

Queen Cleopatra

By Talbot Mundy

Queen Cleopatra

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The clash of these two vibrant, full-blooded personalities engaged in this historic Battle of the Sexes is the heart of the drama and the excitement of

QUEEN CLEOPATRA

Queen Cleopatra

TALBOT MUNDY

She had her own physician, Olympus, to whom she told the truth, and asked his advice ... as Olympus himself has told us, in a narrative which he wrote of these events.

PLUTARCH—Life of Antony.

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Queen Cleopatra

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	4
FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS THE PHYSICIAN	6
CHAPTER I "A kings ship! But which king's?"	7
CHAPTER II "Queen? Which queen?"	18
CHAPTER III "Halt in the name of Ptolemy!"	27
CHAPTER IV "I will make you admired of all my fleet."	30
CHAPTER V "Romans! The Romans are coming	40
CHAPTER VII "I take only destiny for granted."	43
CHAPTER VIII "A phoenix hatches only in the hot flame."	49
CHAPTER IX "Did I summon you from straw-roofed villages to tell me how to govern?"	52
CHAPTER X "A Galilee for Egypt?"	56
CHAPTER XI "What can a woman do nobly and well except to bring forth children?"	62
CHAPTER XII "Let Lolliane earn her laurels."	66
CHAPTER XIII "Vale, Imperator!"	71
CHAPTER XIV "Truly there is nothing for us Romans left to do but to yield to Caesar"	73
CHAPTER XV "Mice crowding a hole in a corn-bin!"	78
CHAPTER XVI "I am Egypt."	85
CHAPTER XVII "Who that is born in a womb is not a member of a mystery?"	90
CHAPTER XVIII "I will settle the succession to the throne this morning." ..	96
CHAPTER XIX "Royal Egypt—Pharaoh of the Upper and the Lower Nile!" 104	
CHAPTER XX "Egypt—could you make Rome wise?"	115
CHAPTER XXI "Kneel. Look upward."	122
CHAPTER XXII "And this I learned from the Lord Achilles' barber."	125
CHAPTER XXIII "There is only one offense that men find unforgivable." ..	129
CHAPTER XXIV "My soul is a woman's—yours a man's; and tear is not my business."	139
CHAPTER XXV "The Thirty-seventh Legion at full strength—two-thirds of the men seasick."	145
CHAPTER XXVI "You have made your own choice. You must take the consequences."	151
CHAPTER XXVII "Tell me the secret of Caesar's strangih, for hs is stronger than I."	154
CHAPTER XXVIII "We will never see the old Apollodorus back."	164
CHAPTER XXIX "Who hath regarded a horse, and the soul of the song that resides in him?"	173
CHAPTER XXX "Caesar—were you afraid to cross the Rubicon'	182
CHAPTER XXXI "There is a gentleness that no amount of force of any kind can penetrate or conquer."	191
CHAPTER XXXII "Death I have always thought to be the end of joy and sorrow."	201
CHAPTER XXXIII "But you keep your word, Tros?"	206
CHAPTER XXXIV "Eastward! Turn eastward!"	211
CHAPTER XXXV "Whoever sticks a head into Caesar's net is Caesar's victim."	

CHAPTER XXXVI	"Who is the ruler of Rome?"	222
CHAPTER XXXVII	Caesar—imperial Caesar—a god upon earth.	230
CHAPTER XXXVIII	"Oh, I know Antony."	236
CHAPTER XXXIX	"Be silent, Tros!"	241
CHAPTER XL	"Silence at last? Praise Zeus!"	248
CHAPTER XLI	"Caesar, beware the Ides of March	252
CHAPTER XLII	"Row—row, you lubbers, and take Egypt home again!" ..	262

FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS THE PHYSICIAN

As A PHYSICIAN I have studied life that I might know the meaning of its end and its beginning—death. And now, toward the end of one life, with a death so close its shadow comforts me, I reach this judgment which, I think, is nearer to the truth than any I have well weighed heretofore:

That as an anvil is the earth; and as a smith's sledge is a destiny, that shapes us to an end far different from our beginning. So it may be that this interval, between a birth and death, is but a visit to a workshop of the gods, where resolution heats us and adversity descends on us as hammer-blows, reshaping us for purposes we are not able to perceive. It may be that a few, who seem more fortunate than others, have been put to proof in other lives, and so need not much shaping on the forge in this one; for I see that there are periods of making ready, and then periods of being put to use. But what that use is, I see only dimly, and at times, as when we glimpse a far-off star, not knowing even then whereof the nature of that star consists.

I have undergone grief; I have witnessed tragedy. And I have seen what seemed to be injustice, without daring to accuse of ignorance those Wiser Ones to whom we look for governance as they, I think, in turn look higher yet. And I have wrought wrong without making restitution, neither knowing how nor having opportunity, as also I have now and then done good without receiving my reward.

The noblest woman that I knew—I saw her drink the dregs of bitterness and die in shame. Some evil men and traitors I have seen prevail. I saw a great man come into his power, and I doubted neither justice nor the Ultimate, although I saw the swath, of fortunes and of hopes, that, in his coming, he laid low.

How dimly I perceive! But now I gain a great hope from the contemplation of this answer to the riddle of all life: Although we live in multitudes, and we afflict or profit individuals and multitudes, we die alone, emerging one by one into a life, compared to which these earth-lives are a little sleep and a forgotten dream. The fruits of what we dreamed we did, succeeding dreamers reap. It is the spirit of the will, the quality of deeds that are inseparable from us. Though a great work crumble and a great book perish in the flame, and though a great soul die in sorrow and a mean man triumph, I believe the gods will judge not sorrow, and not triumph, but the quality of effort. As we enter death, I verily believe the gods will greet as comrades those who played a noble part, though our nobility on earth be reckoned infamy and though the very goal for which we strove on earth should altogether perish.

CHAPTER I "A kings ship! But which king's?"

How often and with how great a longing I have tried to read the heavens! Yet the sea is nearer; can I understand that? Land is underfoot; about me is a host of other men; and I myself am nearest to myself of all things. If I find it difficult to know myself and to discover what my next act ought to be, is there a likelihood that I can read another's heart or know the meaning of the sky? I doubt—I welcome doubt when men say this or that of any one except themselves. And when they speak about themselves, however solemnly, I wonder whether they know any more of them than I of me.
FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

CLEOPATRA YAWNED. The rising sun, with a hint in its hue of the heat it had left behind in Asia, began brightening the gilt and marble coloring of the harbor water, streaking it with silver, making spots of gorgeous color where the seaweed and the scum and flotsam drifted. Through the windows, the masts of a hundred ships appeared like pen-strokes in the haze. Three crows came and perched on the marble balcony rail, alert and impudent, as Cleopatra jumped from her bed and came out under the awning, stretching herself. "Charmian!" she called. "Oh, Charmian!"

Charmian entered through the Persian curtains at the rear of the room, wearing one of the new-fashioned Indian cotton dresses with a pale blue fringe that well offset her coppery golden hair. For a while the two gazed seaward, arms about each other's shoulders. Then:

"I had a dream," said Cleopatra, half closing her eyes to recall it. "This palace was mine, and I could see all Egypt. It was mine, too. Somebody—I don't know who—had banished Ptolemy and Arsinoe with all their brood of eunuchs. He had given me the reins, and he was watching me. He wasn't a god, and he wasn't Apollodorus, or Diomedes, or Olympus. It was a true dream, not a nightmare."

She spoke Greek with the broad Macedonian vowel sounds and the eclectic choice of words of an accomplished linguist.

"Any fool can die," she went on. "I am not afraid of their poisons and daggers."

"Then what do you fear?" asked Charmian.

"To die at the wrong moment."

Seven more crows joined the three on the railing.

"They are talking again of making you marry Ptolemy," said Charmian.

"They held a conference last night that did not break up until an hour or two ago."

Queen Cleopatra

"Who told you?"

"Lolliane. She had it from Apoliodorus. He had it from Theodotus, who told Apoliodorus to tell you."

"So it comes from my brother's tutor, does it? Well: do you see those crows?" said Cleopatra. "I would rather trust them than Theodotus. What else did they say at the conference? Have they any news?"

"None—only yesterday's, that Pompey has defeated Caius Julius Caesar. That puts them in a quandary, because you lent Pompey fifty ships, which should make Pompey your friend. And Rome's treasury must be empty. Pompey will have no other way of rewarding his legions than to swoop down and seize the wealth of Egypt. He will probably support you. That was what the talk was all about. There was nothing else to discuss, with that dread hanging over them. So they decided the best thing to do is to carry out your father's will in every detail, marry you to Ptolemy, and make it difficult for Pompey to befriend you without recognizing your brother and, of course, themselves."

"What they do to my dead body, only their own vile-ness may dictate," said Cleopatra. "While I live it is mine and it is I who dispose of it. No. Not to the highest bidder, Charmian. Strange how you virgins think of nothing but the highest bidder! My brain and my body are all that I have to fight with, but they are good weapons."

Charmian nodded. "But they say," she went on, "that, as far as the law is concerned, the marriage could be effected without your being present. There is ample precedent. Some contended last night that a brother and sister marriage is a good thing, because inbreeding tends to fix the type of royalty. The priests say the ancient Egyptians practised it."

"This is modern Egypt," Cleopatra answered. "You speak, Charmian, as if you agree with them."

"No. I am reporting to you. And they say, if you refuse, they may marry Arsinoe to Ptolemy, put them on the "throne together and repudiate you."

Charmian followed Cleopatra's gaze seaward. There were a thousand sounds; all Alexandria was stirring. Not two hundred paces from the palace windows melons were being unloaded from a barge to an accompanying thwacking of an overseer's stick reminding a slave-gang that the night was over. Beyond the wharves and the crisscrossed spars and masts the calkers' hammers had begun. The guard changed at the gate below; the clang of arms resounded, followed by the retreating tramp of the men who had been relieved.

But sound travels strangely over water, and particularly when the sea is still, with that oily sheen on it that foretells heat. Totally distinct from all the other sounds, seeming to come now from this direction, now from that, there was a pulsation, suggesting a hint of martial music.

"A ship, I suppose," remarked Charmian after a long pause.

"Do you think they are making that noise to their gods?" suggested Cleopatra.

"What extraordinary gods the sailors worship! If I were a god, and sailors made that noise to me, I would send a tempest!"

"Look," exclaimed Charmian, "there goes the harbor master."

"Ready to sell the port to the first strong bidder, or to plunder the first weak

Queen Cleopatra

one," Cleopatra commented without changing her expression or her tone of voice, but rather as if she were memorizing facts for future reference.

The great marble watch-tower on the Isle of Pharos-like a gleaming phantom nearly five hundred feet tall—was just beginning to be visible as the sun sucked up the mist. A stumpy ship, as big but not so graceful as Cleopatra's royal barge, possessed of prodigious overhangs that made her pitch to the slightest swell, got up anchor with a deal of shouting and made toward the harbor mouth. The oars hit the water unevenly—sulkily—as if the gang were half awake. As sharp as the crack of trodden seaweed came the whip on naked shoulders, and the ship veered off her course a moment when the slaves quickened the time unevenly; then, having eaten enough punishment, they swung together and the harbor master's wake became a thing of reasonable dignity.

More leisurely, but with almost as much shouting, two long war-ships, each with two banks of oars, cast off their warps and followed, keeping their distance, line abreast, as if they preferred to look at what the mist might bring forth before deciding what to do. They had no beaks and they hardly resembled war-ships, except for groups of archers standing near the bow; and they had the same long overhangs as the harbor master's craft, that possibly were good for estuary work but that suggested neither comfort nor safety when driving into long seas. Their oars thumped rhythmically, but the noise did not obliterate that other, approaching sound.

Suddenly Cleopatra caught her breath, for never educated Greek lived who did not thrill to the challenge of beauty.

A light air from the westward lifted the gossamer curtain of mist and the sun blazed on a golden prow, shaped like a serpent that raised its glittering head against a purple sail. A ship whose sides were all vermilion, except where white foam boiling from her bow uncovered flashes of gleaming metal below the water-line, came head-on toward the harbor mouth, her long oars sparkling as they smote the blue seas into swirling streaks of green and white.

"Oh!" Cleopatra gasped. "Oh! Any life is worth riving when things like this happen!"

Armed men were in the ship's bow—great men in helmets. Under the curve of the enormous purple foresail could be seen the figure of the helmsman leaning his weight against the steering oar, with a bigger man, the captain of the ship, beside him. Aloft, perched high on the foremast was a cup-shaped nest that shone as if built of bronze, the heads of men protruding over its brim.

"Surely no Roman ship! No Roman has such taste as that! A king's ship! But which king's?"

Cleopatra's eyes were glittering. Whatever was royal and brave thrilled her to the point where emotion, ceasing, became contact with the gods. She seemed something more than woman in that moment.

From behind her, through the wide opening between room and balcony, six women came and stood with fruit and cakes on silver dishes and milk in an alabaster goblet. They tried to call her attention but she dismissed them with a gesture—then changed her mind suddenly and seized two handfuls of the

cakes, which she threw to the crows.

Queen Cleopatra

She watched the birds pounce and fly away, and for about two minutes after that her attention was divided between the oncoming ship and one crow that devoured its cake on a near-by roof. The bird opened its beak wide, fluttered and fell dead.

"Whose ship?" Cleopatra repeated.

Charmian did not answer.

The long ship swerved until the after-sail came into full view and the rowers' heads all along one side were visible. And now the noise explained itself—cymbals, drums and harps under the break of the bow, where the big man on the poop could see them and set the time with a staff that he held in his right hand.

"Sixty oars to a bank, and three banks!" Cleopatra said, counting. "And, oh, they move like music! Charmian, did you ever see such grandeur expressed in anything? Whose ship can it be?"

Charmian turned her head, but checked herself in mid-speech, pointing:

"Was that dead bird there just now?" she demanded.

"No. Let one of the women pack it in a box and send it to Potheinos with my salutation. Bid him and Ptolemy his master eat it. Bid Lolliane deliver the message—they won't dare to harm her—not just yet; they think Apol-lodorus loves her. That is not yet true—not yet. Then send Diomedes to me—I must find out whose ship that is."

Charmian crossed the bedroom to the door and the moment she opened it a man of over fifty years of age strode in as if he had been waiting to be summoned. His sinews resembled molded metal. His skin, except where the scars were ill-concealed by artificial stain, had been burned brass-color by the sun. His shaved upper lip was straight and quarrelsome and a curled, short, black beard stuck forward pugnaciously under it. He wore the Grecian military kilt, that came not more than mid-way down his thighs, and kept one hand on the bronze hilt of a Damascus sword, whose scabbard was embossed with portraits of the legendary heroes.

He was in no wise disconcerted by a nearly naked queen, he also being Greek. He saluted with an air of veteran fidelity, then peered under his right hand seaward, his eyes narrowing to slits because of the strong glare on the water.

"Whose ship, Diomedes?"

"Tros! By Osiris, Tros! May all the gods regard his impudence!"

His voice was as harsh as shaken iron, and it made Cleopatra smile.

The long ship, having rounded the Pharos, well within the harbor now, bore down on the harbor master's sluggish craft without again changing course or checking speed. The wind had ceased to fill the sails, but the beat of the martial music quickened and the long oars flashed response—vermillion blades a-plunge in jade-green, leaving egg-white foam on royal blue—until, urged by sudden panic and the whip, the harbor master's crew went to work frantically to row their craft out of the way. She of the purple sails boiled on without changing her course by a hair's breadth, straight for a point midway

between the war-ships, leaving the scandalized harbor master pitching and

Queen Cleopatra

rocking in her wake.

And then another marvel, heightened by the drifting mist that had again obscured the Pharos; suddenly she brailed those purple sails, as swiftly as they take in awnings when the first rain of a season bursts on pleasure gardens. At a clanging signal from the cymbals and the harps, she swung, with starboard oars aback and port oars pulling short swift strokes that hardly buried the vermilion blades, turning in her own length. And there she lay, broadside to the war-ships' bows, her golden serpent grinning at them, and her four great catapults drawn taut by unseen mechanism.

Cleopatra caught her breath again. "Tros of Samothrace?" She laughed, with a half-note of excitement peculiar to her. "I remember him well. He came to my father's court and said the world was round. I stood behind the curtain, and they punished me afterward for saying I agreed with him. My father agreed with him, too, being drunk, and not afraid when he was drunk; but the priests said such mysteries were not good for people to know, and they tried to have Tros imprisoned, but Olympus warned him, and my father gave him some money, being drunk again, so that he might go away and prove what shape the world is."

"Olympus should have minded his own business!" said Diomedes, thrusting his beard forward, scowling.

Seeing he was not looking at her, Cleopatra smiled, and one of her women, believing the smile auspicious, came forward with slippers and a thin robe of silk, embroidered with Persian roses.

Charmian returned and stood beside her.

"Do you think there will be a battle?" Charmian asked.

"Oh, you virgins," remarked Cleopatra. "Virgins think of nothing but extremes—no middle course!"

Diomedes uttered a brassy cackle of a laugh. "They say of Tros, he never fights if he can get what he wants by running," he remarked; but it was not quite clear whether he approved of that or not.

He of Samothrace, it seemed, had no intention of beginning the hostilities. The cymbals clanged again. The oar-blades on the port side all flashed forward to the limit of their scope and hung there, ready to snatch and swing the ship entirely round.

"I wonder what he wants," said Cleopatra.

"Water— food—fuel—medicine—fresh fruit— news— information—any of the things that mariners put into port for," Diomedes answered. "Crews go sick and mutiny unless they are allowed on shore at intervals. Or perhaps he brings news of Roman doings.—Aries! The clumsy, mud-begotten fellaheen! I am ashamed! By Alexander's right hand, if we had a man like Tros, and one such ship, we could defy your brother's mongrels—and Rome—and—"

"All the world, if only Tros would admit the world is flat!" laughed Cleopatra.

Diomedes scowled. He did not like irreverence.

"Watch those clumsy, ill-trained idiots!" he muttered.

One of the war-ships had put a rowboat overside and managed it so awk-

wardly that the boat upset, spilling men into the harbor. So the other war-ship

Queen Cleopatra

lowered a boat in turn while the crew of the first were fished for, and an officer was rowed toward the long vermilion ship, who did a deal of shouting at long range before venturing cautiously alongside.

"Oh, well, I suppose that means Tros will join my brother. They will buy him," said Cleopatra.

It was her first note of discouragement that day. But suddenly her mood changed.

"Diomedes! Go and—no! Your imagination is as flat as you think the world is! Besides, I want you for something else! Find me Apollodorus. Tell him to reach Tros of Samothrace, and to win him over to my side. Tell him he may promise anything—you understand me? Anything!"

"Tros is not the man to choose the weaker of two sides," Diomedes objected, recovering possession of his middle age, that patronized her youth. "And promises—Tros has heard them by the hundred thousand. Neither is Apollodorus likely to pursue safe courses."

"That is why I send Apollodorus and not you! He makes no gods of mothy precedents! Go, tell Apollodorus he must bring me Tros of Samothrace—must bring him here! When you have done that, go into the city and buy me food that has not been poisoned! Buy it yourself, have it cooked in your own household and bring it to me with your own hands! That is how much I trust you. Go, sir!"

Diomedes backed away, the buckles of bronze armor clanking. He looked as unimaginative and as honest as the door-post that he struck before he turned and left the bedroom.

Cleopatra gestured to her women. "Dress me," she commanded. Three of them went to make ready the bath, and for a long time she paid no attention to the other three, who stood mute, in a row on the balcony threshold, looking nervous. They were dressed in the loose, white Syrian slave-smocks without border or embroidery, but, though the slave-look haunted them, they had a definite air of being better bred and educated than the ordinary run of servants.

The small boat rowed back to the war-ship. The first war-ship swung and started slowly for the inner harbor; the second followed, even more slowly, seeming to strive after dignity but failing, because, every time a whip cracked, an oar moved out of time. The harbor master appeared in doubt what to do and dawdled in the offing. The long vermilion ship lay still, her oar-blades idle on the water but the spaces between them as exactly measured as the teeth of a gigantic comb. Nothing happened until the Egyptian ships had passed into the inner harbor.

Then the man on the poop shook his staff and suddenly the cymbals clanged. The oars leaped into life with an intoxicating quiver of trained strength held in restraint-paused, ready for the dip—and plunged, as the staff set the time for the tune of the harps and the cymbals that governed the speed.

"That is the way to rule—the way I will rule," said Cleopatra. "That man has dignity."

The long ship, heedless of the harbor-master's shouts, ignoring him as utterly as whales ignore the gulls, advanced to within a cable's length of the public wharf about a bow-shot from the palace windows and dropped anchor. She was instantly surrounded by a swarm of small boats, some of which tried to make fast to her stern. But the man on the high poop shouted, and though the moving bulwark with its shields was lowered, and a ladder was hung over-side, no small boat trespassed within the reach of the vermilion oar-blades. It was not until armed men had been stationed at regular intervals along the ship's sides that the oars were drawn in through the ports and the big man, followed by three others, descended the ladder into one of the shore-boats, deliberately chosen from the swarm that plied for hire.

He was rowed ashore and swallowed by the yelling crowd that already choked the wharf, making his way through it with the sturdy gait peculiar to deep-sea captains. Then the small boats, full of shouting hucksters, circled around and around the great ship, keeping their distance because of businesslike-looking watchmen armed with slings.

