Octavius. But as the circumstances were, ambition proved more powerful than love.

Cleopatra exhausted all her magazines of art—tears, smiles, reproaches, blandishments, flattery, supplications to win Octavius, but in vain. He treated her with politeness, but his heart remained obdurate. The queen took from her bosom some letters, full of tenderness, from Julius Cæsar, and with a trembling voice and falling tears read them to Octavius.

"But of what avail to me now," she said, "is all this kindness. Why did I not die with him. And yet in Octavius I see another Julius. You are his perfect image. He seems to have returned from the spirit land in you."

All was in vain. After a long interview Octavius left, and Cleopatra reflected in despair that for the first time her charms had failed her. She had surrendered herself to Octavius and



he had coldly laid her aside. What more *could* she do? Nothing. There now remained for her but to die, or to be carried to Rome to grace the triumph of her conqueror. There was a young Roman in the camp by the name of Dolabella. He was much affected with the queen's grief, and she, with woman's tact, had soon thrown around him all the meshes of her wiles. Dolabella kept her informed of all that was transpiring. One day he brought to her couch the tidings, that in three days she and her children were to be sent to Rome.

The crisis had now come, and, with singular calmness and fortitude, Cleopatra prepared to die. After taking a bath, she attired herself in her most sumptuous robes, and sat down with her friends to a truly regal feast. Apparently banishing all care, the festive hours passed rapidly away. At the close of the feast she dismissed all her attendants but two. She then wrote a note to Octavius, informing him of her intention to die, and requesting that her body might be buried in the tomb with that of Antony. She had contrived to have brought to her, in a basket of flowers, an asp, a reptile the concentrated venom of whose bite causes inevitable death, and yet with but little pain. She dispatched the letter to Octavius, and immediately placed the reptile upon her arm. The poisonous fangs pierced her flesh, stupor and insensibility soon ensued, and she sank back upon her couch and died.

Octavius, immediately upon receiving the letter from Cleopatra, dispatched messengers hoping to prevent the fatal deed. But they arrived too late. Upon entering the chamber they found Cleopatra already dead, still arrayed in her royal robes. Her two waiting women were at her side. One of the messengers uttered words of reproach; but the maid of honor replied:

"It is well done. Such a death becomes a glorious queen, descended from a race of illustrious ancestors."

Octavius now returned to Rome, the undisputed master of

the world. His ambition was gratified in a very magnificent triumph; the portrait of Cleopatra with the serpent upon her arm, being borne very conspicuously in the train of the captives. Rome was now at its culminating point of power and splendor. Such an empire had never before existed upon earth. It contained within itself nearly the whole of the then known world, being bounded by the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euphrates. It was, however, a heterogeneous realm: a conglomeration of discordant states, with every diversity of languages, manners, customs, and laws. The city of Rome numbered near four millions of inhabitants, a motley concourse from all the nations and tribes of the world; the circumference of the city was fifty miles.

Octavius now commenced a series of measures of reform, which have secured alike the approbation of friends and foes. Whatever his motives may have been, his actions were noble in the highest degree. Every act seemed aimed at the promotion of the public welfare. Barbarous customs were abolished; the rights of the citizens protected; humanity encouraged, and wholesome laws enacted upon every subject which legislation could reach. There was transient peace throughout the world, and most of the nations, over which the Roman eagles fluttered, were in the enjoyment of a measure of prosperity such as the world had never known before.

These enactments being in successful operation, and the favor of all classes of people being won, Octavius, whatever his motives may have been, assembled the senate, and in a carefully prepared speech, which he read to them, resigned all his power, expressing the wish to retire to private life, and to restore Rome to the old constitution of the commonwealth, republican in its forms. The intelligence of most people, even now, will decide that such a conglomeration of heterogeneous people, so ignorant, so barbaric, so lawless, so infinitely diversified in manners and laws, could not be well governed by Republican institutions. It is said that Octavius could not