A barge-load of outrageously behaving women tried to approach the ladder, but an officer on the high poop threatened and the flat barge backed away, the women screaming ribaldry and some one on the barge inciting them to greater effort. Two of the women stripped themselves and danced naked on the barge's foredeck, obscenely wriggling their stomachs.

Cleopatra turned and faced her slaves, who flinched but stood their ground. They had seen the crow die. One was still holding the goblet of milk, and another the plate of cakes. The third, a Circassian, had nothing in her hand. "Drink the milk!" Cleopatra commanded, looking straight at the Circassian. Charmian bit her lip. The Circassian hesitated, caught her breath, then laughed half bravely and took the goblet from the other's hand.

"If I had known," she said, "I would have eaten and drunk to warn you they were poisoned."

She mastered herself and raised the goblet to her lips.

"I should have known. I deserve to die. Farewell, O Queen!"

Cleopatra snatched the goblet from her. She dashed its contents in the faces of the other two.

"Call the guard!" she commanded.

Charmian ran to the door. Two Nubians entered, stolid and solid as polished ebony, with leopard-skin over their shoulders and immense swords sheathed in scabbards of red leather.

"That Circassian is innocent, but take those other two slaves to my sister Arsinoe and tell her she should punish them for failure—even as I am being punished for having failed to do my duty long ago. I should have slain Arsinoe."

The Nubians seized the trembling women by the arms and hurried them away. Cleopatra turned to the Circassian.

"Is the bath ready?" she asked. "Oh, if we could wash away our bodies and leave nothing but our souls! Osiris! But what black loathsome objects some of us would be!"

CHAPTER II "Queen? Which queen?"

Be man what he may, the fact is, nevertheless, that he conceives himself to be something different from what he appears to himself to be and to what others think he is.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

THE PALACE occupied the whole of the Lochias Promontory, which jutted out into the harbor and was surrounded by a high wall. Thus the Royal Area consisted almost of a city in itself.

Outside that Lochias wall, at its eastward end, not far from the public wharves but far enough to avoid the smell of fish and other perishable cargoes, was a block of palatial apartments facing inward on a courtyard in which a fountain played amid palms and semi-tropical shrubs.

There was always a swarm of men and women at the bronze gate, which stood wide open day and night but was guarded by armed Nubian slaves who admitted nobody without credentials. Within that courtyard there was never a woman seen, since it was part of the pose of the gilded bachelors who lived there to pretend to avoid women, and particularly matrimony. They regarded themselves as the salt of the earth—sole arbiters of fashion, sport and politics. They patronized and honestly admired the arts and kept themselves, at least in theory, abreast of all the sciences, in which Alexandria led the world. They were mostly pure Greek by ancestry, spoke Greek and regarded themselves as Greeks, although there were Latins among them—very rarely an Egyptian. They thought of Alexandria as a Greek jewel bound on to the brow of Africa. Apollodorus leaned against a palm within the courtyard, discussing the merits of certain horses with a group of his Cappadocian grooms. He glanced up sharply as he saw Diomedes come clanking importantly through the gate, then continued his conversation. Diomedes came on until the grooms slunk aside to make room for him, but Apollodorus affected not yet to have seen the veteran.

"Greeting, Apollodorus."

"Voice of Pluto! Man of iron, how you terrify me! May the beautiful gods, if there are any, forgive you, Diomedes! You haven't shaved your upper lip this morning."

"What is that to you? Faugh! You smell like a woman, of roses! I have been up all night, protecting the life of the young Queen to whom you profess such wordy loyalty. If you had manlier inclinations, Apollodorus, you might put your talents to a better use than setting fashions and admiring your own beauty. I would admire a few good scars on you."

"Man of blood! But to what do I owe the honor of this visit? Do you think I am corruptible? You haven't come because you love me. What then?"

"I have come to find out how reliable you are. Horus! I am a soldier. I seek deeds, not words! said Diomedes angrily. "I seek no favors. Zeus forbid that!"

"Aren't you mixing your theology? First Horus, and now Zeus! They say they have some very interesting gods in India; why not add them to your list?"

Queen Cleopatra

There was a lecture about them in the library—discreetly distant entities to swear by, too remote for consequences!"

"Isis! How long shall I brook your insolence? I bring you a direct command from Royal Egypt."

"Oh, you are running an errand for her? That is different. What says she, O oldest of all messengers!"

"I am young enough to slit your cockscorn! Take care how you irritate me? You are to find Tros the Samothracian, who came ashore from that ship with the purple sails."

"And? Having found him? What then?"

"Bring him."

"To you?" To me.

"She said that?"

"Yes."

"Diomedes, you astonish me! You at your age! She has all the intuitions that distinguish royalty from blunderers like you and sybarites like me. She would know without any one telling her, that I would not run your errand. I know you are lying to me, Diomedes!"

"You Sicilian rogue!"

Diomedes faced about and Apollodorus' mocking laugh followed him out through the gate to where slaves awaited him, holding his restless red stallion.

"My chariot!" Apollodorus ordered then. "Who knows where Tros of Samothrace went?"

His grooms knew all the gossip. Two of them vied to be first to inform him.

"To the house of Esias—Esias the Jew."

The chariot, cream-colored, gilt-edged, decorated with colored painting representing the nine Muses and drawn by three white horses, was at the gate in charge of a Thracian charioteer almost more swiftly than Apollodorus could reach his chambers and throw on a light driving cloak of cloth-of-gold. The Thracian passed him the reins and sat facing the rear, on one of the two small seats. Apollodorus guided the impatient team through crowded cross-streets at a slow trot.

There was a kaleidoscope of color—shopfronts, garments, head-dresses, and every imaginable shade of human skin. The din was a delirium of many tongues, for all the languages of the Levant were spoken in Alexandria. The smell was of spices and fruit, and of flowers crushed underfoot. The flow of movement, mixed of dignity and restlessness, was mainly north and south, from the wharves on the shore of the Mareotic Lake at the city's rear to the sea-front. Long lines of loaded slaves, with a foreman in front of them shouting for right of way, threaded the swarm that jammed the corners of the streets to listen to excited public speakers airing views on topics of the moment.

Handsome slaves, gaudily dressed to challenge attention and selected for their strength of lung, stood on platforms to yell news of auctions, amusements and cure-all - remedies.

Beggars, tumblers and performers of acrobatic tricks, singers of topical songs and groups of itinerant musicians completed the confusion, and at times Apollodorus had to draw rein until the charioteer could press to the front and force a passage. He was not recognized until he swung eastward into the Street of Canopus and let the horses break into a gallop.

But the moment the galloping hooves were heard, heads turned and he was greeted with the joyous roar of a crowd that loved its sports above its pocket-book. The cheers increased into a tumult until the colonnaded arches of the three-mile-long street voueyed with applause:

"Apollodorus! Oh, Apollodorus!"

It was paved, that street, and all the buildings facing it were built of marble. It was more than a hundred feet broad, stretching the full length of Alexandria from gate to gate. The roofs of the colonnades were riotous with flowers and women's garments; they were the stadium from which merchants' wives viewed the frequent political rioting, or delighted equally to watch the chariots of men of fashion raeing, in despite of law, in mid-street. But there was only one chariot deemed worthy of attention when Apollodorus came in view. Men, women, children, soldiers, slaves, all surged to catch a glimpse of him. Speed—furious speed preserved him from being hemmed in and almost worshiped. He drove with apparent recklessness that masked consummate skill, standing with legs apart, his golden cloak afloat in the breeze behind him, laughing and waving his hand to the crowd that poured in from the side-streets just a stride too late to block his way.

Women threw flowers from upper windows. One tossed her heavy bracelet into the chariot from the roof of the colonnade; it hit the charioteer, drawing blood. Apollodorus threw a kiss to her, and bade the Thracian keep the bracelet as a salve for damages. The whole voice of Alexandria seemed blended into one exultant roar: "Apollodorus! Oh-h-h! Apollodorus!"

The swarm grew denser as he neared the Jewish quarter at the east end of the city, for the uproar had warned the throngs in meaner streets, who flowed into the Street of Canopus ahead of him and forced him to slow down at last. He gave the reins then to the charioteer and made the best of it with good grace, sitting down on the little rear seat to lean out and grasp the hands of men, laughing when a woman jumped into the chariot. She kissed him, pulling his wreath awry. He gave it to her. The crowd snatched it, tearing it to pieces to wear as favors.

The last half-mile was covered at a slow walk, and even that speed would have been impossible if the Thracian had not tickled the horses with his whip to make them rear and plunge; but they arrived at last in front of a building that was as big, if not as beautiful as any on that famous street.

It was of the same decadent Greek design as all the others, fronted by a Corinthian colonnade; but sacks of corn, opened for inspection, and men of many nations, some sailors, some from the desert, lounging in the three wide doorways and sprawling on long benches on the sidewalk, gave the place an untidy atmosphere of business that seemed to have overflowed from the dense and shabby back-streets where the Jews lived cheek by jowl in smelly tene-

Queen Cleopatra

ments.

Apollodorus jumped out of the chariot and reached the shop door in one bound, escaping into gloom where counters served by fifty or sixty slaves reached in long parallel rows from front to rear. He was met and greeted by a curly bearded Jew, dressed in embroidered silk, whose dark face was a cartoon of oblique diplomacy.

"Greeting! Greeting! Greeting! Noble Apollodorus!" The Jew clasped his own right hand in his left and shook it, as if shaking hands with fortune.

"Golden greeting! We are honored! What is it we are privileged to do for the noble Apollodorus? Corn for the stable—good corn, heavy and plump in the grain? A new slave? We have a new consignment of Circassians and Greeks—some very pretty girls guaranteed virgins—some Persians—an Arabian or two—and three from Gaul, extremely choice. Or is it—"

"Esias! Esias himself!" Apollodorus interrupted.

"How delighted he will be! How flattered! How it will grieve him that he is engaged in private conference and can not—"

"Spare his grief then, Judas, and avoid its consequences! Lead me in."

"But, my Lord, I dare not! He is closeted just now with an important visitor, the great Tros, Lord of Samo-thrace."

"Announce me, or I go in unannounced!"

"But the Lord Tros said—"

Apollodorus began to stride toward the shop's rear, where two seamen in red kilts, who wore big gold earrings and assorted weapons, guarded the door of Esias' private sanctum. Judas, fawning like a brown-eyed dog, tried to restrain him, then, having failed, pushed past the seamen and flung the door open.

"The Lord Apollodorus!" he announced, and shut the door again behind him silently.

At the rear of a large, low, dingy room sat two men, their backs to a window. There were shelves of papyrus and parchment documents on either hand and stacks of locked wooden boxes marked with red Hebrew characters. Samples of spice on a table filled the whole room with a pungent smell. In the darkest corner squatted three slaves, with stylus and tablet, ready to take dictation but out of earshot until required.

The two men in the window rose grudgingly, as if annoyed by the interruption. One was an elderly Jew, with the dark oiled hair in curls on either side of his olive-colored face. It was the handsome, rather crafty face of a cautious friend or a resourceful enemy. His brown eyes shone like topaz. His beard was beautifully curled. His wrinkled hands were long and subtly flexible. His cloak, of dark, embroidered crimson silk, had come from eastward of where, in popular opinion, a trackless sea poured over the rim of the world.

"Noble Apollodorus!" he murmured, bowing, and made a sharp noise with his fingers indicating to the slaves where they should set a chair for his guest.

The other man was like a weather-beaten Heracles. His height was an inch or two less than six feet, but his strength and his commanding presence made him seem much taller.

Leonine, amber-yellow eyes peered challenging from under dense black hair, bound low on his forehead by a circlet of plain gold. His neck which had been browned by wind and sun, bore the big head with unconquerable grandeur, emphasized by barbaric gold earrings and a black beard, curled up short. His cloak, of golden cloth, was bordered with wide crimson, and under that he wore a blue tunic embroidered with intricate designs in gold thread. There were massive jeweled rings on three fingers of either hand and a heavy bracelet on his right wrist. A long sword, sheathed in leather stamped with designs in gold and green, lay on the seat beside him, and there was a curiously carved dagger at his waist. His hairy legs, as strong as trees, were spread apart, deep-sea fashion, as he stood with his broad back to the light and stared at Apollodorus.

"The noble Apollodorus, seven times Victor in the Games—the noble Tros, a lord of Samothrace," Esias announced, introducing them, and resumed his seat.

"If you have business with me be swift with it," said he of Samothrace.

He sat down slowly, with an air of taking soundings first, less ponderous than deliberate of movement, but he looked as capable as the sea itself of swift surprises.

"I am Connoisseur of Arts to Egypt's Queen."

"Queen? Which queen?"

"One is—will be plenty," Apollodorus answered.

"Esias informs me," said Tros with a voice like rolling thunderbolts, "that there are two queens and two kings."

"No, no!" Esias interrupted. "You mistook me, noble Tros. I said, Cleopatra is the queen, but her younger sister Arsinoe, a mere child, has obstinate supporters. Nevertheless, their brother Ptolemy, who claims to share the throne with the elder sister, is in the strongest tactical position. The youngest, the fourth, is a mere child—a sickling."

The leonine eyes of the Samothracian looked keenly at the Jew's. Then, moving his head slowly, he stared at Apollodorus.

"You are a Connoisseur of Arts? Is that a reason for interrupting my business with Esias?"

Apollodoras smiled back imperturbably.

"They say of Esias," he answered, "that his business is more important than that of any dozen kings. Nevertheless, mine with you outweighs his. I am instructed to take you to Queen Cleopatra."

Tros was half on his feet on the instant.

"You? Take me? You mean by force?"

"By force of curiosity. I guarantee you, that in all your wanderings you have never seen anything as priceless or as interesting as what I shall show you."

Tros grinned at him and sat back. He reached into a pouch beneath his belt and laid a small box on the table.

"Look, thou Connoisseur of Arts! Open and look within!"

The box was of gold engraved with deep designs unknown to Egypt.

"Are you wise? Are you wise?" Esias cautioned, clasping and unclasping his

Queen Cleopatra

fingers nervously.

"Wiser than those who swore the world is flat!" Tros answered. "Open that box and look!"

Apollodorus pulled off the lid and caught his breath. He laid the box down on the table and stared at it, poking with his forefinger. He pushed it nearer to the light. He invoked a dozen or more gods. And then he looked at Tros again.

"You could buy Rome with those!" he remarked.

"Unless Rome should take them from you!" warned Esias.

"You will show me a more priceless and a greater sight?" Tros asked.

"Why, yes," said Apollodorus, pushing the box toward him. "I will show you a woman to give them to. They are almost worthy of her."

"Give them? To a woman?"

Tros snorted. He stuck his finger in the box and rolled its contents to and fro. On a lining of black cloth there lay a dozen pearls, so perfect that they looked like symbols of eternal dawn. Two were almost as large as pigeons' eggs.

The Jews eyes glittered. "Wonderful!" he exclaimed. "They are the best even I have seen—and I saw the pearls of Mithridates that Pompey took to Rome. But who shall buy these? Monstrous things! They are neither corn nor slaves. They are worth no more than somebody will pay. Who has money enough? Nah-h-h—and listen to me: I have seen ill-fortune dog the feet of them who owned such jewels. There was Mithridates. There is Pompey, whom they call the Great, who plundered him. I am not one of those who think that Pompey will end by being master of the world."

"I won these by not plundering," said Tros. "My friends, the British Druids, gave them to me for a certain service that I did."

"That may be better. That may change it. It may. It may," Esias answered.

"Nevertheless, I could not afford to buy them. Who can? They are something to give to your enemy, to make all other men his enemy. I will not even accept them for safe-keeping. But I will open you a credit against that bag of smaller ones. I will sell those for your account, although I warn you, I look for no good market for pearls until this cursed war is over and the world has opportunity to grow luxurious again."

Tros closed the box and returned it to the pocket beneath his belt. Then, reaching to the seat behind him, he laid a small heavy bag on the table and pushed it toward Esias.

"One thousand, three hundred and eleven pearls. Write me your receipt."

Esias wrote. It was plain that they trusted each other; there was nothing said about the weight and Esias did not check the number.

"You may have what money you need, and I will deliver those stores you require for your ship," said Esias.

Tros nodded. "And now you. Tell me again what you want."

He knitted his great shaggy brows and glared at Apol-lodorus.

"I lack nothing," Apollodorus answered.

"Your purpose?"

"To discover the easiest course between birth and death, O Conqueror of, Seas! I worship the unattainable. I glory in the unknown quantity. Which is

why I adore art— and Cleopatra."

Queen Cleopatra

"Therefore you will die on a dunghill!" Esias commented. "Because the mob, which knows nothing of art, and less of Cleopatra, will despise you whenever you cease to win chariot races."

"I would rather admire my own opinion, dying on a dunghill, than despise myself in affluence," Apollodorus answered cheerfully. "However, each to his own peculiarities. We flatter ourselves by calling them ideals, whereas they are merely habits. You are consistent in yours, Esias, which is why I like you well enough."

The Samothracian was leaning back again, watching the Sicilian's face across the shaft of light that streamed through a slit in the linen window-shade.

"Is the world flat, or is it round?" he asked suddenly.

"I don't see that it matters, noble Tros," Apollodorus answered. "If the world pleases, it has my permission to be square, or pyramid-shaped, or a dodecahedron. I am all-tolerant of everything except stupidity and bad art."

Tros leaned forward suddenly, elbows on the table.

"What do you know about dodecahedrons?"

"Nothing," Apollodorus answered blandly. But their eyes met. Esias, alert and inquisitive, failed to detect any signal that passed between them. Nevertheless—

"I will go with you," said Tros.

He rose and gathered up his long sword, then turned to Esias.

"I am curious to see his wonder-woman," he said gruffly.

"But the slaves, Lord Tros. You were to see my strong slaves. I have a Gaul who could break an oar by pulling, and you will lose him—you will lose' him—he will certainly be sold unless you seize the opportunity."

"I will return and look him over."

"How soon? There is much that you and I should talk of privately. Shall I reserve the slave for you? He is not cheap, but a wonder—a very Heracles.

Until this evening then—but not later, Lord Tros—there are many inquirers for him—he is a good investment. I will reserve him until this evening, eh?"

"As you will," Tros answered, working his way out from behind the table and striding heavily toward the door.

He rolled a little in his gait, as if a deck were heaving under him. His eyes conned every detail of the room as if he memorized his bearings. There was also a wholesome deep-sea smell to him that Apollodorus noticed, and a recurrent, more or less unconscious gesture of habitual command.

CHAPTER III "Halt in the name of Ptolemy!"

We recognize a kindred spirit, or a greater spirit, neither by eye nor by ear, but by the heart, which sees by flashes of the Light within ourselves.
FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

OUTSIDE, THE CHARIOT'S restless team was being petted by a noisy throng of sightseers, to the intense annoyance of the charioteer, who began to grin, however, when Tros followed Apollodorus into the chariot and the horses reared at the touch of the reins.

The team leaped forward, scattering the crowd. The Thracian jumped in, squatted on the floor, leaving his master's guest his choice of the two rear seats and studying with interest the enormous size of Tros' legs—ready to avoid being stepped on when their owner should lose his balance.

But Tros surprised him. He stood, legs well apart, hands clenched behind him, holding on to nothing, looking ahead calmly over Apollodorus' shoulder—an imperturbable figure, Icing-like in his crimson-bordered cloak.

Apollodorus sent the horses at the limit of their speed, but Tros stood calmly surveying the splendor of Alexandria and its feverishly moving crowd.

"You astonish me," Apollodorus remarked over-shoulder at last. "I never before saw a seaman who could ride a chariot."

"On a paved street? You should go to Britain," Tros answered. "My friend the King, Caswallon, drives wild horses over goat-tracks, at a speed that would show you nothing but his dust!"

"Good drivers, are they, the Britons?"

"Hah! You should have seen them swoop into the Roman ranks, eight chariots abreast, with scythes on the wheel-hubs and the scythe-points almost touching, then wheeling like pigeons to right and left to mow the Romans down—and that on a beach, mind you, with a big surf running. I have ridden across the breadth of Britain with Caswallon. Nearly half my crew are Britons."

"Good sailors?" Apollodorus asked.

"No. Rank bad. There will never come a sailor from that island—not though the world should last for ever. I make use of them to serve the catapults, to scrub decks, cook, and man the oars in fair weather. They are also good at music. They can harp and chant. For the foul-weather work I have Northmen, who came from the top of the world, where the winters are dark and six months long. I have, too, Eskualdunak* from Spain—red-headed rogues, each with a fine opinion of himself. They need an iron discipline. Five hundred men in all—a quandary to keep well fed. A great ship such as mine is more care than a kingdom."

"Basques. Apollodorus laughed. "An obol for your ship then! Nay, that is too much—that is more than all the kingdoms of the world are worth!" But suddenly his manner changed. The horses checked a little, feeling subtle warning pass along the reins. Ahead—away ahead, where a bright-hued stream of slaves

Queen Cleopatra

and merchants flowed across-street, south and north, the crowd had parted suddenly to let two chariots through that came at full pelt.

"Racing?" Tros asked. He had seen a street race on his way that morning. "Ptolemy's men!" Apollodorus answered, leaning forward, holding the reins short, as if about to make the sharp turn at the barrier's end in an arena. All his debonair indifference was gone.

The crowd under the colonnades began to shout excitedly, well used to mid-street racing in defiance of the law, but this was novelty. This looked like such a game as Romans loved to stage, with death included, and a slim chance even for Apollodorus to escape alive.

Toward him, furiously, one on either hand, the two-horsed military chariots came headlong, clattering and swaying, two men helmeted like heroes leaning out of each to shout and gesture. They appeared to be commanding him to stop, but Apollodorus held his course exactly down the middle of the street, only making sure that he had his team in hand.

Suddenly, within a hundred paces, both oncoming chariots swung inward, wheeling, trying to bar the way. Their horses slid and struggled—met breast to breast—a pole broke and a horse went down—

"Halt! Halt in the name of Ptolemy!"

A man in leopard-skin leaped out of the confusion and came cunning to seize Apollodorus' reins. He received a whip-lash on the face that sent him reeling. The Sicilian swung his frenzied team to the right and escaped collision by an inch, then shook the reins and took the middle of the street again, full pelt.

"Not bad," said Tros. "The Britons would have done it better."

Apollodorus did not answer, for again the crowd had scattered. Cavalry were coming—a troop of Ptolemaic guardsmen, at the trot, their red plumes dancing and the sun a-gleam on brass. General Achilles, splendid in his armor, led them, with a mercenary Roman body-guard of four on either hand.

Between them and Apollodorus was a cross-street, running right and left. He raced for it, leaning forward, shaking the reins, fanning his team with the long whip, silent. And a roar went up like that of the arena when the favorite begins to make his bid to leave the field behind and the watching crowd grows frantic.

"Ah-h-h! Apollodorus! Ah-h-h!" There was a mob surge at the cross-street, where the crowd ran helter-skelter. Some of them, divining that he meant to take the right-hand turn, went scattering into mid-street to avoid him, getting in the way of the oncoming cavalry that had broken into a gallop. A trumpet sounded.

"Fools!" said Apollodorus _grimly between set teeth. "Good!" They have started a riot!"

There began to be a clamor and the thwack of the flat of swords on heads and shoulders—then a mob snarl. Stones, onions, broken bricks and flower-pots suddenly began to rain from windows, roofs and colonnades. The air became charged with flying debris. Alexandria, not often in a mood to be imposed upon, had snatched excuse for one of its sudden tantrums and the sunlit Street of Canopus changed into a rainbow tumult quicker than the eye could follow

or the unused stranger understand.

Apollodorus took the turn on one wheel, not ten paces clear of the indignant cavalry.

Achillas and his cavalry shook off the crowd and poured into the street behind the chariot. The din and thunder of pursuit gave warning to whole blocks of market-stalls and tenements. A thousand wild-eyed Alexandrians on the instant recognized Apollodorus in headlong flight, saw the helmets of oncoming cavalry, and charged into the street to block pursuit with any weapons they could lay their hands on, yelling for their favorite.

Apollodorus, with the crowd between him and the cavalry, had no fear now of being overtaken in the side-streets, through which he began to weave his way as swiftly as the throng would let him.

They came to a side-gate of the Royal Area, threading their way through a crowd that hemmed in the chariot like water against a ship's sides. Half Alexandria seemed to have something to sell, or else a petition to make, to the supposedly more fortunate palace occupants. There were merchants with strings of slaves, lawyers, beggars, laden camels, temple priests, magicians, burdened asses, dogs, parrots and apes for sale, itinerant water-carriers, inhabitants of all the lands surrounding the Mediterranean, including renegade Romans and the destitute wives and children of some of the Gabinian troops whom Pompey had recalled to serve him against Caesar. Sweating agitators, hardly heard above the tumult, stood on portable platforms to harangue them all—each agitator raucous with a cure-all of his own for solving all the public difficulties.

"See how our rhetoricians keep themselves in practise!" Apollodorus exclaimed merrily, waving his arm. "One by one the silly fellows shout themselves, into a fit of apoplexy or a public office, and I don't know which is the worse for them or us!"

A group of soldiers at the gate made a way for him by locking spears in line and, wheeling outward, forcing back the crowd to either hand. He drove into a marble courtyard, and a huge gate made of Euxine timber, painted red in contrast to the white stone walls, swung shut behind him.

CHAPTER IV "I will make you admired of all my fleet."

How hardly we remember, on this nether millstone, which is earth, and with that upper millstone, which is circumstances, grinding all our grosser nature into dust that is to clothe oncoming souls—how hardly we remember that these tragedies are but a brief dream, and these little purposes what nothingness they are!

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

TROS STOOD AND gazed until Cleopatra spoke at last:

"I saw your wonder-ship at dawn."

"Royal Egypt, greeting!"

"Whence are you?" she demanded.

"From many seas. I touched at Sicily and Cyprus, after coming through the Gates of Heracles, from India, by way of Africa, having put forth first from a land called Britain, where I built my ship by the leave of Caswallon the king."

"That was a bold voyage. Have you news of the Roman armies?"

"I learned that Caius Julius Caesar has defeated Pompey."

Tros watched her keenly, but he could detect no sign of emotion other than immediate interest, although Apollodorus caught his breath and Charmian and Lolliane looked frightened.

"I have heard the opposite," said Cleopatra.

"I, too, heard many tales," said Tros. "But I came on Pompey's fleet, whose admiral knew the outcome and besought me to get word to Pompey that his fleet is at large and loyal to him. Having heard that Egypt had loaned Pompey corn and ships and men—there were twenty Egyptian ships with that fleet—I thought that in defeat he might seek friendship here, and so I came. I am an enemy of Caesar."

"And you live? Then Caesar is not omnipotent! For what cause are you Caesar's enemy?"

"I upheld a weaker cause," said Tros, "because it was the less unrighteous of the two."

Cleopatra's eyes changed and for a moment she seemed to lose her interest. She glanced at Charmian and at Olympus.

"I mistrust men who prate of righteousness," she said. "My brother's minister, the eunuch Potheinos, always boasts of his. Theodotus, Ptolemy's tutor, is a worse rogue if that were possible, but you would think, to hear him talk, that the gods learned virtue from him. My brother's general, Achilles, stabs men in the name of Mithras the Redeemer. But Apollodorus doesn't believe there are any gods or such a thing as righteousness. He seeks ease in the easiest way. I trust him."

"You are not invited to trust me," said Tros, so bluntly that again she liked him on the instant.

"Yet there are very few," she answered, "whom I dare to trust. If you are tell-

ing me the truth, that Caesar has defeated Pompey—"

Queen Cleopatra

"If I should he to you, I would lie more cleverly," Tros interrupted. "Caesar defeated Pompey near Pharsalia. I heard few details, beyond that Pompey's army is a scattered rabble and Pompey himself a fugitive."

Cleopatra pondered that a moment, resting her chin on her hand.

"Caesar," she said presently, "will hardly consider himself beholden to them who lent ships and men and corn and money to his adversary. Tell me: what is Caesar like? I have heard he is a base-born demagogue. Is he less evil than his reputation?"

"Many men are," Tros answered. "Aye, and some women," he added pointedly. "Base-born Caesar is not. He claims to trace his pedigree direct to Venus. He is Pontifex Maximus of Rome, but he believes no more in gods than he does in chastity. He is a lean sarcastic cynic with a handsome face, who understands men's weaknesses; and he is cunning, but he masks that, so that his soldiers think he is as simple as themselves. He poses as the champion of the common people. He is an autocrat—a despot. He will know no rest until—"

"I know," said Cleopatra. "He has won the world if he has beaten Pompey. What gods looked on, I wonder, when a prince such as Pompey ever has been, went down to defeat!"

"He who steps into the shade, shall he summon the sun?" asked Olympus, but nobody appeared to notice him. He stood in shadow—one of those learned freedmen, such as all the Ptolemies had kept at court to make appropriate remarks. He wore the robes of a physician.

"Lord Tros, to whom else have you told this news of Caesar?" Cleopatra asked.

"To none, Royal Egypt. News is worth more than money."

"Why then did you tell me?" she asked, suddenly again suspicious of him.

"I have found my market," he retorted. "There is no safe port for me this side of the Gates of Heracles, as long as Caesar rules the Roman world."

"What of it?"

"I never understood a woman," Tros said awkwardly. "But you will soon discover that you, too, have Caesar to deal with. It needs fathomless resources to defeat him. If you have courage, and the resolution to defy Rome, I will give aid gladly."

"You a Greek," she said, "and you will give? Nay, you spoke of a market. Name your price."

"I said, give! I am of Samothrace," Tros answered.

"Yes," she said, nodding, "I have heard of that oath.* How does it run? To uphold justice—give without price—trusting to the gods for recompense, not stipulating what the recompense shall be—is that it?"¹

¹ The mysteries of Samothrace were impenetrable, so much so that many modern historians have jumped to the conclusion that the ultimate, outer, notorious decadence presented a true picture of the inner secrets. But read H. P. Blavatsky and others. The greater mysteries died out from below, for lack of

"The great gods keep the record of the oath I took," Tros answered sullenly. "Where are your wife and children, and where is your home?" she asked him. "I am a lone man, Royal Egypt, and I have no home on land. The sea is home and wife and enemy in one. And as for children, I have left a deed or two, and here and there a little good-will. That sort propagate their kind to better advantage than the squabbling brats that men get by surrendering their dignity to women."

Cleopatra went and sat where she could stare at him. He seemed incredible—too good to believe. She was beyond laughter. She enjoyed him with a sort of ecstasy, with which she always wondered at a hero—on the very rare occasions when a hero crossed her line of vision. Blunt speech invariably thrilled her, as no mock-heroics ever did. The one wholly unforgivable, contemptible and loathsome sin, in her eyes, was hypocrisy. The most refreshing thing on earth was lack of it.

"I will make you admiral of all my fleet," she said at last.

"You have a fleet?" Tros asked her.

"There is your ship. I believe in my destiny. I appoint you admiral."

Tros bowed to her, perhaps to hide the smile that he could not keep from betraying itself around the corners of his eyes. She was as frank with him as he had been with her:

"I also have no home on land," she went on. "Like you, I must win mine; for this Lochias is a nest of spies and murderers; and Egypt lies like a naked woman ready for Rome to violate. But I will win, though I die for it."

"Death is no serious matter," said Tros.

She stared at him again, delighting in him.

"But you can take no oath to me," she said at last. "You have sworn the oath of Samothrace, and I know that excludes all others—even as the oath that I took forbids me to swear any lesser allegiance. So I demand a pledge."

With his hand on his sword-hilt Tros bowed his head as if gathering thought from an unseen realm of inspiration. Then he groped into his belt and drew forth the little golden box.

"I had these from the Druids, for a service that I did them," he remarked. He went down on a stubborn knee, like one of his own great oaken catapults obeying the strain of the tautening winch. "You may have them, as a token that I hold you to your promise to resist Rome—by force

"Two things should never be attempted," said Apollodorus. "To be an artist or a queen. One is bound to fall short of either impertinence."

"Impertinence appears to be the air you breathe, although your sex may save you from the fate of Clytem-nestra," remarked Diomedes.

Several women laughed, and one laugh rang among the rest so quietly musical as to make all others sound off-key. The words that followed, spoken in a low voice, were melodiously freighted with the magic of the laugh:

individuals of sufficient strength of character and moral purity to undergo the initiation.

Queen Cleopatra

"Then at least there is one man in Egypt whom I need not fear."

"Have no fear," said Diomedes' voice. "I posted the guards. There is not a Roman nor an Alexandrian among them—charcoal-black to a man—none from nearer than Tape (Thebes)."

"We must make her afraid if we hope to see her fortunate," Apollodorus remarked, turning on his elbow. "Father Ptolemy the Piper showed us how to live long. He was afraid of everything except the wine-bowl. So the winebowl killed him. She should flatter papa's said-to-be-immortal shade by growing a stomach and dying drunk, after borrowing enormous sums of money from the Roman moneylenders with which to bribe the Roman senate. The honest Roman senators would spend all the money making hogs of themselves, and would grow too gouty and fat to have any ambition. Meanwhile, much water will have flowed down the Nile, and much else will have happened. We might all be dead, for instance. According to the shadowy Olympus the dead don't worry. Let us emulate the dead. I think that statesmanship. As official Connoisseur of Arts to Royal Egypt I advise artistic bribery of Rome instead of highfalutin guesswork.

We know Romans will do anything for money."

"If I must buy Rome, I will not buy as my father did," said Cleopatra.

"Women's favors bring no premium in Rome," said Diomedes. "Any Roman can have all the women he wants for the mere impudence of asking. Money and com and onions and armor—those are what Romans value."

"Rome is not worth the buying," Apollodorus objected. "Which of you has seen the place?

Smells—narrow streets—malaria from the marshes—bricks, for ever bricks and ugly temples wedged between despicable hovels—a nobility of bribe-fat parvenus, taught how to amuse themselves by Asian slaves—usurers who prate morality and practise twenty-five per cent.—bought votes—imported vice—the statuary that Pompey ravished out of Greece and set up beside the most awful Italian atrocities in wood that even this world ever saw—high-flying oratory (like our own, but even more inane) to distract attention from corrupt rnisgovernment—and a mob, smelling of imported onions, unwashed, and consisting of the riffraff of the earth and ruined legionaries, whose farms were stolen while they fought the moneylenders' wars! Rome? It would need a Heracles to clean it. It is no marvel that the Romans leave it to rob other people and find comfortable homes abroad!"

"The Romans are a race of soldiers, and only a soldier can understand them," said Diomedes. "They have great virtues, of which the first is discipline while under arms."

"I have slaves of my own who are better disciplined," remarked Apollodorus.

"Nevertheless, to mock them is not to conquer them," said Diomedes.

"Whether Pompey or Caius Julius Caesar has been victorious, the fact remains that we have Ptolemy and his triumvirate to deal with. They have chosen Pompey. We should send a messenger to Caesar, who, if he has won the war, is master of the world."

"If I had ten men who were loyal to the Land of Khem, Caesar might have all

the rest and I would defeat him nevertheless," said Cleopatra, with a strong thrill in her voice.

"Rave words, Royal Egypt! But the gods of the Land of Khem died long ago and the Romans have a god named Mars," Diomedes retorted. "He is a god who favors fighting men—a god who has seen many young queens walk on foot, in chains, behind a Roman general's chariot!"

For a moment Cleopatra did not answer. Then her low voice, carrying conviction, broke on the stillness—as calm as the night, and as sure as the sea that came leisurely laving the sand.

"I was born a Ptolemy and named the Sister of the Moon and Stars. Did I will that? Or are the Powers answerable? Do you think me thankless for a royal birth and for a great reign to accomplish? I believe the gods who sent me forth will never bring me down to such indignity as walking in a Roman's triumph. As I trust in proper time to feel a son's life swelling in my womb, I now feel greatness of another sort—not me, nor mine—a greatness charged upon me. I should be a traitress to avoid it. I accept the name Royal Egypt. I will not surrender it, though Rome send all her might to Alexandria and though I have no friend left."

She returned to the couch beneath the canopy, where Charmian and Lolliane sat in shadow and a pair of tall fans oscillated slowly in the hands of slaves. Then Diomedes took her place against the balustrade, his back toward it and his bronzed hands pressing on the marble. He extended both his sinewy arms in an heroic gesture of despair.

"If you were only a man!" he exploded, and then grinned apologetically.

"Diomedes is not easily ruled by women," remarked Apollodorus. "Three of his wives have died in the attempt. He has taken a fourth, who begins to look weary. But perhaps, if he lives long enough, the fifth or sixth—"

"Silence, fool!"

"No murder," said Cleopatra quietly. "I need all my friends. You are old-fashioned, Diomedes, and you have only one idea. Apollodorus is lazy.

Olympus is a sort of bright oasis in the desert of his own gloom. But I am not afraid that one of you may poison me or sell me to the Romans."

"Royal Egypt, you are sold already—and twice over!" .exclaimed Diomedes.

"Your father had sold you before you were born. He put a mortgage on you when he borrowed money from the Romans. And now Potheinos and Theodotus, Achilles and the rest of that crew who rule your brother, sit and count the profit they will gain by selling you dead or alive."

Apollodorus pointed to the curtains at the rear. They moved.

"Now news! Behold the shadowy Olympus!" he remarked cheerfully. "Good, bad or indifferent, he will make it interesting. Silence for the apologetic Sphinx!"

Olympus strode out from behind the curtains, bowing almost imperceptibly to right and left, and then stood motionless by Cleopatra's couch. She hardly moved her head to notice him.

"Tell me your news, Olympus."

The physician answered in a voice so free from emphasis that it was wonderful it should be audible at all; and yet each syllable he spoke was heard

Queen Cleopatra

distinctly just as far away as he intended. It was a reassuring voice, devoid of any of the arrogance of erudition. "I came by sea. My boat is on the beach. Using the roof as I have often done, I overheard the three in conference: Theodotus, Achilles and Potheinos, busy seizing opportunity to reenish themselves in old mistakes, their poison having failed."

"Violence next! Was I right? Now violence?" Cleopatra asked.

Olympus went on calmly:

"Potheinos' spies have reported to him that your baggage had been sent on board Tros' ship. So they have ordered war-ships to the harbor mouth to block the entrance, and they have sent archers along the Heptastadium to the Pharos lighthouse. As soon as they saw your barge leave they tempted the crews of your few remaining ships ashore and sunk the hulls in shallow water. They expect to catch your barge when you return on it tonight and to crush it between two war-ships. Failing that, and if you succeed in reaching Tros, they expect to sink his ship a little after midnight when he passes through the narrows."

"And does Tros know this?"

"Not unless he has guessed it," Olympus answered.

"Good!" she answered. "Good! You are wise, Olympus. If you had warned him, Tros might have—"

"No," Olympus interrupted. "Tros' father was a Prince of Samothrace. I did not stay to warn Tros because of lack of time and because I have no doubt of him. Tros is ready, and his provisions are on board, but to reach him by sea is impossible, because they lie in wait for you, to sink your barge. And if you should reach the palace, and linger there, they will storm your apartment tonight, having trebled the number of Ptolemy's guards, with that intention. But if you can reach Tros' ship—"

He paused because she stood up and confronted him. She stared into his eyes, attempting to probe the very soul behind the solemn mask. Some woman in the shadow, near where the slaves stood with the fans, uttered a stifled scream, and was rebuked by Charmian. Then Cleopatra turned away from Olympus and went to stand by the balustrade, to gaze in the direction of the city, where the Lochias Palace lights were a dim golden blur on the horizon. Two stewards entered with a dozen slaves and all the furniture for a meal. They began to lay the table in the midst of the pavilion.

"Turn them out!" commanded Cleopatra.

Lolliane gestured to Apollodorus, who dismissed the stewards, and Diomedes groaned aloud at the sight of supper vanishing.

The revelry outside, in the pavilions near by and on the beach, was growing riotous, as strong wine and the equally intoxicating beauty of the night stirred sensuous emotions. Men and women joined hands, dancing in the moonlight. Harps thrummed lustily, and hired, irreverent comedians sang the topical song of the moment, mocking a recent decision of "the highest court. Two fat, accounted reputable citizens were dancing in the role of Dionysus, out of breath and shouting to their friends to judge which did it best.

Cleopatra freed herself from Charmian's embracing arm and began to pace the floor of the pavilion. She looked, one moment, like the genius of the scene, and the next, like some one utterly apart from it. A spirit in her rose and waned like the glow of a firefly—a mastery, that alternated with a sullen look of murder as the Ptolemy inheritance came uppermost. One moment she was young—unconquerably young; then ageless—an enigma.

Queen Cleopatra

Presently she stood again before Olympus.

"What say the- stars?" she demanded.

"I have read the stars, O Egypt. But the stars have vast relation in an infinite design. We mortals are as particles in an immensity, and he who tells you he can read in starlight the unfolding of the next hour—or the next day, is as a trained ape jabbering for praise. I only know this is a period of deeds on which a world's fate hinges. And I saw a vision."

"Tell me!"

"I have seen the Nile outpouring floods into the sea, wind and sea striving against it, so that there was turbulence of waters surcharged with a golden mud. But in the end the sea prevailed. It swallowed up the Nile. But from the sea arose new corn land."

"Where was I? What has this vision to do with me?"

"You were at the meeting of the waters—a strong swimmer,—now yielding to the current and now breasting waves—not always swimming wisely, but for ever brave."

"And the end?"

"I did not see," Olympus answered. "Except that I saw corn land rising from the sea."

She turned away and stared toward Alexandria.

"Wait! Watch!" Apollodorus whispered, motioning for silence. There was something leopard-like about him now. His lazy, lithe, athletic figure was alert, for all his careless attitude, and there was one strong sinew on his neck that stood forth like a tightened bowstring.

Cleopatra faced them suddenly.

"Diomedes! Take Olympus' boat there on the beach and get word to the captain of my barge to row up the Canopic mouth of the Nile and anchor in hiding until I send for him. Go yourself! Explain nothing! Say he is to hide the barge and await my orders. Bid him put the lights out. Go, sir! Hasten back and gather up your guards. Then march to Pelusium hotfoot!"

"To Pelusium?" he wondered.

"Seize the fortress at Pelusium, and bide my coming!"

Diomedes made as if to answer her, but changed his mind. He laid a bronzed hand on the balustrade and vaulted over.

"Where is the boat?" he called back. "Which way?"

Olympus went to the balustrade and pointed.

"Apollodorus! Go and see what chariots are here. Pick out the best ones with the fastest horses. Never mind whose they are. Have them ready at the entrance before Diomedes comes!"

Apollodorus strode out like a young god, humming to himself. Olympus, standing close to Cleopatra, whispered to her while her women arranged a cloak over her shoulders. Cleopatra's eyes were on her royal barge, whose row of lights swung lazily offshore.

None spoke again until the barge swung suddenly in a maelstrom wake of phosphorescent fire and headed eastward, churning the dark purple water into silver streaks. There came a chorus of excited comment then, from the pavil-

ions near by, and for a moment even the wanton music ceased. But the lights of the barge were extinguished one by one and curiosity gave place to revelry. Then Diomedes came, Olympus helping him to climb the marble balustrade. "Do you think I am old?" he grumbled. "Take your hands off me! What next?" he asked.

"Pelusium!" said Cleopatra.

Suddenly the curtains parted at the rear. Apollodorus entered.

"Art," he said, "has triumphed. There await nine chariots: one matter-of-fact vehicle for each immortal Muse."

Cleopatra almost ran from the pavilion. Apollodorus, seemingly more casual than ever, plucked Olympus' sleeve.

"No hurry!" he remarked. "Don't flatter destiny by breathing through your nose! Your stars are superstition and your high morality is pride, Olympus! Your visions are due to indigestion; I can tell by looking at your pale face that you eat too many onions and beans. But you know how to make life amusing, and of death a thing worth living for. What do you think is the next act in this drama?"

"Ask the gods," Olympus answered, smiling, as they strode together, following the women.

"But I don't know the gentlemen. I never met them."

"Are you sure?" asked Olympus.

"I am sure of nothing, except that it will amuse me to die when the time comes, and that I wish we had had supper!"

There was little conversation out there in the dark, but a deal of noise and movement. Guardsmen, blacker than the night, had formed themselves into a living screen that kept the curious at bay. A torch blazed by the chariot in which Cleopatra was already seated. Charmian stepped in beside her, and her other women scrambled into the chariots behind. An eunuch and a dozen other personal attendants tried to justify existence by getting into everybody's way, but that, as customary as the flies at noon, was only one more stimulating bustle added to the stamping of impatient hooves and the shouts from the darkness beyond the screen of guards. There were indignant Alexandrians out there in the night, demanding to know who had stolen their chariots and why. Cleopatra beckoned to Apollodorus, who jumped into her chariot, turning out the charioteer, who wailed to the gods that his honor was gone, until the eunuch smote him on the mouth.

"Go now!" said Cleopatra.

Apollodorus shook the reins, and they were off, three milk-white horses recognizing mastery in the bit-feel of the hands that guided them. He laughed as he leaned his weight against the reins to swing the team around the sharp turn where the grove ceased and the moonlit road began.

"I approve—I commend—I endorse!" he cried gaily. "As Connoisseur of Arts I only ask you, is this comedy or tragedy? But who cares? Hi! Hi! Hi!"

He cracked the whip and sent the horses thundering full-pelt along the moonlit road toward the city, that was like a somber, flash-lit thunder-cloud on the horizon.

CHAPTER VI "Romans! The Romans are coming

Men speak to one another of protection, but what do they mean by it? For the strongest armor sometimes is an added disadvantage. I myself have vainly treated many a wound that might have been a mere scratch had its victim not worn armor. And the medicines of many a physician are a deadlier preventive of recovery than a disease itself. If a man's own soul protect him not, where shall he look for safety from the multitudes of dangers that beset him on every side? But if he hide within the glory of his own soul, how shall any dark destroyer find him?

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

THE CANOPIC GATE was closed at" sunset, but its guards grew rich admitting belated travelers, runaway slaves and criminals in search of sanctuary in the army's ranks.

It was the fashion, too, for those who had drunk gaily at Eleusis to come racing homeward for prodigious wagers, and it was the profitable business of the guards to throw the gate wide open to them, to identify contestants, if they could, as they negotiated the exciting sharp turn at the masonry curtain just inside, and to collect at their homes new day a fee that varied with the individual's social standing or extravagance.

So, when nine chariots, enveloped in a cloud of dust, came clattering and swaying down the moonlit road, past desert and oasis, where the night alternately was sleepy, silent and awake with a din of frogs—where there was now no smell, then suddenly the reek of onions, cows, camels, rotting vegetables and manure—there was no time lost before a yellow lantern was set swinging to announce that the gate was open.

Outside the wall, the gate was clustered around with wine-shops, brothels, swarming Egyptian tenements and mud-walled rows of shops. There was a yelping of scavenger dogs and a chorus of shrill yells from women to their gutter children to come indoors out of danger. Then a clatter of hoofs and sparks: Apollodorus, far in advance of the other chariots, wrought a marvel, turning his team on the cobblestones between the gate and curtain. There was hardly time for the captain of the guard to recognize Apollodorus shouting over-shoulder to pass the eight following chariots through at his expense. Charmian and Cleopatra, wrapped in shawls and huddled on the rear seats, might have been ladies of easy virtue or the wives of drunken citizens; no guard was fool enough to risk his lucrative position by inquiring into that. And then the street throng.

There was a night life such as Rome had never witnessed in her mean streets by the Tiber, and the marble of the Street of Canopus was glorious with torch-light, lights from upper windows pouring golden radiance on motley crowds and casting a myriad enchanting shadows. It was a dream of opulence—a roar of countless tongues—a din upswelling into tumult and a dream that scattered

as the chariot drove headlong into it.

Not drawing rein, but watching opportunity, Apollodorus recognized a public speaker on a flight of marble steps. He had just drunk from a gourd, and was wiping his mouth on his sleeve. He laughed and threw his right hand up in greeting.

"News!" Apollodorus shouted. "True news! She—Cleopatra—has fled—overland toward Pelusium! Spread it!"

He was gone, with a clatter of hooves before the fellow on the steps could fling a question back. That news would be all up and down the street within five minutes.

Then Apollodorus turned south, toward wharves and slums that fringed Lake Mareotis, where the riffraff of the city dwelt in tenements and all the thoughtless sinews of the constantly recurring riots lay in squalor, eager for excuse to wreak rough vengeance on whoever had less hardship to endure or more resource with which to meet it.

"Romans! The Romans are coming!" Apollodorus shouted. "Potheinos and Achilles have sold Egypt to the Romans! Cleopatra has fled to Pelusium to resist the Romans! Who hates Romans?—Who loves Alexandria? Go hot-foot to Pelusium! Join Cleopatra!"

No chance to question him. They only saw a milk-white team, wild-eyed and heaving, burst out of the night. They heard Apollodorus' voice. They saw him gesture, with his golden cloak outflowing in the wind that blew across the Mareotis Lake—caught fragments of his stirring news—and he was gone again into a trough of smelly darkness between sheds and wharves where other sleepers lay.

Tumult awoke behind him, as the long sheds, where the poor-free labor slept in fretful peonage not much removed from slavery, disgorged their yelling occupants, each shed-full clamoring its guess at what the news might be.

"Egypt, we make history to-night!" Apollodorus laughed.

He threaded his way slowly now, because the team was weary and the dark streets of that section of the city were ill-paved—dangerous.

"Achillas and his soldiers have enough on hand to keep them busy for a while! Can you hear the looting?"

There was a battering-ram at work—a big beam being swung against a warehouse door. Half a dozen blocks away a roof burst into flame. Apollodorus laughed delightedly as he toiled the frightened team along an alley where the wheel-hubs scraped the walls.

"Don't you love your fellow-men?" he chuckled. "Oh, who wouldn't be a queen! Yet—take the queen away and look! What happens? Riot, arson, pillage! And they'll blame you for it—don't forget that! They will blame you, Cleopatra!"

Charmian was frightened by the meanness of those back streets, where an underworld of misery was lurking and an unguessed knife might slither out of shadow without any one the wiser as to who had thrown it.

"Are you mad, Apollodorus?" she demanded.

"Aye, as mad as a god!" he answered gaily.

"Aren't you ashamed, driving your queen through filthy slums? And the other

Queen Cleopatra

eight chariots—where are they?"

"If Achilles hunts them, he will lose us, won't he? That is the principal thing."

"Oh, what timid stuff chastity is!" said Cleopatra. She put an arm around Charmian and began soothing her in a low voice, using the tone that Apollodonis called the lion-tamer because its vibrance had a magic that seemed able to impose calm. He began to whistle, to himself and to the team, his eyes alert for accident, his merry mind a-wander for a phrase or two with which to decorate the danger they were in.

"A pearl," he cried to Charmian, "a pearl, though taken from its setting, is a pearl. So is a queen a queen! If she must have a throne, then she is no queen." There was no reply. Cleopatra went on murmuring, recalling Charmian from somewhere near that borderland where courage leaves off and hysteria begins. Apollodonis toyed on with his fancy:

"Plunge a light into the darkness—lo, it burns the brighter! I am a philosopher—a greater than the Shadowy Olympus! With a poet's vision I discern our Sister of the Moon and Stars about to prove her moonliness—her starriness! O horses—milk-white horses—ignorantly ill-trained geldings that you are, belonging to some fat contractor's wife, who thinks an invitation to the palace is Olympian bliss, you draw the wheels of destiny toward a royal goal! So wake up!"

He applied the whip.

"And speaking of Olympus, it is time we found out how he manages a mob of women!"

He could hear the troops emerging from the Lochias main gate, and presently their trumpet-blare began to send a warning on ahead of them.

"And now—if Achilles had brains—but he hasn't—he would invade your wing of the palace swiftly, so as to be able 'to blame it on the mob! Zeus! How can even you shine, Cleopatra, in a world of fools? I praise your genius—I praise it—but even I have to be satisfied with my own assurance. You need real enemies to prove your mettle!"

Now he began to work his way toward the Lochias, approaching from the western end, where Cleopatra's guards kept one gate safe for her. The streets were empty—windows shuttered—doors locked—lights out; to be caught between the soldiers and the mob—was a risk that the inhabitants of that part of the city were too middle-class respectable to care for. But a dozen blocks away, to the south and eastward, there was fighting—clatter of charging cavalry—the thump of slung stones against wooden shutters—shrieks—yells of execration—and a crimson glare against the sky.

CHAPTER VII "I take only destiny for granted."

Strength is of these two kinds: power to apply force, power to resist it. But intelligence is able to command both; and intelligence contains this attribute: that he who has it recognizes instantly a greater than his own, and so applies his own to the advantage of them both instead of (as a fool would do) opposing lesser against greater. Were it not so, nothing great could ever come to pass nor any greatness flourish.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS

THE SHADOWY SHAPES of women gathered around Cleopatra, but she turned to the somber, black-robed figure of the man who was fastening the gate-chain after driving home the bolts.

"What news, Olympus?"

"Little. We came by side-streets unmolested. Your guards along the waterfront are loyal, but their officer, Thucydides, has been boasting. He seems to think your favors are not too high a price for his protection."

She ran toward her apartment—aroused slaves—and in person superintended the collection of a thousand things-ordered them thrown into whatever chests were handy-ordered the guards summoned—bade them carry the chests to the royal wharf.

"You?" she asked Olympus then. He was not doing, not obstructing—an un-critical observer, silent until spoken to.

"I had better stay here."

She nodded. "Let me talk to Thucydides."

Lieutenant of the Guard Thucydides came striding up the stairs with an expression suggesting consciousness of blackmail value.

"Can I trust you?" Cleopatra asked him.

"To the last breath of my life," he answered, bowing.

Lightest footed of them all, she led down a marble stairway. They pursued a white-clad phantom across courtyards—through a bronze gate—to a private wharf side, where the guards, all sweaty from their work and grinning with the enjoyment of a mystery, surrounded her.

"On board!" she commanded.

One by one all forty filed along the plank. Her women followed, free and slaves all mixed together, some giggling nervously—Charmian and Lolliane trying to set a calm example, and yet half rebellious themselves because, defying unseen danger, Cleopatra remained to the last between Olympus and Apollodorus. Lieutenant of the Guard Thucydides stood silent—speculating. There was no light, and the moon had gone down.

"Careful!" Apollodorus whispered. "Let me deal with him. No bloodshed—just a shove. He will drown in that heavy armor."

But Ptolemy though she was, she avoided murder, with Olympus looking on. And besides, there was no stark need for it.

She whispered: "If he sets foot on the plank—"

Queen Cleopatra

Apollodorus vaulted to the barge deck, crouching there in darkness with a dagger ready.

"Now, Thucydides, can I depend on you?"

"For ever, Royal Egypt."

"Find Olympus. Bring him to me."

She stepped on board the barge, and some one pulled the gangplank in. Thucydides hurried away into the darkness—turning this and that way, peering into shadows, shouting:

"Olympus! Hey! You star-gazer, where are you?"

Not finding him, he returned to the edge of the wharf. The barge had gone! Its mooring ropes hung idle. Slaves had manned the long sweeps. He could see the white of women's cloaks and the hull, blacker than night itself, already too far away for a man in armor to reach by jumping. Then he betrayed himself:

"Wait there! Bring that barge back or I will—"

He was mocked by the splashing sweeps, settling down to rhythmic, matter-of-fact headway. He could be heard clanking about in the dark until he found a small boat,—there were no slaves,—jumped in and endeavored to overtake the barge. But he was unused to the oars, and the barge swept onward, slightly aided by the south wind, until presently a gruff voice hailed it out of darkness:

"Ho, there!"

"Dodecahedron!" cried Apollodorus.

"You may come!"

The starboard sweeps were drawn in. The barge bumped a ship's side and somebody swore from the gloom overhead. Then, saving a low sound of water lapping against wood, and the creak of long spars slightly swaying in the upper air, there was silence. But the night felt full of eyes; there was a smell of men and of a clean ship, blended with a tang of tarry rope.

A ladder creaked down from a tackle and two hairy seamen sprang out of the night, descending on the barge's deck to hold the ladder steady.

"Make haste!" said a gruff voice in the upper gloom.

Cleopatra went up first, in quick jerk after jerk because her robe was in the way of active feet. Apollodorus followed, then the women one by one, then the guards. A sling was lowered from a spar, and to the sound of bare feet running on the deck the chests came overside and were immediately stacked under a paulin somewhere in the dark. A boat splashed, close by.

"Tros!"

The great sails blotted out the starlight and the deck was like the bottom of a pit, save that it swayed a little. There were creaky movements. Cleopatra could hear men breathing, and now and then metal struck metal, as if armed men lay in ambush.

Tros loomed out of a shadow, with a white staff in his right hand.

"Tros, is my treasure stowed? Then listen: that small boat splashing out there in the dark—"

Tros turned away from her.

"Conops! Send the oar-slaves up. Make fast the tow-rope. Set that beacon on

the stern."

Cleopatra seized Tros' arm:

"Tros! That man in a small boat is Thucydides—an officer of my guard. He will betray me whether we take or leave him."

Tros leaned overside, and spoke low:

"Conops! Let that fellow board the barge. Stay with him until you light the beacon, half-way to the Pharos. Then come aboard alone along the tow-rope." He led the way up a ladder to the high poop, where a bearded man in chain mail lolled beside the steering oar. Beside the ladder, below the poop, there squatted a group of barbarous-looking, men with big drums, cymbals and three harps.

A voice cried out of darkness, far astern already, for the south wind made the barge drift. Tros looked over the poop-rail.

"Anchor!" he commanded, and a clashing of cymbals shattered silence. From away up forward came an answering sea-song, and a rhythmic swinging strain—the thump-thump of a hawser being coiled down and the high squeak of a roller lacking oil. Then a voice cried:

"Anchor home!"

There was a vast, half-silent movement on the decks below. Cymbals clanged again. There came a thumping all along the ports—a landslide uproar, as the oars went outward, swinging, ready for the dip. Then silence.

"Starboard oars ahead!"

A double clang of cymbals and a monstrous splash, then steady drum beat—churning of sea alongside—overseers' voices. —The stars began to circle around the heavens and the great sails flapped.

"Main sheet now! Port oars forward!"

Came a rush of naked feet—terse orders grunted out in monotonies—and presently the marvelous, delirious, mysterious motion of a great ship under oar and sail, lifting as she gained way. Sternward shone a thousand palace lights and to the south, beyond, a crimson splurge below the belly of a smoke-cloud, where rioters, had fired a warehouse near Lake Mareotis.

"You take Tros for granted?" asked Apollodorus. He appeared vaguely, it might be, jealous.

"I take only destiny for granted," she retorted curtly—almost angrily.

Her women, arranging themselves in the lee of a bulwark on some mattresses that Tros had ordered put there, chattered in undertones, like birds at dusk, their personal discomfort driving greater matters out of mind. They shared wraps—spoke in whispers of the breathed air rising from the hold, and of the draft the great sails spilled on them.

Cleopatra stood beside Apollodorus staring out astern along the tow-rope, to discover for herself what Odyssean trick Tros' brain had thought of. For she knew, and did not doubt he knew, that archers posted near the Pharos Light could sweep the channel with a hail of arrows that perhaps might not sink ships but that could turn a deck into a slaughter-yard.

If Tros had not seen war-ships weighing anchor in the Harbor of Happy Return nor had observed the archers marching along the Heptastadium, he had nevertheless made ready for such contingencies as craftily as he would have

Queen Cleopatra

foreseen changes of the weather. And presently she understood.

A light appeared. Conops had raised an iron beacon on the stern of the barge—had lighted it—tow and oil—exactly such a beacon as all big ships used, on rare occasions when the big ships weighed at night, to show their movements to the port authorities. But the light was a cable's length astern; and on Tros' ship all was so dark that there was grumbling from the lower oar-banks, checked by monosyllabic overseers.

Tros only moved to cast his eye aloft where spars were hardily visible against the moonless sky; the steersman knew exactly where to find him at any instant, on the port side of the poop, arms folded, bulking black against the gloom. He did not turn his head when savage, cat-and-dog-fight oaths came over-stern. But Cleopatra and Apollodorus leaned out over the taffrail, peering with eyes bewildered by the swaying beacon light that focused all attention on itself and made the hither darkness seem impenetrable.

Suddenly the swearing ceased. "I see him!" laughed Apollodorus, stooping—groping. He discovered a thin hand-line—threw it—missed and had to haul it back. It was caught the second time, and presently a one-eyed face that had a knife between its teeth and swore incomprehensibly, advanced in jerks along the tow-rope. Leaning out, Apollodorus seized a hand and hauled in Conops, dripping, and as angry as wetted embers.

He took the knife out of his mouth—with the back of his hand wiped blood from a long skin-gash on his cheek—spat—used blasphemy in three spliced longshore dialects, and then remarked to Cleopatra in polite Greek:

"Blind snoals or a woman—which is worse?"

She laughed. He started forward, but Tros stopped him before he reached the ladder.

"What now? Is that blood? Are you hurt, little man?"

"Hurt? No. Wet! The slack of that thrice-cursed tow-rope sunk us fathom-deep—the two of us—and he in a bower-anchor's weight of armor. Asked where I was going—I showed him. Never thought an Alexandrian had spunk enough to follow. But he tried—and the rope was wet. He grabbed me—the rope jerked us high and ducked us under—by the hat of Hermes—"

Tros interrupted, snorting: "How many times have I to tell you to be slower with your knife?"

"My knife, master? What about his dagger? When I kicked him in the face to shake him off, he went mad—tried to cut the tow-rope—maybe thought to climb back on the short end—or that you might put about to pass a new rope, and so pick him up. I was reaching for his dagger, with an arm and a leg around the rope, when he slit my face—and there were the two of us ducked under, mark you, like a pair of porpoises, me waiting for the slack to tauten for a breath of air. As soon as I could draw my knife—I cut his fingers till he let go."

"You longshore brawler! You vicious wharf-rat! Get forward! Muster arrow-engine crews! Then up with you to the foretop and direct our arrow-fire. Remember now: The range should be a scant two cable-lengths. The barge should swing out with the wind when we change helm. I must squander a

good tow-rope letting go—by Hermes, no, an ax will save the hither end of it! The barge should drift into the channel. If they shoot at it they may think they have slain our helmsman. If so, they will keep on shooting at the barge light. We should be half-way through the narrows before they see us. And we have the wind, so we can show heels after the barge is let go. But remember the south wind and allow for it. Their archers will be somewhere near that rock where you can see the white foam—that's the only place where they have the whole width of the channel in range—so when you spot them, give direction so many paces right or left of that. Fall away!"

Conops went forward, grinning. Tros turned to Cleopatra, changed his voice to an almost fatherly note and spoke as if resuming conversation:

"If you live," he said, "and if you grow wise at the business of being queen, you will not rid yourself of rogues. Some rogues serve better than the virtuous, who sometimes shake their virtue in extremity. But, mark you! Let them know you know them to be rogues, or they will show you disrespect, which is a stuff that brings thrones down tumbling."

"Greatness is the courage never to deceive oneself," she answered. "Having greatness we are not deceived."

He stared at her, then meditatively turned away.

And now the Pharos Light, five hundred feet in the air, was like a moon of ruby let down from the sky, its unseen marble tower unimaginable, so great was the height. What other sounds there might be were all silenced by the surf on Pharos Point. A prick of lanternlight moved jerkily along shore. From the masthead Conops cried a warning. All along the deck the giant bowstrings began creaking to the strain of winches. Two crews manned the arrow-engines on the poop; and there were others, hardly heard, in darkness all along the ship's waist on the port side.

Conops cried out he could see the channel mark. Tros set a crew of ten men hauling on the tow-rope, shipwise, frugal, saving a few fathoms of it. Suddenly he gave a curt command. An overseer's ax went through the rope with one blow. Then:

"Helm starboard! Starboard again! So—starboard again! So—hold her!"

The helmsman threw his weight against the long pine steering-oar, and the stars moved sidewise. Thunder of surf increased. Away astern—a swimming mystery—the barge light tossed and seemed to swing toward the eastern shore.

Next, out of stilly night, beyond the surf and below the Pharos tower, came a trumpet blast—and—instantly—a meteor-flight of arrows, wrapped in burning tow to show their course. They whistled in a jewel-like parabola toward the barge, and fell short, dropping beautifully. Then another flight—another. "Forty paces to the left!" cried Conops.

All along the great ship's side, from bow to poop her deadly arrow-engines twanged and tautened to the clank of ratchets, sending sheaves of arrows screaming at the Pharos. There were intermittent, muttered orders—no haste—rhythmic swiftness unlike any human agency—suggestive of an underworld.

Then Tros' voice:

Queen Cleopatra

"Haul in on the main sheets! Full speed with the oars!"

He tapped the poop-rail with his staff to set time for the drums and cymbals. There began a wild harp-music. Gradually, gradually faster grew the stroke until the wake boiled egg-white and the very sails grew dimly visible in up-cast phosphorescence. Then the ship's bow lifted to the first wave on the harbor bar and suddenly the sails showed, bellied out and straining, dark against the red light of the Pharos beacon. They had turned the great lens, concentrating all the light in one long beam across the channel.

"Light lamps below," Tros ordered. "Stack oars. There's a heavy dew, so wipe the arrow-engines dry before you house them. Sigurdson—ho, Sigurdson! Get forward there and slack away the shrouds—"

Harps, drums, cymbals ceased. Oars thumped in through the ports and rattled into racks under the deck, and presently an endless stream of oarsmen poured up from the hold to spread their mattresses. Some, staring overside, conversed and there was laughter—half heard through the "talking" of the great ship's timbers and the creak of straining spars.

Then, from the masthead:

"Ships!" cried Conops' voice. "Two—three—five—eight to port of us—they're just in sight!"

"They are too late," Tros remarked.

He turned toward the helmsman—gave him a new course and watched a while, then came and stood, hands resting on his hips, in front of Cleopatra, bulking big and making her look tiny.

"You may have my cabin. Never a woman used it since the wife who was about to bear a son to me died—in Gaul—of Caesar's arrow."

"Let my women have it," Cleopatra answered, turning from him.

Tros, standing with legs apart, his right hand stroking at his beard, watched her. He moved as if to go below, then, folding his arms on his breast, strode up to her again:

"Royal Egypt," he said bluntly, "I am not used to a bowed head and my knees give with an ill grace. If it pleases you, I am your servant."

"Admiral—Lord-Admiral," she answered.

"And the ship is yours."

"I will use the cabin. Lead me to it," she commanded.

Shouts came from ashore—another trumpet-blast—flight after flight of arrows plumped into the sea a cable's length astern, their sound like fish chased by dolphins.

CHAPTER VIII "A phoenix hatches only in the hot flame."

They who are without virtue are blind to the virtue in others. So also, they who are unfit to govern are blind to authority and yield not except to violence. He who has authority inherent in him, as he might have virtue, or a gift of song, or wit, needs neither trumpet nor insignia to tell him when he meets authority superior to his.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

IN THE GREAT stern cabin under the poop of Tros' ship Cleopatra lay, with Charmian beside her, in a bunk on the starboard side, on which had been spread an embroidered coverlet of Gaulish wool. Lolliane sat in Tros'-seat in the curve of the stern, with her elbows resting on the heavily built table in front of her, her eyes watching Apollodorus, his watching Cleopatra. Tros' clothes, as gorgeous as eastern carpets, swung to every movement of the ship, from a pole set cornerwise across the cabin. There were several women huddled on a mattress on the floor. Apollodorus and Tros stood side by side, leaning their backs against the forward bulkhead.

"Would you like two lanterns?" Tros asked.

"Zeus, no! That one smells bad enough! Go on with what you were saying.

Why will you not go home to Samothrace?"

"The Samothrace that was, no longer is," he answered. "You are of the Holy Mystery of Philae, and I marvel that a woman should have attained initiation. But I marvel more that you should ask me what you know I dare not answer." But Cleopatra was sounding him, as he himself was used to sounding strange seas.

"Samothrace, I know," she said, "is like a volcano that is burned out, and now the buzzards build foul nests where once a purifying fire came forth. But if I were of Samothrace,

I think I would not rest very long until I had lit again that olden fire."

"Each to his task," Tros answered. "I, who lit my candle at the flame, was sent to Britain to encourage the Druids, who are wiser than I am; they were too wise to scorn my help. So the Britons, who had been quarreling among themselves, took thought about their manhood. They defeated Caesar. Twice they defeated him—once and again!"

"And then you set forth to sail around the world? Why did you turn back?"

"My heart said that my task was only half done. Caesar was still living, and Rome rampant. Who am I to burst out of my egg until my work within the egg is finished?"

"Why did you not kill Caesar? I understood you to say you took him prisoner."

"It is not my habit to slay prisoners. A prisoner is one whom Destiny lets live a while. And who am I, that I should gainsay Destiny? It is Rome I dread, not Caesar."

"It is Egypt, not myself, that I will save from Rome," said Cleopatra, and Tros

Queen Cleopatra

eyed her for a moment with a new approval.

"Caesar," he said, "is the genius of Rome in human shape. He is the very essence of the wolfish Roman energy, that uses even its own virtue to a cruel end. But to slay Caesar in order to check Rome's conquests would be sillier than to nail a shadow to the wall to check the growth of the tree that cast it. Rome might loose three Caesars on the world, in place of one."

Cleopatra mused a while. "And Pompey?" she asked suddenly.

"Pompey is a man whom dignities and partly understood philosophies have swallowed until he mistakes the surface for the heart of things. The name Magnus that they gave him blinded Pompey. He could no longer see his greatness since its shadow covered him; his littlenesses had to serve, and they were many, leading him this way and that into indecision and deceiving others."

Cleopatra followed her own train of thought, her eyes half closed, and for a long time there was silence, broken only by the "talking" of the great ship's timbers and the regular thrash of the sea against the oaken hull.

"I agree," she said at last, "that killing Caesar would not stay Rome's course. And yet stay it I shall! None knows, except I, who burn with it, what will there is in me to save my Land of Khem from the fate of Gaul—aye, and from the fate of Samothrace, whose spirit died."

"Nay!" Tros exclaimed. "That spirit flew forth. Samothrace is like the Moon, whose course was run and whose spirit found release into a larger sphere."

"They call me Sister of the Moon," she answered. "Is that ominous?"

"Woman, if you have heart enough to understand, all omens are only evidence that life and death succeed each other as the day and night. The faint of heart may shudder to see the sun sink westward. But a wise one greets the night and gives thanks, turning to the eastward presently to greet the sun again."

"And Caesar, you say,—Tros! I—no, not this Cleopatra— not this shadow that you see here, but I—I am Egypt! What does it mean, that I must go forth like a hunted criminal? Is that, too, ominous? Is Egypt doomed to die like Samothrace?"

"I tell, you, Samothrace is not dead!" Tros retorted. "Do you look for the soul of Samothrace in the shell of a rock-bound island? Look then for the soul of Egypt in a bucketful of Nile mud! Did wisdom die the day Pythagoras went free from his tired old body? Did they poison all intelligence with Socrates? I never was admitted to the higher mysteries, not being whole enough in understanding of that little knowledge that I have. I am a novice. Nevertheless, where I go, there goes Samothrace! And when I die, that Spirit I have let shine—dimly though it shone through me— shall once again receive me and renew me, until I go forth to a new birth. In the interval shall seed I sowed not germinate? When I return to earth shall I find fault if Samothrace is known by other names, and if its spirit dwells in other lands than that bare island? Are the olden gods of Khem but worms, that eat their Egypt, and destroy it, and have no home left nor anywhere to go?"

She nodded. "You are generous to fight my gloomy spirit for me, Tros."

Olympus puzzles me with long words and symbols, whose inner meaning seems to be a key to yet more mysteries. And Olympus is no man's enemy, which makes it difficult to have patience with him."

"He is a greater than I," said Tros.

"Olympus ever bids me choose between the spirits of light and darkness. But do you know how difficult that is when darkness steals up, and there is gloaming, and no stars, but only a nameless fear and a loneliness beyond all reach of companionship?"

"It is alone that we learn at last how countless and how close the gods are," Tros replied. "And I tell you: the gods would cease if they should cease to cherish—aye, and to obey us! But they obey the spirit in us, not the fumes from off our crucible of moods. Alone—not otherwise—we commune with the Spirit that is a bright light in the bosom of the Soul."

"I am afraid of mine," said Cleopatra. "When I feel that greatness in me, and that brightness, I become a coward For I fear this little body and this brain will burn up."

"Aye, a shell breaks ere a phoenix hatches," Tros assured her. "And a phoenix hatches only in the hot flame."

"But you were telling me of Caesar. Speak on. Killing Caesar would be to unleash Rome without a master. Rome needs money and would drain the very dregs of Egypt for it."

"Aye," Tros answered, "and in the name of law would rape religion, tolerating—aye, and whoring for its body, but slaying its soul as it slays the souls of the women its dealers buy and sell."

"But Caesar?"

"He can whip his Romans to obedience. He has that merit."

"Then if I win Caesar?"

Tros pondered that a moment. "Caesar," he said then, "is a man whom many women have beguiled, to their own undoing. There is none—not man or woman—who has come within Caesar's orbit and not suffered for it."

"Suffering? We may expect that. Do we women bring forth children without suffering?"

"They cut Caesar forth from his mother," said Tros. "It may be justice that a woman suffers, since she peoples a world with men to wreak worse cruelties."

"Time was," Cleopatra said, "when Egypt was a land of wisdom and its kings were patriarchs whom men revered. When I was young my mother took me a long journey up the Nile, to Philae, and I saw on my way the Pyramid, Memphis, Karnak, Thebes. I saw what dignity and affluence are born into a world where wisdom reigns; and I saw how, when the spirit is no longer understood, a people lapses into dullness and the very temple columns fall. My mother told me stories of the Land of Khem that I will remember as long as I live; so that Egypt to me is not Alexandria, but thousands of years of splendid history that flow down from the past as the Nile flows from none knows what mysterious source. And I know that as the Nile flows, so that spirit lives on, rising and waning, yet ceaseless. And I know that spirit moves me whenever I forget life's meanness and remember what the Fathers told me at Dendera. Tros—I was anointed Pharaoh of the Upper and the Lower Nile and High Priestess of

Osiris and of Isis!"

CHAPTER IX "Did I summon you from straw-roofed villages to tell me how to govern?"

In the drama that we call life it is the part of wisdom to expect the unexpected, and to mistrust the expected when it comes—remembering: there is a false dawn but there is no doubt possible when once the sun has risen.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

THE FARTHEST eastern outlet of the Nile, fast silting up and navigable only in flat-bottomed scows, met the sea at Pelusium. Waves moaned into the estuary and pounded on an endless beach of unclean sand, arid to the southward lay a wilderness of mud-flats fringed with reeds, inhabited by myriads of birds.

A strong fort, scowling, as it might be, at the dreariness, defended the highway between Egypt and Syria, which crossed that last arm of the Nile by the only practicable ford, with fish-traps on either side, winding amid miles of mud-flats where the ibis broke the eggs of crocodiles and myriads of flamingoes hunted shell-fish.

On the eastern bank there was a strip of cultivation— mainly onions and corn: on the western, as far as the eye could see, field after field of black mud that bore prodigious crops in season—water-wheels, thatched huts barely separable from the landscape, no trees.

The great brick fort was square and around it lay Pelusium—a maze of barns, shops, slaughter-houses, brothels, wine-shops, with a few mean inns and a market-place, where Greek, Persian, Syrian and Armenian traders vied with Jews, or joined with them in chousing the Egyptian.

There was heat insufferable and a stench of dead fish, seaweed, onions and camel-dung. By day there were flies in swarms so dense that to the leeward of a wall or on the beach at noon a man could hardly breathe without inhaling them. A few small boats lay drawn out on the sand; a few small ships stuck noses into mud berths in the estuary. Over the whole landscape lay a pall of dreariness, suggesting that neither hope nor health had any being near Pelusium. The place seemed dying, like that outer tentacle of Father Nile that formerly had made it a considerable port.

On the eastern bank of the Nile, set so as to command the ford, lay Cleopatra's camp—a maze of black unsightly tents around a dune on which her white pavilion, of jetsam timber and a sail, open on three sides to the fetid wind, had been erected. She had hardly privacy; but her women were in thatch-roofed huts around her, which helped a little, and she had a small screened-off apartment at the rear.

Her ragged army's right flank rested on the beach, where a riffraff from Joppa and Gaza bivouacked by driftwood fires.

The left flank touched a muddy irrigation ditch a mile inland. At the rear of the camp a thousand camels meditated and as many horses kicked and fretted

at the flies.

There was a swarm of sutlers, traders, hangers-on, but not much of the pomp and panoply of war. Diomedes, followed suspiciously by a group of petty Arab chiefs, looked worried.

But he observed the decencies. He caused a bugle to be blown to announce that he desired an audience. When Cleopatra came forth from the enclosure at the rear into the open-sided sail-cloth pavilion, he made his body-guard of ten black Nubians salute her—and he waited while her own ten answered the salute. Her throne was a chariot-body draped with leopard-skins, but she could have made an upturned empty chest look royal. Charmian and Lolliane came to stand beside her, and there were women with tall palm-leaf fans to drive the flies away.

Diomedes bowed again. The Arab chieftains, moving slowly, jockeying surreptitiously for precedence, contrived to conceal whatever interest they felt. Observant, they were careful not to exceed the bow of Diomedes.

"What do these princes want?" she asked.

Her voice awoke them to alertness, though they did not understand her Greek. They glanced at Diomedes, who was evidently primed to answer for them.

"Royal Egypt," he began, "these princes are complaining that you did not seize the fort, so that your cause, they say, is lost before the war begins. They say, your brother's army in Pelusium is strong, and growing stronger, whereas we have few supplies and there is no help coming. Who, they ask, is to reward them and their followers for leaving home to linger in a camp beside a marsh, where flies infest them and Egyptians steal by night what little stores they have? To them I have answered, Royal Egypt, what you ordered me to say, but they demand an answer from your own lips."

Cleopatra's forehead clouded.

"You speak as if you favor their complaint," she said when she had thought a while. "You are a poor judge, Diomedes, if you hope to manage me by watering allegiance till it tastes like the tavern wine your lazy foragers provide!"

"Royal Egypt," he stammered uncomfortably, "I warned you, but you would not listen. There was nothing left for me but to bring them and let you find out for yourself. I have no—"

She interrupted him: "I require your courage. If you have none, rid me of your cowardice this minute!"

"Royal Egypt! What more can I do than I have done already? I abandoned all that I possess to join you here and to uphold your cause. Is this justice—to accuse me of—?"

"Justice?" she retorted. "Justice! That is what gods provide, after events!" She motioned him aside and he obeyed her, leaving the chiefs to plead their own cause uninterpreted. But Cleopatra gave them no chance, overwhelming them with fluent Arabic before they could begin to frame then-speech:

"Did I summon you from straw-roofed villages to tell me how to govern? I have haled you here to save your wives and daughters, and your cattle and those little hoards of money you have buried under stamped earth floors!"

Their brown eyes shifted nervously at the suggestion that they had money hidden. One man made shift to answer, but she forwined him into silence.

Queen Cleopatra

"Am I answerable for the wind? You saw my great ship sail. It carried word to Caesar. You saw my messenger Apollodorus gallop to find Herod. And some of you, I think, know Herod, who is young, but he already has a name at which the very horses prick their ears. Do you prefer him as an enemy to recompense his followers at your cost?"

Their truculence was not so noticeable now. Her unexpected fluency in Arabic deprived them of the chief advantage they supposed they had: they could not prompt one another without her knowing; neither could they bewilder her with vague and random-worded sentences in her own tongue designed to half hide insolence.

"Ptolemy grows stronger in Pelusium?" she went on. "Answer then: why does he not march forth against us? Because his General Achilles counts the cost of giving battle, fearing Alexandria, behind him, that neither loves him nor is willingly against me. If Achilles had the worth within him of a tavern-thief he would have hurled himself against us, lo, these days ago. But he is too late. Herod comes, and a thousand cavalry."

"How do you know that?" a lean hook-nosed chieftain answered. "We have no such knowledge. If a thousand cavalry should follow Herod, he would have to raise them from the country to the east of Jordan and the south of Jericho. And if he did that, we should know it. We have no such news."

"Then go to the top of yonder dune and observe the dust toward the north-east," she retorted.

"We have seen it," the Arab answered. "That is the dust of twenty-five or thirty chariots—no army—surely not a thousand men. Moreover, there is movement in your brother's camp across the river."

There was no denying that. From hastily constructed sand-pits and redoubts, and from the breastwork that guarded the Nile ford, Cleopatra's pickets were sending word of it, the runners racing to be first. All along the crenelated fort wall of Pelusium appeared men's heads and shoulders, like vultures, gazing seaward. In the roadstead, out beyond the shallows where the Nile mud piled up ever-widening shoals and sea-birds circled above waves of yellow green, Ptolemy's small fleet apparently was weighing anchor.

Diomedes saluted with scant ceremony, turned away and, shouting for his horse," went striding toward the river to inspect the ford defenses.

"They will take us in flank. They will sail their fleet into the estuary," said an Arab.

Cleopatra stood up on tiptoe. But she was small and there was still a part of the horizon that she could not see. She gestured and her women moved her chariot-throne to higher ground outside the tent, the guards assisting and the Arab chiefs observant, curious, preserving a vague deference that might be turned into respectful friendliness or the reverse, as circumstances should dictate.

She stood on the chariot, gazing seaward, shielding her eyes with her hand. An Arab chief called for his camel. He mounted. The beast rose and he, too, stared in the direction of the sea.

"A ship. But whose ship?" said the Arab.

For a long time Cleopatra gazed in silence. Three times she seemed about to speak, but checked herself, as if doubting what she saw. Then:

"Pompey!" she said at last. "Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, seeking refuge!" She stepped down from the chariot. "To the beach with you! Go to the beach and signal him! Send out a boat to him! Warn him! Persuade him to land on our side of the estuary! Welcome him in my name!"

The Arabs left her and she turned to Charmian:

"What pity that Tros did not meet him! If he falls into the hands of my brother's men, they will sell him alive to Caesar! Whereas if he should join me here his men might rally to him and—and I would seize Pelusium—then Alexandria—we would give Caesar and Rome a problem that would make Rome hesitate!"

CHAPTER X "A Galilee for Egypt?"

Some men build—upraising one thing from the products of a thing thrown down. But other men, as scavengers, see only fuel in a living tree or quarries in the monuments of bygone days. Nobility, it may be, is a tendency to imitate the Lords of Life by building—whether it be character, or cities: Ignobility a tendency to imitate the Hounds of Death, that, seeing what is built up, hunger to annihilate.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

THE DUST-CLOUD to the eastward thinned and soon a dozen chariots whirled out of it, Apollodorus leading. Arab horsemen galloping to meet them wheeled into a cavalcade that crowded either flank and thundered in the rear until the leading chariot drew rein at last in front of Cleopatra's tent.

Apollodorus, travel-stained and hollow-eyed, so weary that he reeled when his feet touched ground, was almost knocked down by a following chariot's horses that were too far spent to feel their driver wrenching at the reins.

A very young man sat in that second chariot at ease. He took his time about descending and he made no comment, although he seemed to be amused by Apollodorus' narrow escape. He looked distinguished, and, in a sly way, dignified.

He had a beard already long enough to curl. His almond finger-nails were beautifully polished, and his feet, in doeskin slippers, were as small and well shaped as a woman's. Gilded chain-mail showed through the opening of his tunic, over which he wore a thin striped cloak of green and gold. His head-dress was in the Arab style, but green and gold instead of white, and fastened with a jeweled brooch. He had rings on nearly all his fingers and a jeweled dagger at his waist.

If his clothing was designed to draw attention from his face, it failed. He was darkly handsome. Apollodorus' good looks faded in comparison. But it was said that even his own mother swooned at the baleful influence of Herod's eyes. Herod's own attendants all wore charms against them.

An Arab chief rode up and, hardly pausing to salute, demanded:

"We were promised a thousand men. Where are they?"

Two hundred Arabs clustered around him and Apollodorus waited breathless for the answer. When it came, in Herod's good time, it was like hot kettle-water, scalding what it touched:

"Son of a hundred thousand stinking dogs! You dare to breathe on me! Do I need to answer you what I have done with one man—or a thousand—or ten thousand?"

"Nevertheless, ^Prince Herod, this is a defeated army unless reenforcements come!"

Prince Herod laid a finger on his shapely nose and showed his teeth, whiter than ivory beneath the black mustache.

"Scatter, you dogs, to your gutters! See what I will come and do to you!"
The Arab rode back to his friends and passed the word among them:
"Herod has a thousand at his back or he would never dare to speak thus."
Presently a scout came galloping to say he had seen dust again along the eastward sky-line.

"Dust of many horsemen!"

Herod turned toward Apollodorus, ignoring servants, who had poured out of the other chariots to wipe his slippers, brush dust from his cloak and sprinkle him with Persian scent of myrrh-and-rose-leaves.

"Where is she?" he asked—as he might have asked where dinner waited.

Apollodorus did not answer. He was noticing how strangely empty was the camp, and how discouragingly shabby it all looked. His eye then for a moment resting on the fort beyond the river he detected archers gazing seaward. Diomedes came in sight, from the direction of the ford, apparently in haste to reach the seashore, angry with a horse that trod the soft sand balkily and followed by a group of officers. Apollodorus started off on foot. Herod chose a chariot whose horses were less foundered than his own, but Apollodorus, overtaken, would not ride, so Herod drove on, his attendants trailing as first one man's wind gave out, and then another's.

So when Apollodorus came in sight of the beach after passing behind smelly lines of breastworks and reed-thatched shelters, from which spearmen and archers of a dozen seaport towns observed him sulkily, Herod was already standing apart from a group of men and women, Cleopatra facing him at spear-length's distance. Herod looked irritably nervous, angry that a woman should oppose his will. The crowd had stood back. Even Cleopatra's women had withdrawn to thirty paces.

The first words that Apollodorus caught were Herod's:

"Did you imagine I would lead men here until I understand the risk? Can I afford to lose a thousand through miscalculation? I am not Lord of Egypt! I am Governor of Galilee. I had to drain a hundred villages to bring a thousand men. It cost me—Allah! It has cost me more than you can repay!"

With the corner of his eye he saw Apollodorus listening.

"And how should I know treachery was not intended?" he went on. "This lover of yours—"

Cleopatra made an almost unseen gesture to Apollodorus to restrain himself.

"—he can tell you, I have left my men where they can strike. You summoned me. I came. But I have taken care."

"Why did you come at all?" asked Cleopatra.

"Why? Why? You implored me to come! You besought me to come! Apollodorus promised you shall later lend me men to make me King of Syria, if I will help you now. He brought a pearl and said it was your gift. Do you send a prince a pearl that you may flout him when he makes you royal offers in return? None flouts me with impunity!"

"Having helped you when the Jews had made you desperate, I turned to you for help," said Cleopatra. "You were the first I thought of. Your answer is to threaten me with violence unless I run with you to Galilee! A Galilee for Egypt? Do you think me so mean?"

Queen Cleopatra

"Me, or Apollodorus, or some other!" Herod answered, grinning meanly.

"Better a little kingdom, Cleopatra, that is certain, than a great one merely yearned for! Mine may grow. But what of Egypt, when the Roman legions come collecting debts?"

She turned her back and Herod's own attendants closed in, forming a group around him to preserve his dignity. Apollodorus went to Cleopatra's side and Diomedes rode up, angrily dismounting, jerking at the bridle.

"Pompeius Magnus, you can see, has joined the enemy," he almost shouted at her. "Now they can either hold him and sell him to Caesar, or employ him to withstand both you and Caesar! Yet you offer a discourtesy to this prince, who—"

"If I offend you, Diomedes, leave me!" she retorted.

She turned her back. She gestured to her women to surround her. Diomedes tried to talk to Charmian, who turned her back, too. Some of Herod's men, to whom he had been whispering, returned toward the camp as Diomedes strode up, greeting Herod with a stately Old-World courtesy that Herod answered with conventional phrases and a lean mean smile.

"I beseech you, Prince Herod," Diomedes said, "to make allowance for a young queen in extremity. Her disappointments have been many, and this last one—the great Pompey going to our rivals is the bitterest of all. If you had only let her see your army—"

"She shall see it!" Herod answered.

Diomedes was too eager to restore good-will to notice the inflection:

"If you have a thousand men, Prince Herod, I beseech you, summon them!"

Herod made no move. His eyes were on the sea. He watched a small boat rowing shoreward. It was one that the Egyptians had sent to Pompey's ship. In the stern sat some one in a crimson cloak, who could not well be any one but Pompey, although only four men sat with him and there was neither standard, nor yet fasces, that by right should have accompanied a man who claimed dictatorship of Rome. In the forepart of the boat sat three men, one of whom was recognizable by helmet and high plume as Ptolemy's general, Achillas. On the far side of the estuary all that beach was swarming with the troops of Ptolemy and with the traders and the riffraff of Pelusium, but they made no outcry nor any movement toward that tongue of beach on which the boat should land its occupants.

Said Herod: "Is there not an archer who can shoot that distance? Pompey and Achillas in the one boat—why not kill them before the boat can touch shore?"

"Distance over water is deceptive," Diomedes answered. "There are four full bow-shot lengths between us."

"Possibly. But shallow water," Herod insisted. "Send your cavalry—water only knee-deep—archers up behind the hors emen—surprise—"

"Shoal-water, yes," said Diomedes, "but a quicksand, and a channel, then another quicksand. Then mud. Do you see the color of the outflow of the Nile? That red stuff settles into banks that catch ships as the sirup catches flies. They are as safe from us, and we as safe from them, as if we were a league apart. Do you see that boat we sent to Pompey's ship to gain first word

with him?" He pointed toward a rowboat laboring in surf along the tail-end of the shoal with more than half a league to go yet.

Herod grinned, his sly eyes seeming to contain within their depths all knowledge of the treachery of ages. He was not a young man then. He was as old as evil.

"I would not give this," said Herod, and he snapped his fingers, "to be there in Pompey's place! They hate me in Jerusalem, but when I come they greet me. Were I Pompey, I would think that silence ominous. And were I you, I would regret a rich prize almost within reach, yet slipping, slipping! Had I come but one hour sooner it should not have slipped away! I am in time to save another, though. Now listen to me. Let us not mind Pompey; he is "lost for ever."

Cleopatra, standing amid her women, turned her head to look for Apollodorus. He was missing. In the moment while her eyes sought swiftly for him, came a cry across the sea as if a woman's soul had suddenly gone wailing through the gates of death. The cry came from the anchored ship, where Pompey's wife was watching his arrival at the beach, foreseeing death three breaths before it happened amid silence with a thousand looking on.

The boat's bow touched the beach. Achilles rose and, setting one foot over-side, extended his left hand, inviting Pompey to come forward and take hold of it. The rowers all leaped overside, waist-deep, to thrust the boat's bow firmly in the sand, and Pompey, laying aside a book that he was reading, stood up, signing to his four companions to step ashore first. There was some slight argument about that, but they finally obeyed him, and he followed, alone, stepping from rowers' seat to seat, a splendid figure, dignified, in no haste.

He ignored Achilles' hand. Intending to jump dry-shod from the boat's nose to the beach, he passed between Achilles and two other men in Roman military dress. The taller of the two men drew a Roman sword and struck him in the back between the shoulder-blades. He gave no cry that anybody heard but turned in sudden agony and seemed to recognize the man who struck him. Then, as if ashamed, he covered his head with his crimson cloak. Instantly Achilles, now behind him, plunged a dagger in his back, and Pompey fell from view below the gunwale. Then Achilles and the other two were seen to leap on him, elbows and shoulders showing as they stabbed and hacked enough to kill a dozen men.

Another moment, and the Roman who had struck first held a severed head in air. Another broken-hearted cry came wailing over-water from the ship. Achilles' rowers jumped into the boat and, stripping the headless body naked, threw it overboard.

Meantime, there was a scuffle on the beach. The Romans who had come with Pompey were surrounded. Three of them were stabbed to death; but the fourth man vanished unaccountably. Achilles and his two companions, the taller of them carrying the head, set off toward Pelusium, most of the soldiers, who had looked on, following in disorder, although a few remained to strip the bodies of the men just slain.

Cleopatra gripped at Charmian's shoulder.

Queen Cleopatra

"Dogs!" she exclaimed, then threw both hands outward in a tragic gesture. "Oh, how I love a herol How I hate such gods as let a hero die of mean men's daggers—as a corpse uncared for is a prey of worms! O Charmian, is this a world? Or is it outer wilderness where lost souls long for Hades?—Look you, they will seize his ship next! They will slay his wife too! Do you see my brother's warships working up against the wind to cut off her escape? Are we to stand here doing nothing?"

But the ship that had brought Pompey had its anchor up already, and the wind, that was against the Egyptian fleet, was fair for a captain bold enough to try to use it through that shoal-encumbered channel. He had oars out, too. Cleopatra evoked unseen powers:

"Now! If there is anything in all Olympus' magic,—

WOMAN, SAIL THOU SAFE AWAY IN MANZET, BARK OF RE°!"

Charmian began to tremble. Cleopatra seemed unconscious of anything except the race for the channel entrance—oars against oars and sail—distance two for one against the lone ship threading its course through quicksands.

"They come too fast. They catch her!" exclaimed Charmian, inbreathing. But Cleopatra's eyes had seen a sail approaching—purple—then another—two sails on the one ship, bellied out to westward with a squally east wind tugging at the sheets. The glitter of a long-tongued golden serpent's head appeared.

"Tros!" she said. "Tros of Samothrace!" The Egyptian ships had seen him too, to windward, bearing down on them with white foam seething off his bow and both his bulwarks dark with the heads of fighting men. They fell away before the wind, a dozen of them, to reform in battle line, and for a while they milled around in more or less confusion, their commanders shouting; until realizing they were helpless with the wind against them, they retired into the roadstead in the lee of the protecting westward shoal.

The escaping ship was equally afraid of Tros, but its captain seemed to be a master navigator, crafty and self-confident. Not large enough or fast enough to dare to dry conclusions in the open sea, he held a course to westward until Tros/ backed sail to wait for him. Dousing his own sail then, with Tros' ship almost within range, he headed due east under oars until he had Tros downwind and a shoal between them. Laboring along the shoal's edge he could hoist his sail again at last, and Tros had his choice between a long stern chase or letting him escape.

By that time Tros could see the frantic signals being made to him from Cleopatra's camp. He hove to, with the oars just paddling sufficiently to keep him head to wind. It would have been madness to attempt the estuary, with a fleet in sight that could have stolen along presently in

"Re was the Egyptian Sun-god—Manzet his vehicle. But the formula was said to be valueless without the rigorously guarded secret teaching, which only a few people were privileged to obtain. There is many a magic formula in common use to-day, whose real meaning has been long ago forgotten. Perhaps the commonest of all is the word "Hurrah!" darkness to blockade the entrance. But a boat went overside and headed toward Cleopatra's camp—a

long row across white-capped water.

CHAPTER XI "What can a woman do nobly and well except to bring forth children?"

As there are blessing and cursing, so there is magic of two kinds: the one, personal and selfish; having its roots in fear and hatred, that is known as Black Art, and it leads into the limbus of annihilation. But the other is a natural result of spiritual rebirth—an awakening to recognition of all nature and its forces as a host of eager, ever-present friends.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

LOLLIANE SAW Apollodorus beckon from a breastwork built by Diomedes to defend the ford by arrow-fire in flank. She left Cleopatra's side, and when he saw her coming, he withdrew behind a gabion.

"Sleep—rest yourself, Apollodorus," she advised. "I never saw you so weary. Lie there in the corner on that lion-skin and sleep."

He laughed, peering around the gabion and over the breastwork, to make sure none was listening.

"Don't you admire our strategy? How great is Diomedes! He has set these earthworks to defend us from our own men! Subtler than a serpent! Flatterer! He called me Curly-locks! 'Ho! You there, Curlylocks!' He saw me just now as he rode toward the ford. 'You love your handsome face,' he said, 'so I can count on you to try to save your beauty! Stay here. You shall have a dozen archers. Fire on our men if they start retreating!' Generalship!"

Suddenly his mood changed. He seized her by the right hand; deadly serious, and she glimpsed the man behind his mask of affectation.

"Lolliane! Is a life worth living—is a death worth dying—to have done one thing nobly?"

"What can a woman do nobly and well," she answered, "except to bring forth children? And a child might be a coward. There is no foreseeing the end of anything."

He laughed again. "If there are gods, let them be blamed for endings! Whose praise do you value?"

"Yours! Apollodorus, why ask? Why pretend? You know! I was as frank with you as you have been inscrutable! I never asked more than a moment's taking of the love I offered. Are you satiated with love? Are you afraid of consequences? Afraid of Cleopatra's jealousy? She only uses you, Apollodorus.

When some one more useful appears she will yield you to me or to any one else. It is oh, so little I ask of you! Praise? Hers and your own—none other!"

"Nearer than most to the target," said Apollodorus. "Nevertheless, you miss by two spans."

"How?" she asked him. "Tell me."

"No praise other than your own is worth to you the breath it uses."

"I could let hers go," she answered. "Mine? I would praise myself for ever, and sing songs for ever, if I had yours! But not lip praise. Praise from the

heart, Apollodorus! Once! I would remember it beyond death."

Apollodorus was too weary to conceal his thought. He saw her with the searching sculptor's eye that looks through surfaces to principles and labors to interpret them.

"I will never—never praise myself," she said, "until you praise me. If I understood you, I would make you love me. But not greedily. I would not ask too much. I had a little Jewish slave-girl who used to tell me stories. Once she told me of a man named Samson. I forget the woman's name, but she shorn Samson's locks to win him. Shall I shear your locks, Apollodorus? I would not do what that other woman did. She sold him to his enemies. But I would let you go if you would love me—utterly and truly—from your heart—once!"

Weariness had stripped him of his skill and she could see what underlay the cynicism in his eyes. Her intuition leaped. She understood! She understood him too well, reining in her triumph even as it broke loose, lest it run away with her and lose him after all.

"Apollodorus! You, too! You shall win your own praise! Two by two we do things. One by one we pay the price of doing. I am not afraid."

She held her arms toward him.

"Kiss me!"

He raised her right hand to his lips and in a moment she was in his arms.

"You are lovely, Lolliane. Any man might call me fortunate, and you have used wise words, but I think you stole them from Olympus, letting go the half of what he said: it is a world of clever sayings and of unwise deeds!"

He lifted her and made her stand against the gabion, her face toward the sinking sun. His eyes were set again, into that curious, appraising, sculptor's stare, incredulous of anything but his own ability to see.

She trembled, sure of him at last—yet sure he would be merciless.

"There is no song here," he said, "nor any splendor of dawning hope. Could anything be worse?"

"Nothing," she agreed, "unless it were to lose you."

"That is for you, or for death to determine," he answered. "Listen. While she and you and Charmian stood watching Achilles kill a man, whose feet he was not fit to lick, I crouched where Herod talked to Diomedes. Do you know what a fool in a rascal's hands can be, and what might come of it?"

She laughed. "I know to what extremes Apollodorus led me! Am I a fool? Are you a—?"

"Races are won at the finishing post," he answered. "All plans look like madness until laurels are awarded. You are not in Herod's hands yet—yet, I said—you heard me—yet! But she, you, I and all of us will be unless—"

"The gods forbid! There is Tros," she said. "Tros' ship—"

"Out of reach! Herod has persuaded Diomedes to leave two-thirds of our army here to deceive the enemy, while— for her own sake, mind you!—she is to be forced to go with Herod to his little principality in Galilee! Diomedes has agreed—agreed with Herod!—trusts him!—thinks a promise made by Herod can mean anything but treachery! And yet priests tell us there are gods—as if whatever gods there truly were would not protect us against hon-

Queen Cleopatra

est fools like Diomedes!"

"We can prevent it! It is not too late! We can prevent it! said Lolliane. "There is a boat coming. It can take us to Tros' ship."

"Look!" said Apollodorus, pointing.

Herod's cavalry—a thousand desert swordsmen mounted on mares from a land where it was rumored even Parthians feared to travel, were in full view, pouring along the highroad between the beach and Cleopatra's camp.

"Listen, Lolliane. Listen now. Attend to me, and think of Herod. Diomedes will be daggered in the neck before to-night's moon rises. Cleopatra is the prize!"

"Then warn her! Why not?"

"She would refuse the only possible way of escape." "Speak plainly, Apollodorus."

"I see you are not strong enough," he said. "A race is won by never fearing to go down under the wheels. I will try another way. Perhaps I can kill Herod in the dark."

"He has too many servants, Apollodorus. You could never get near him. But I might do it! I will prove to you, I love you! Bid me do it!"

"No," he answered. "Murder is a man's work." "Apollodorus, you are weary.

If your hand should slip we should be worse off—all of us instead of one.

No—I will do it! I! What was your plan? Let him carry me off believing I am Cleopatra? He would kill me when he learned of his mistake, and I prefer this other risk. Better a death by daggers than the arms of Herod!"

"It is a good thing not to be afraid to die," Apollodorus answered. "It is much the best way to prolong life. Not to fear shame is to rise above it." "But to love?" she asked,

Apollodorus laughed. "I do not know what love is. I have never felt it. Passion I know, and admiration. I admire you. I will admire you more if you will save her by tricking Herod."

"By being befouled by Herod!"

"There are bodies lovelier than yours, my Lolliane," said Apollodorus. "There are many lovelier than hers. If I need women, or if you need men, there are a thousand either of us might have for a nod. Can Herod rape your spirit? If he can, they stay here. You would not be worthy of the race we run."

"Worthy?" Lolliane said. "Do you mean—do you mean—?" "I admire you, Lolliane; and I do not know what love is. If your bravery should cause me to admire you more, I do not see that I could love you less, if love is anything."

"But you will loathe me, as I loathe Herod!" "If you think that, stay here, Lolliane." "Apollodorus, if you loved—"

"I dare say that I never loved," he answered. "I have asked Olympus what is love? His explanation was as interesting as the problem, and as difficult to understand! But I will tell you what I told him: To love is to let neither death, nor anything whatever that is less than death, dissuade you from any course. That is how I win chariot races." "His answer?" "Oh," he smiled. "You know that Sphinx-face."

"Is dishonor less than death?" asked Lolliane.

"Whose? What others think of you is much less. What you yourself know—death is a mere incident compared to that."

"If you had tasted love, Apollodorus, you would know that what you think of me is more to me than all else—life-death—anything! If I should do what you ask; and if, later, you should think me Herod's cast-off rubbish—"

"Lolliane!"

"Strange," she said, "that I should trust you I will do this thing, Apollodorus."

He took her in his arms.

"You will remember me?" she asked.

"I think you have taught me at last what love is, Lolliane. I will come for you."

"You will-?"

"I will come for you."

CHAPTER XII "Let Lolliane earn her laurels."

Every man has two sides to his nature, one predominating; and, obeying Law that governs Sun, Moon, Stars, Men, strength will grow stronger and weakness weaker until one roll of the Endless Book is written and the Pen of Destiny is dipped anew.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

"So QUIET? Fearful?" Cleopatra asked. "You who were brave until now?"

"No. No longer afraid," said Lolliane. "I was thinking how wise you were to trust Tros and to leave your treasure on board his ship—and what a pity it is that you sent Herod even one pearl. It whetted his appetite. Why do his men guard the beach with their horses all saddled and bridled—ready for what? There is too much mystery about your Herod. And where is he? Did you believe his story about going to choose a better place to pitch his camp?—mind you, in darkness! Where is Diomedes? Why has Diomedes posted Apollodorus near the ford, when he knows Apollodorus is too spent with fatigue to stay awake? Do you not scent treachery?"

The dim lamp, throwing shadows on a sail-cloth wall, left Cleopatra's face obscure—unlimned—a silhouette. There were no slaves present—only they three; she could afford to show fear, if she felt it; but the half-light was a mask, and her royal voice was never known to fail her.

"Treachery, yes. But if the gods desire my death now, they will have it, and if not, no. I am counting on Tros to come ashore, with news of Caesar. I know Tros sent a boat. I think Apollodorus must have met it at the beach, because the boat went back."

"I spoke with Apollodorus down by the redout," said Lolliane.

"Was he afraid? Does he talk of deserting me yet?"

"He is too much like a god to be afraid!" said Lolliane.

"He is too much a god to be true to one woman," Cleopatra answered. "If Apollodorus knew how near a god he is he would turn into a priest, and a good priest is as rare as a virginal woman. But Apollodorus believes himself a sybarite—a cynic; and so he is safe from the dangers of zeal. But he is also safe from women, Lolliane! He is protected by the very flattery with which he plasters them. Flattery, to me, is like the tortoise-shell on palace doors. I love it. But I always wonder what the wood is that it hides. Has Apollodorus flattered you?"

"He has," said Lolliane.

"Then beware of him! He has a plan to use you. What has he been saying?"

"He was cryptic. I would rather you should hear it from his own lips. Let us hope he is sleeping for he needs it. He has twelve archers in a breastwork, on our right front, near—"

"I know where he is," said Cleopatra. "If I should send for him, Diomedes will learn of it and accuse me of upsetting his wonderful military plans. Diomedes is too insolent already. On the other hand, we are watched, and if I go to him—"

"Dressed as a slave?" Lolliane suggested. "You and Char-mian! There are men-slaves you can trust—I would take the Gauls, if I were you. And I can stay here. I can wear your shawl, and imitate you—you have seen me do it. I could let the lamplight throw my shadow on the tent wall, and show myself in the opening once or twice, just for a moment, to assure the spies that you are here."

Lolliane aimed well. Recklessness of danger and delight in it were Cleopatra's nature, as was loyalty to true friends and scorn of the half-hearted ones.

"You are not afraid to stay here alone, Lolliane?"

She summoned slave-girls. She and Charmian clothed themselves in long, soiled linen smocks, and the slaves stood naked. She threw her shawl to Lolliane.

"Baskets! The spies must think I am sending food to Apol-lodorus. Where are those Gauls? Lolliane—sit there, where the lamp will throw your shadow. Keep these slaves here, or they might talk. Now, let me see you imitate my gestures-good! Do that again. You had better let one of the slave-girls be dressing your hair. The shadows of the others will look like your own and Charmian's. We won't be long, dear."

One Gaul leading, one behind, and one on either flank, she and Charmian stepped into the dark with the baskets on their heads, like wenches taking gifts of food to officers in whom the Queen showed interest.

There was no lamp—and not yet much moonlight. They avoided bivouack-fires of camel-dung and driftwood, passing; like timid slave-girls, through the shadows between groups of men, who caught the glint of firelight on the weapons of the guards, and bid a bold price for their favors, from a distance. It was hardly etiquette to let a girl go by un-flattered, but one took no chances with the mail-clad Gauls.

There was a furlong-space of utter desolation between the farthest camp-fires and that breastwork where Apol-lodorus was. No sounds, there but a sea-croon from the far beach, and ahead, the distant useless blare of trumpets in Pelusium.

So they heard Apollodorus' voice, and presently another like an angry Hon muttering, before they could see the reed-work gabions and the line of the breastwork linking them, against the misty river gloom of the Nile beyond: "The fools have cut their own throats by murdering Pompey. Surely his fleet could not be far behind him. Now his men will throw in their lot with us, and—"

"But I tell you, I saw Caesar's fleet! Crowded with men. Headed southward. If not for Alexandria, then whither else? By the wind and by the course not Hadrumentum."

"Might it not have been Pompey's fleet?" asked Apollodorus' voice.

"Nay! Later I met one ship loaded like a crate of chickens with two thousand men under the command of Lucius Lentulus, Pompey's general. I spoke to

Queen Cleopatra

him. He was in two minds—to escape Caesar and to find Pompey. When I told him I had seen Caesar headed for Alexandria he set his own course for Pelusium; but his ship's bottom is foul. My captain does not know these waters. He will be lucky if he gets here by to-morrow's dawn."

"But he will join us."

"I doubt it. We shall learn in a matter of hours that Caesar has taken Alexandria. Caesar is swift, I tell you! Lucius Lentulus may make for Hadrumentum, where they told me in Cyprus that Cato and some other Romans expect to make a last stand."

"If we wait, we will see," said Apollodorus.

"Wait, say you? There is one time: now! There is one course: bring her to my ship! How, to do that—how to reach her without anybody knowing—"

"I am here," said Cleopatra's voice.

Night vomited a shadow. Tros loomed, hand on sword hilt, peering at her.

"The voice, yes. The shape lies. Speak again!" he growled.

"Dodecahedron!" she retorted. "It is I and Charmian. Where are Apollodorus' archers?"

"Out of sight and hearing, Egypt! They were in the way. They might have shot Tros, so I sent them midway to the ford to keep watch."

Tros stepped into the rising moonlight, looking all ways.

"Go in there into the dark," he ordered.

Cleopatra took Apollodorus' hand, and Charmian hers. He guided them to a lion-skin, on which they sat down with their hands clasped over their knees.

"Did you bring no men, Lord Tros.?"

Tros blew his seaman's whistle, hardly audibly; it was echoed instantly from three directions.

"Nine men, and a boat on the beach," he answered. "Your Jew friend Herod's eunuch luckily mistook me in the dark for an accomplice—bade me find my horse and be ready to ride like the wind when Herod gives the signal. Herod has been thoughtful for his skin. His signal is to be waving torches half-an-hour's ride distant along the seashore! Luckily, Apollodorus had a servant on the watch for me. What brought you hither in a slave's frock? Did Herod already cast his net at you and miss?"

She had a way of not answering questions that suggested Others to her mind.

"Apollodorus," she whispered, "send to my tent for Lol-liane!"

But Apollodorus was leaning above the breastwork, staring in the direction of the ford. He seemed not to hear her but summoned the four Gauls to come and lean beside him.

"My archers sleep, the honest fellows," he reported in a low voice. "Comes a man straight past them! Tros, can your men catch him?"

Tros whistled softly. "Conops. You and another. There is a man coming this way from the ford—"

"Dead, master?"

"Alive, you dock-rat! Hurt him, and I will strand you in Pelusium!"

Then silence. Presently approaching footsteps. Suddenly an oath—hard breathing and a struggle—thud of a body falling heavily on sand. Footsteps

again. Then two dark shadows hurled a third one backward into the pitchy darkness of the breastwork.

"Fall away!" commanded Tros. Two of the shadows vanished and the third stood backed up with a sword's point at his throat until Apollodorus dropped into the gloom beside him for a scrutiny and demanded his name.

"Aias," he answered curtly. "A decurion from the fortress of Pelusium. I bring word from the fort commander—for the Princess—for herself—none other."

"Dog!" said Apollodorus. "Name her Royal Egypt, or I will whip you into her presence!"

"So be I come into her presence," the man answered. "She will repay whipping. I have good news."

Then came Cleopatra's voice:

"Apollodorus, send at once for Lollianel!"

If he heard her he gave no sign of it.

"A message!" he announced. "Pelusium has sent a spy to tell us what it suits them we should know!—Speak, you! This is Royal Egypt. On your knees, and he to her, and get it over with, before I hand you over to these Gauls to kill! Down on your knees, you—"

The man knelt. He could not see her.

"As I live, I lie not! By Osiris and the Breath of Hathor, I am from Pelusium—"

She did not wait to hear him. Tros tried to prevent her but she passed him into moonlight. He who was on his knees could see the linen smock then.

"So! By the boat of Chons, I am a sport of slave-girls, am I? Take me to your Princess! I will tell her—by Osiris, I will tell her a slut—"

Tros' hand on his wind-pipe shut a word off midway and his knees sank as he fought for breath, wrenching at Tros' fingers, until Apollodorus freed him.

"He may be of use, Tros."

Tros watched Cleopatra, ears alert for what the night might bring forth next.

"Summon your men, Tros!" she commanded. "Take my Gauls, too. Lead them to my tent. Bring Lolliane here!"

He had his whistle to his lips. But before he could blow it a torch blazed somewhere in the middle of the camp—flared up and whirled in air until it made a flaming circle around some one's head. It ceased as suddenly, and from a far-off summit of a sand-dune to the eastward six torches answered, flaring in elliptic rings. Then a stealthy, ghostlike movement began, a muffled drumming of the hoof-beats, as an Arab army melted into nothing in the night.

"Your Herod—" Tros bit that off. It was no time for recrimination.

"My Lolliane! Tros, if that traitor Herod has hurt one hair of her—"

Apollodorus spoke: "Let Lolliane earn her laurels. She has saved you, Egypt! She has made her bid for what she has her heart on. May it turn out to be no more worthless than the prizes any of us crave!"

Charmian snatched at his arm and shook him. She was half hysterical.

"What do you mean, Apollodorus? Do you dare to say that Lolliane—"

But the prisoner was trying to escape. Apollodorus sprang at the man from

Queen Cleopatra

behind, choked, tripped him, and the two went down together. Breathing hard, Apollodorus called to the Gauls to come and search the man but they could find no dagger in his clothes—Conops had cleaned him of all metal, money included. But Apollodorus had his doubts yet.

"You were sent to kill our Queen!"

The fellow struggled with the Gauls who knelt on him.

"No! No! By Horus! Let me up! I have a message!"

But another messenger was coming headlong—a mare without saddle or bridle and some one sprawling along the mare's neck, clinging to the mane. The mare shied at the shadowy shapes of men and women, swerved—shot its rider off—and vanished. Tros bent over a girl who lay and jabbered at him. She was naked, except for sandals.

"My slave!" Cleopatra knelt beside her. "Speak, girl! What has happened?"

Charmian knelt on the other side, but Charmian was nearly in as bad plight—teeth chattering, her heart so fluttering that breath came and went too rapidly for speech. Cleopatra pushed her away violently, and then, seizing the slave's shoulders, shook her.

"Speak, girl! You are safe now. What happened?"

She used what Apollodorus called her lion-tamer voice that scattered fear and drew forth sanity. The girl found speech, in broken sentences:

"Lady Lolliane—they came suddenly—the Arabs—and took all of us except me. General Diomedes ordered it—I saw him—he was outside, ordering. He ordered, 'Do her no harm! Veil her!' So they wrapped her in a sheet. Then an Arab came from behind the Lord Diomedes and slew him— with a sword—in the neck—and he fell face forward. They carried off the Lady Lolliane, laughing to one another, saying she was you, O Egypt—but some stayed to loot. I had hidden because I was naked. I crept out under the tent and hid again until I saw a mare tied by a halter to the saddle of one of the Arabs who was busy at the loot. So I slipped the halter off. I rode to find you. Oh-aie-aje-aie-aiel My Lady Lolliane!"

Tros' voice rumbled like a signal-drum—so sudden and fraught with vigor that even Charmian ceased trembling and the slave-girl sat up:

"You-^Conops! Off with your shirt and clothe that woman! Gag her if she makes another sound. Bring her along behind us. Lord Apollodorus, lead the Gauls and bring that prisoner!"

He ran no risk of disobedience. He picked up Cleopatra-wrapped her in his own cloak on his left arm—and with both her arms around his neck, and with his sword-arm free, strode swiftly toward the beach.

"Four of you men run ahead and make the boat all ready to shove off!" he ordered.

CHAPTER XIII "Vale, Imperator!"

The living are afraid of death. I should not be surprised to know the dead are equally afraid of living—but with far more reason.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

Darkness before moonrise. On the beach: Pelusium. A voice. Standi I have a javelin. Who are you?

Another voice. I am no man's enemy in these days—too old to be dangerous and too poor to be worth a robber's trouble. I am Marius Rufus. Who are you?

First voice. Philip, a freedman. Draw near. Let me look at you.

Marius Rufus. A freedman? Whose then?

Philip. A great Roman's. If you are as honorable as your name sounds, then attend his obsequies. Oh, woe! Oh, woe and wailing for the greatest Roman! Woe! Oh, misery! Oh, shame! Oh, foul fate! Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus—Marius Rufus. He? You are demented!"

Philip. Would I were! Oh, would it were my head they took! See you—naked—headless! That is my shirt he is wrapped in.

Marius Rufus. He shall have mine too, whoever he is. But Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus—naked—headless on a seashore? Who is likely to believe that? How comes he dead—and you, his freedman as you say you are, still living?

Philip. Woe! Woe! Would that I had died in place of him! Oh, would that he had listened to his wife Cornelia: 'Go not! Go not ashore!' she warned him. Would that he had listened to us, who begged him to stay in our midst, as he left the boat! But he would come last, proud to the end, although he foresaw treachery.' They stabbed him—hacked his head off—stripped him—threw his body in the sea—oh, woe! woe!

Marius Rufus. Woe indeed, if you speak truth! If this is Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus then I have better right than you to grieve, for I was free born, and I marched with his standard in Spain, and in Hellas—aye, and against Lepidus. But what were you and your companions doing?

Philip. Them they slew. I broke away. I dashed into the sea; for I had seen my patron's headless body thrown in, and I had no other thought left than to die with him—to drown with him. The gods preserved me to perform his obsequies, I swam a long time, looking for the body. And at last I saw a crowd of idlers staring; and I saw the body rolling in the surf. So I put seaweed on my hair and shoulders and I came forth. The fools ran! They thought me Neptune!

Marius Rufus. Eh? The Sea-god coming to do honor to the Scourge of Pirates? That was good, that was! Poor fellow, you are wet still—and a chill wind. I begin to believe your tale. Let me see that body. I believe I would know my old general, even headless. He was wounded in Spain—let me remember now—where was it?—on the right breast, half-a-hand's breadth from the arm-pit. Ecce! Ecce! You have not lied, Philip! That is he! Oh, woe and lamentation! Foul fate! Imperator—conqueror—dictator—headless on a vile

Queen Cleopatra

beach!

Philip- Quiet! Let us pay him the last honor in such silence as he loved. See— I have found the book that he was calmly reading as they rowed us between ship and shore. Such dignity! Such otherworldliness! A Roman—a true Roman! Oh, what foul fate for the greatest of all Romans!

Marius Rufus. You were right, friend. Let us make no clamor, or they might prevent the honor we would do him. Where is the head?

Philip. I know not. I have hunted for it high and low. His murderers may have taken it to sport with or to spike above a fort gate.

Marius Rufus. Likelier to sell. And who should pay a price for it but Caesar? May our fathers' gods repay that Caesar as he merits? Infamous impostor!

Demagogue! Per-verter of our olden customs!

Philip. May the Fates mete justice! You are old, friend Rufus. Have you strength to carry driftwood?

Marius Rufus. Aye, some little strength yet. You have washed the body? Wait then while I add my shirt to yours. I am a soldier. Let your shirt be for decency, and mine for honor—for his emperor's cloak—the worthier to act that part because I have no other. So—now, let us hasten. When we have brought wood will you know where to find a torch?

Philip. Aye. Let us build the pyre here, by the sea's edge.

Marius Rufus^Vale, Emperor! Marius Rufus gives thanks that with shreds of strength left over from the service of the Rome we both love, he has lived to do this last deed, to the end that your great spirit may go forth in peace, and find rest. Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus—vale, Emperor!

Philip. Vale, Emperor!

CHAPTER XIV "Truly there is nothing for us Romans left to do but to yield to Caesar"

Fools say: I will do this and the consequences shall be thus. The wise, however, seek to do only that which is proper to the moment and they meet the consequences when they come; since wisdom is a spiritual quality, its mate intuition, its offspring foresight that confers ability to do a right thing at the right time. Thus the truly wise are reckless of results, which, rooted in their cause, inevitably must include as much of lightness as the deed did that has brought them into being.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIAHY OF OLYMPUS.

TROS' CABIN LANTERN had nearly spent its last oil in the darkness before dawn. The great ship lay at anchor offshore, rolling to a ground-swell, that kept the lantern swinging and the shadows moving. Tros sat like a judge, his sword of justice on the table and Aias, the prisoner, standing before him. On the port bunk lay Apollodorus, fast asleep. Cleopatra lay with Charmian, chin supported by both hands, on the starboard bunk.

"Now understand me," Tros repeated, "if I catch you lying—"

"By Horus and by Hathor, I lie not! May your honors' excellencies' ears be as the ears of Thoth, who registers the heart's weight. May Osiris judge me."

"You have a Greek name," Tros objected. "Why not swear by Greek gods?" But Cleopatra intervened: "No, no, Tros. The half-breeds are all liars when they swear by Zeus. The Nile prevails. He only knows the names of Greek gods. They mean nothing to him. Let him answer in the name of Thoth and the dreadful weighing."

"It is I who weigh now! Speak on," Tros commanded.

"I am a decurion of the fortress guard of Pelusium. I overheard the Lords Achillas, Potheinos and Theodotus taking counsel among themselves to slay the Roman General Pom-pey. I heard all. It was the Lord Theodotus, the King's tutor, who kept insisting that dead men don't bite: that therefore they must invite him to come ashore and stab him to death on the beach. They sent for two Romans named Septimius and Salvius, to whom they promised great rewards if they would slay the Roman General. But it was the Lord Achillas who struck the first blow, nevertheless."

"He does not he. I saw Achillas strike the blow," said Cleopatra.

Tros glanced up at the lantern, then looked sternly at the prisoner:

"You have until that lantern flickers out, to tell the whole truth. Otherwise you shall drown."

The prisoner resumed his story in a hurry. "There came a messenger from Alexandria, on a camel that fell down dead, for it was furiously ridden. He cried that a Roman fleet lies anchored off the Pharos—and that it is Caesar's fleet—and that Pelusium thus lies between two enemies, like an onion between the pestle and the mortar. Therefore, the Lord Theodotus took the Roman General's head and made all haste to carry it to Caesar. And the Lord

Queen Cleopatra

Potheinos himself aroused the young King from his bed, to take him at once to Alexandria, to make such terms for him with Caesar as may be possible. But the Lord Achilles holds the fortress, waiting with the army to see what shall transpire. Therefore, the Fort Commandant, who has many reasons to mistrust and to fear the Lord Achilles, sent me to inform the Sister of the Moon and Stars that if she will approach the fort to-morrow night at midnight, she will find the south gate unguarded. He relies on her, whose eyes are stars of heaven, and whose voice is mystery, to reward him for restoring to her the fortress that is hers by right. And he agrees to slay the Lord Achilles with his own hand."

Tros sat back and glanced at the lantern again, waiting for Cleopatra to make her own comment on that proposal. She was swift with it:

"Set him ashore, Tros. Let him go back to Pelusium and say this to the Commandant: that I perceive his treachery. I am not so easily delivered into the hands of General Achilles."

Tros rapped the table with his knuckles. In the dying light the face of Aias had grown yellow, and his eyes, distended by his fear, looked inhuman.

"Did you hear? Can you swim?" Tros demanded.

He struck a bronze gong that hung from an overhead beam. The cabin door was opened by a seaman.

"Four of you—throw this decurion overboard. Don't injure him unless he tries to return to the ship. He has my leave to swim ashore if he can do it."

The ensuing scuffle and the slamming door awoke Apol-lodorus.

"News!" he demanded. "Where are we? Are we on our way? And where to?"

"In darkness?" Tros answered. "With a head wind, and a shoal on either hand? A ship is not a chariot!"

And then the light went out; but Cleopatra vowed that she could see the first faint glimmer of the dawn through the half-opened hatch that was used to ventilate the cabin.

Tros went to the poop and she and Charmian followed him. For a minute or two Cleopatra stood there filling her lungs and stretching herself, while Tros gave orders to his officers in a group below him on the main deck. Then Apol-lodorus came up, yawning, and ceasing to yawn as he watched Cleopatra's figure, swaying, bending, lovely in the dim gray light—until a voice cried in Greek from the masthead:

"Ship approaching! On the port bow!"

They all leaned over the port rail, peering through a light mist that was already drifting away before the wind.

"Roman ship—crowded with men—coming in slowly under oars toward the beach!" cried the voice up aloft. But they could see nothing yet from the poop. Ashore there was a dull red glare—the remains of Pompey's funeral pyre—that an approaching ship might have mistaken for a beacon.

"Lucius Lentulus," said Tros.

"They have let go their anchor! They lower a boat!"

The sun rose and the wind blew long lanes down the mist until a ship showed plainly, less than half a mile away. But it lay at anchor on the far side of a

shoal over which the gulls were feeding in water less than a fathom deep, while here and there a mud-bank, like the back of a great leviathan, lay half-awash.

"Up anchor, Conopsl Drums there—ready! Out oars!"

The wind freshened until the mist revealed the dreary coast-line and a small boat rowing from the Roman ship toward the shore. But Tros attended to the navigation, picking his way very slowly between moaning shoals, alert for the cry of the masthead lookout and for the chant of the seaman taking soundings. The winding channel brought him, now closer to the shore, now nearer to the Roman ship, but in the aggregate the course was northward, out toward open sea.

"Stand by arrow-engines! Lay the ammunition in the racks and make all ready!"

The deck grew thunderous with running feet. Then silence, as if the whole ship held her breath. Tros' voice, speaking low to Cleopatra, was like the rumble of a wardrum:

"Yon ship's company is in no mood for a battle. They haven't room to swing a weapon on the deck, and most of them are seasick. I could capture them, if I could see a purpose in it. But do you see your brother's fleet there, weighing anchor? If they crowd in on us—"

He was interrupted by Apollodorus, who was gazing astern at the beach, where the small boat was already tossing in the longshore surf. Pompey's lieutenant, Lucius Lentulus, was easily distinguishable by his red cloak and his helmet. Horsemen were galloping down from the fort to the point of sand near the funeral pyre where the boat must presently touch shore.

"Does anybody want to bet?" Apollodorus asked. "I will lay a thousand to one against the life of any Roman who sets foot on that beach this morning!"

The horsemen appeared to be shouting—possibly a welcome. Lucius Lentulus was seen to step ashore, but he was almost instantly surrounded by Achilles' cavalry. A troop of horsemen rode into the water and, surrounding the boat, slashed with sabers at its occupants. A voice cried from the masthead:

"The Roman ship weighs anchor!"

"Speak to them, Tros!" said Cleopatra. "Sail up close and speak to them!"

Tros ordered a dry branch hoisted to the masthead.

"They are in a panic," he remarked, "but, praise Pallas, they seem to have read that signal right."

He stood in closer and the Romans lowered their only other small boat. The wind was against the Egyptian fleet, so there was time for a conference. Tros hove his ship to.

"Is my hair tidy, Charmian?" asked Cleopatra.

Charmian touched her hair and smoothed the creases from her dress. In tense silence, except for the creaking of spars and the cry of sea-birds, the whole ship's company watched the approaching boat until Tros roared:

"Lower away the ladder! Lend him a hand there!"

"This was customary. Lacking a system of signaling by flags, as in modern usage, ships' commanders carried, whenever possible, as part of their equip-

Queen Cleopatra

ment an olive branch to be hoisted as a sign of peaceful intention.

A wounded Roman officer, his left arm swathed in bandages, came striding along the deck, halted at the foot of the ladder leading to the poop, and saluted.

"I am Constantius Sylvanus, Tribune, now in command of two half-legions of the army of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, Imperator."

"Draw near and prepare yourself for evil tidings, Constantius Sylvanus. I am Tros of Samothrace. Royal Egypt may I present this tribune to you?"

The Roman masked astonishment, saluting her with raised right hand.

"Constantius Sylvanus," said Cleopatra, "we are sorry indeed to greet you with evil tidings; but a true man, as we doubt not you are, suffers all blows of fate with dignity."

"I am running from defeat," Sylvanus answered. "Is there worse to endure than that?"

"Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus has been done to death, Sylvanus. You can see there on the beach, where Lucius Lentulus lies also slain, the smoke of the great Pompey's funeral pyre."

Constantius Sylvanus bowed his head. "We loved him— we were loyal to him, even in defeat," he answered, when he could find words. "When we saw that red fire glowing through the mist Lentulus had an intuition that it might be our Imperator's pyre. If it were so, he swore he would recover the ashes or perish. And now—"

Not knowing what to say or do, he glanced at his ship, where the men leaned overside to watch for his return.

"I mingle with yours a true grief for a noble Roman," said Cleopatra, and again he saluted her. "But you must make haste, Sylvanus. My brother Ptolemy's men are murderous and merciless. And whither will you go now?"

"We lack food and water. We must make a near port, Royal Egypt."

"We will give you food and water from this ship, and you must go to Ptolemais. Send word thence to Herod, Prince of Galilee. You may tell him I am on my way to Caesar, and that if he does no injury, and no dishonor to my Lady of Honor Lolliane, whom he seized, then. I will not ask Caesar for vengeance on him."

"Royal Egypt, if you will pardon a soldier's blunt speech, I am in no condition to carry messages," Sylvanus answered,

"But you are lost else! What hope have you except to make your peace with Caesar? Who better than I can speak in your behalf to him? If I say: Constantius Sylvanus went on my advice to Ptolemais, where he awaits Caesar's clemency and asks what disposition he shall make of the troops in his command, will Caesar, think you, overlook that opportunity to make you his friend, who have been his enemy?"

"Not if Caesar is as magnanimous as you seem wise, O Queen. Truly, there is nothing for us Romans left to do but to yield to Caesar."

"Return to your ship then. Make haste. We will follow you to sea and provision you out of sight of my brother's fleet."

Sylvanus saluted her with far more ceremony than when he first came over-

side, then backed away. Tros' seamen helped him down into his boat.

"Royal Egypt, will you put your head into a crocodile's mouth?" Tros asked her. "Caesar has raised more women's hopes and wrecked more women's honor than Priapus ever did! And how shall you reach Caesar?—you, who are already dispensing Caesar's patronage!"

"Constantius Sylvanus should have asked that! Stand out more to the westward, Tros, and terrify my brother's fleet, or they will catch that Roman! They will turn back if they see you are not afraid of them!"

"Woman, turn thou aside!" Tros answered. "Bid me carry you to Caesar, and I will, so near as I can come. But I would rather carry you to Britain, where my friends are. Caesar is a three-edged thunderbolt—not a woman's plaything!"

"Do you my bidding, Tros," she answered. "I am not a woman on her way to Caesar. I am the Nile flowing seaward. I am Egypt—sister of the Moon and Stars."

"But how shall you reach Caesar? Will your brother and his eunuchs not bar the way? And shall I risk my ship into the harbor, with a Roman fleet at anchor there? Poseidon knows that Romans are no sailors. But I am one. And the first charge of a seaman is his good ship, which is not to be thrust into sure disaster. In the open water I can show Caesar or any other Roman a white wake. At sea I have no fear of all the Romans in the world. But cooped in a port without room to run—"

"Trust Olympus," she answered. "Only show your purple sails at dawn outside the Pharos. Then trust Olympus, who is watching; and trust me—as I trust my destiny."

CHAPTER XV "Mice crowding a hole in a corn-bin!"

Though enthusiasm leads into mistakes; that notwithstanding, it shall override them as the leaping wheels of chariots escape a ditch; and by momentum it may reach a better highway hitherto unseen.

FRAGMENT FBOM THE DIAKY OF OLYMPUS.

SEEN AT INTERVALS from under the sail of a small boat rising over lazy ground-swells and descending into seaweed-littered gulfs between them, Alexandria looked like a city where the gods might dwell. The columns, domes and golden temple roofs—the glitter of sun-kissed marble offset by the green of irrigated trees—the dignity and vastness of the Lochias—the exquisite proportions of the library and mausoleum, and of the long steps to the water's edge along the front of the royal harbor—blended into a splendor worthy of the Alexander who had given it his name.

Apollodorus began to row, because the wind failed, holding the boat's bow straight into the waves at the harbor entrance, keeping as close as he could to mid-channel, in the hope that at that distance watchmen on the Pharos might mistake him for a fisherman.

Cleopatra, enveloped in a blanket in the stern, kept turning her head for a glance at purple sails, behind her on the sky's rim.

"If Olympus has seen Tros' ship," she said at last, "we shall soon see Olympus. He is a doer, once he has done meditating."

Being out of range, now of the archers on the Pharos, Apollodorus rested, letting the boat turn how it would, until it brought him facing the marble steps of the royal harbor. "Zeus and Leda—look at Caesar's ships! Mice crowding a hole in a corn-bin! I like this Caesar! Look—can you imagine a man daring to invade our Alexandria with that fleet? What a confession of faith in himself! And what a comment on our lack of faith in anything!"

He waved his arm toward a great Egyptian fleet, that lay in the Harbor of Happy Return, beyond the Heptastadium, outnumbering Caesar's ten to one. "If I were you," he went on, "I believe I would visit that fleet that calls itself your brother's—use your seductive voice on captains who have not been paid since Ptolemy the Piper died—promise them their back pay—sail with them into this harbor, and then deal with Caesar as an alien committing trespass! Tros could come in and support you. If that is the whole of Caesar's fleet, he can't by any calculation have with him more than four thousand men. I should say Tros could come in single-handed and destroy those Romans at long range with his catapults."

"No," she answered. "Potheinos and Achilles have had time to make terms with Caesar. For all we can tell my brother's fleet has yielded to him. Their captains might drag me before Caesar as a sacrifice. It does not suit my piety to be a sacrifice of that sort."

"But a certain sort of sacrifice you will be?" he suggested.

She noticed the vaguely sub-acid hint of jealousy and shrugged her shoulders. "Well, I never for instance saw a sacrificial goat look dignified," Apollodorus argued. "Sacrifices bleat self-pity—or else self-praise, as when old Diomedes used to rant about having given up all he had to follow you. The most dignified sacrificed animal I ever saw was a white bull that gored a high-priest in the belly. And to what will you be a sacrifice? To Caesar's vanity? He and Rome might gain but who else? To Egypt? Can you imagine Egypt grateful or rewarding you with anything but slander and a little ground glass in your bread at dinner? To the gods? Well, if there are gods who demand a sacrifice, men call them by a wrong name; they are devils."

"I am not afraid," she answered.

"No," he said. "You are excited by the thought of seducing Caesar, who will do far worse than seduce you; he will break your spirit."

She gazed in silence at the Lochias, with that look in her violet eyes that Tros, Olympus and the priests of Philae trusted—but that caused many people to detest her and to call her by abominable names.

"Olympus is coming," she said after a while. "I see his boat."

"Probable, because incredible! If anything rational were to happen I might be surprised."

A boat was coming toward them. Two men toiled at the oars and splashed a great deal too much to be fishermen; the man in the stern sat upright with the steering oar in constant use, instead of sprawling and merely dipping the oar at intervals.

"There! I recognize him!"

"In the stern? O earth, sky, sea and air, bear record that for once, at any rate, I prove our Cleopatra wrong! Olympus is tall and lean; that fellow is fat, with a grin on his face. Olympus never grins; he smiles as if it cost him money!"

"Olympus is rowing," she answered. "Would he sit in the stern, where any one on watch would look for him? That man at the oar in a dirty red turban—with a torn sleeve—that is Olympus!"

"Well, his oaranship is hardly worthy of his errand," said Apollodorus, rather ruefully confessing himself wrong. "However, he appears still faithful to you—which may or may not lead him to the galleys, where they would teach him to row! Be careful though—Caesar is rich and may have bought him to betray you!"

"Olympus is the only man in Egypt who can not be bought," said Cleopatra.

"You include me?"

"Lolliane bought you!"

For a while Apollodorus turned that over in his mind.

"But by Apollo," he said at last, "I made her pay a high price! And you, Egypt? Will you never sell yourself?"

"I don't know. I am likelier to buy," she answered, and began staring again at the Lochias.

Apollodorus sat still, wondering, it might be, whether she meant buying' Egypt, and in what coin, until presently, there being no wind, and the rowers weary, the two boats drifted together. Then Olympus, sweating through his shirt, threw up a right hand in salute; but as if they had been warned, the two

Queen Cleopatra

who were with him offered the Queen no salutation; so that if seen from the shore, they might, indeed, be fishing; there was a great net heaped up in Olympus' boat.

His first words were a question: "Have you food?"

"If you have news for me, Olympus, I will live on that until to-night!"

"Clothing?" he asked her.

She nodded toward a roll of carpet in the boat. Olympus broke into the tale abruptly.

"Caesar came. He lay a day at anchor. He sent men ashore for information. Some say that Caesar himself was ashore with the spies, and I believe it was so. Then he sailed to the royal wharf; and he marched through a part of the city with the fasces before him, giving great offense. There began to be rioting, some even daring to ask him whether he believed himself to be in Rome?—So he returned to the Lochias and occupied your part of the palace, which they

i

fold him was deserted. Thence he sent a messenger to Pelusium inviting you and your brother to return to arbitrate before him the dispute concerning which you are at war. He spoke as one who disapproves of civil war, so that those who heard him laughed; but he began to show them that his presence is not comical."

"No messenger from Caesar reached me," she interrupted.

"Meanwhile Caesar set his troops to work to fortify the Lochias. Then he sent for the Princess Arsinoe, who came before him amid two score eunuchs, and he asked her why the populace of Alexandria should have attacked his men whom he had sent into the city. He already knew—for he had sent for me and I had told him—and he knew, indeed, before I told him—that the people resented his having marched like a conqueror through the streets. But the Princess Arsinoe said the crowd was angry because it supposed he had come to restore Cleopatra, whereas it desired herself, Arsinoe, for queen."

"What did Caesar say?"

"Very little. Arsinoe returned to her wing of the palace, whence he has not sent for her again, although he keeps himself informed as to who visits her, and he has written down a list of all her friends' names.

"Seeing him in your part of the palace, many people supposed he intended to dispossess you altogether. Those, to curry favor, came to him with accusations against you. They said Ptolemy is popular and you not, and that if he desires peace in Egypt all he needs to do is to support Ptolemy and prevent you from returning. He received great crowds of politicians in your throne-room. I was among them, listening."

"Have they spoiled my apartment?" Cleopatra asked.

"No. Caesar commanded his secretary to put scribes to work at once making an inventory. There has been no looting—which, indeed, was forbidden to Caesar's soldiers; and there could be no pilfering, with Caesar's sentries on the watch."

"He proposes to take your furniture to Rome with him!" Apollodorus com-

mented. "He will probably take you also."

Olympus went on:

"At an hour when the audience-room was thronged, there came your brother's minister, Theodotus, in great haste, with a following of guardsmen, and a basket borne by an Egyptian slave. Theodotus thought to impress Caesar by sparing no time to cleanse himself after his journey; he was dusty and he stank of camel-back. He made a long speech, using 'flowerj' rhetoric, to which Caesar listened seated nodding now and then in recognition of the curious verbosity that many Romans love and in which Theodotus so excels when he is in the mood. Theodotus began to think himself exceedingly well received. He came to his peroration with an air of triumph. He took the basket from the slave, and suddenly he rolled out Pompey's head upon the floor at Caesar's feet, remarking:

"'Lo, there, Caesar! Can a dead dog _bite? And if that face is no longer recognizable, I doubt not you will know this signet ring.'

"A centurion took the ring and handed it to Caesar, who turned it over on the palm of his hand for a moment or two, averting his face from Pompey's head. Some say he wept, but I, who was near him, did not see that. Presently he stood up. There was silence. All his calculating genius seemed concentrated on his pale face and in his eyes, that blazed such indignation and such horror as no ordinary mortals know. He shuddered. He shuddered, it seemed, with a loathing he felt for Theodotus.

"Then Caesar's greatness—I do not say goodness—burst forth as a tempest. They who had been ready to applaud (and not a few of them were Romans of his staff) stood dumb, while as a slave—a dog—a leper he scalded Theodotus with proud ironic phrases that stripped him of respect-rank—dignity, and drove him, as it might be, naked from his presence to face bitter winds of scorn. He sent him slinking and then running, like a criminal in terror of the whip. There was no man there who did not feel the blast of horror that Caesar sent forth.

"Then he bade them cover Pompey's head. He bade his Romans bury it with honor. He betrayed no satisfaction in the thought of Pompey's death. But when he had seen that head most honorably wrapped in linen and enclosed in a box of gold and alabaster taken from your throne-room, he went forth all alone, commanding that not even his bodyguard should follow. And they say he went to the mausoleum of Alexander, himself robed in his purple imperator's cloak, and that he stayed by the sarcophagus an hour in meditation.

"That same day Prince Ptolemy came from Pelusium, with Potheinos and only a small body-guard. Achilles remains at Pelusium, it being said you went to Jericho with Herod to raise more troops for invading Egypt.

"Potheinos sent to inquire why Caesar occupies the palace. The Romans of Caesar's staff insisted he should seize both prince and minister, but Caesar astonished every one by sending a courteous invitation through Potheinos to prince Ptolemy to resume the quarters in the Lochias that are his by right.

"Potheinos accepted, observant, sending a secret messenger to inform Achilles at Pelusium; meantime, also, secretly encouraging new riots in the city—spreading rumors that Caesar will levy enormous tribute. A number of Cae-

Queen Cleopatra

sar's followers were slain, including one centurion. He has withdrawn his men behind the walls, which they patrol now as if the Lochias were a Roman camp.

"Then yesterday in the presence of his freedman, the Tribune Calvinus, he interviewed your brother Ptolemy, along with Potheinos. I overheard by listening from behind the curtain in the gallery where Caesar had seen me frequently. I have spoken to him there as many as ten times. He studies my face with a kind of curious contempt, but I was able to relieve him when he suffered an attack of falling sickness on the day he landed. So he permits me to come and go unquestioned, although he appointed men to report to him my movements. However, those men happen to be members of the College of the Priest of Isis, whom I myself had introduced into the palace as attendants to watch Caesar. I am not sure that he does not know that. He has a sardonic sense of humor that makes him enjoy such situations.

"Furthermore, he is exhausted mentally and physically, and now that he feels the war is ended, and himself supreme, he is inclined to relax and to indulge himself amid the luxury of Alexandria—eating very little, drinking less, but reveling in the climate and in the palace furnishings, discussing with the prefect of the library what books are to be sent to him—and above all, I believe, searching with those cold, blue, calculating eyes for friendship. He appears to me to be a lonely man, who knows he has very few, if any, intellectual equals."

Cleopatra interrupted:

"Ptolemy—Potheinos—what did they say to him? What did he answer?"

"They accused you. But he did not let Potheinos tell him very much. 'I have no doubt,' he said, 'that you are competent and skilful, and I will look to you for various information, which I am confident you will provide with unbiased accuracy at the proper time. But I am used to intercourse with kings, whose ministers, I regret to say, too frequently instruct them to avoid such frankness as is, never-theless, expedient when meeting me.'

"So Ptolemy spoke up without restraint, and, peering through the curtains of the gallery, I saw Potheinos bite his lip. For the boy spoke as a boy of that age will, as-serting immature opinion and boasting of his army at Pel-usium. He called you Herod's concubine, and he accused you of witchcraft, devil-worship, prostitution—of intrigue with Pompey—of intrigue with black kings from beyond the Cataract—of having refused to marry him in defiance of your father's testament. He accused you, too, of leaguings with the intellectuals of Alexandria, and with the priests -or with some of the priests—to get rid of himself by poison or some other means. Then he boasted again of his army at Pelusium; he threatened Caesar with the instant use of it unless Caesar should give guarantees of friendship. On the other hand, he undertook to hand over to Caesar for punishment all those supporters and agents of Pompey who have been imprisoned since Pompey's death. It would not have been possible to make a more unwise speech, even if deliberate unwisdom were the aim.

"And Caesar smiled. Caesar even went so far as to congratulate him on his

grasp of statesmanship. 'However,' he remarked, 'I am an older statesman, and my greater experience indicates the wisdom of disbanding that army at Pelusium of which you speak.' Your brother laughed at that and Potheinos forgot his manners, ceasing to be unctuous. Caesar had the excuse, that I think he sought, to speak abruptly.

" 'I am told,' he said, 'you sent a messenger to your General Achilles at Pelusium, instructing him to march on Alexandria. You will countermand that. You will do it now!'

"Dioscorides and Serapion were summoned to act as messengers, being acceptable to Caesar since reputed to be your supporters and therefore unlikely to be treacherous in Potheinos' favor. Those messengers were sent forth, Caesar reading the dispatch that Potheinos wrote and Prince Ptolemy signed, commanding Achilles to remain with all his army at Pelusium, recruiting no more men but making all speed to disband such forces as he has. And then another order, whose effect was like a thunderclap, so unexpected was it and so contrary to custom. 'As an act of clemency on my part, and of friendliness to Rome on yours,' said Caesar, 'I desire that you will issue a decree at once releasing all those friends and supporters of Pompey who have been imprisoned.'

"The decree was written. Caesar caused it to be put in force that day and, furthermore, he ordered all the confiscated property returned.

"He then asked Ptolemy, in a voice of kind politeness, to suggest more means of making peace in Alexandria. To which Ptolemy answered he should take steps to prevent your return to Egypt. Caesar smiled again. 'But why?' he answered. 'If I am to arbitrate between you, as the representative of Rome and the executor of treaties, it is important to hear both sides.'

"Ptolemy shouted at him that you are a deserter, not entitled even to a show of justice. He threatened Caesar, and rushed from the room with tears in his eyes, shouting to his attendants that the Roman Emperor had been insolent. But Potheinos went to work at once to have Dioscorides and Serapion overtaken and either dissuaded from their errand or else slain. He also set at least a thousand spies to watch all wharves and landing-places, to report to him your coming, if you should come, so that he might have you slain before you can reach Caesar—who well understands Potheinos' treachery and evidently plans to give him rein, that he may entrap himself.

"And Caesar is far from idle, though he seems exhausted and appears to crave rest. He has sent to Asia for reinforcements, to march overland, by way of Syria, and he sent for all the high priests, and for Sosigenes the astronomer, and for most of those intellectuals who frequent the library, talking with them, discovering them unanimous in your praise but doubtful of your return alive to Alexandria because of Potheinos' murderers who lie in wait for you. Potheinos is said to have promised your weight in gold to whoever shall bring your head to him.

"And Potheinos would murder Caesar if he could. But Caesar sleeps surrounded by a Gaulish guard. What little food he eats is tasted by a Roman. He is feeling his way, I believe, not certain yet that he can master Alexandria with so few men. 'I believe he is weary of slaughter and would like to impose

Queen Cleopatra

himself on Egypt peacefully. And he is ready to retreat, as you can see by the way he has moored his ships. I think his plan is, if he must retreat, to do so without arousing too much enmity, so that he may come back later and resume his efforts. But I doubt he will retreat unless he must. His treasury is nearly empty and his men are unpaid. He is eager for gold, and corn, and onions, to be poured into Rome to make him popular." Cleopatra's natural gaiety, that had been slumbering since her flight from Alexandria, awoke. No ordinary love of danger could have lit that smile; there was a mischief in it and a hint of drama, as she leaned out from the boat to lay her fingers on Olympus' arm.

"How can I reach Caesar? Is Apollodorus' name well known to him?"

"Possibly—perhaps—but Caesar is not so fond of games as many Romans are. Undoubtedly Apollodorus' fame is known to the Roman sentries. They have talked little else than lions, horses, gladiators and the brothels, since they came here. They might expect credit from Caesar for admitting a famous charioteer into his presence."

"At what hour does Caesar sleep?" she asked.

"Not often until midnight," said Olympus. "Secretaries read to him; or else he dictates accounts of all he has done, and of what he would like it believed he has done—of his motives, and of what he would like to be believed were his motives—not seldom what he thinks his motives were; for Caesar differs not at all from other men in mistaking afterthought for foresight, vividly foresighted though he is."

"I will go to him then shortly before midnight," Cleopatra interrupted. "Go you, Olympus, and talk to the Romans who will be on duty when I come. Say nothing about me, but sing Apollodorus' praises. Then be ready to identify him at the gate and at the stairway. Wait! I have not yet finished: clothes I have, and jewelry I have, but I need a tiring-woman and a bath, for I will never go to Caesar like a woman of the streets. So put me a good slave-girl, and a tub of water, and some brushes and oils and scents, into a boat at night-fall. Let spies think that the girl is going to some lovers' trysting-place. And now go!"

Olympus pulled a box containing several big fish from underneath the heaped up net and set it in Cleopatra's boat. Apollodorus drew a gold coin from the pocket in his belt and threw it.

"Catch!" he shouted. "Find a good dependable high priest and have him bribe a god with that to help us! Stay—here is another—catch—buy two gods—outright!"

CHAPTER XVI "I am Egypt."

Great events, like great gods, come forth silently and they are here before we know it.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

APOLLODORUS LAID A loose plank lengthwise on the thwarts and padded it with his own discarded clothing. In the lee of an anchored barge, in darkness, Cleopatra wriggled until, the pads were properly adjusted. Then Apollodorus wrapped her, plank and all, in the Persian rug in which she had brought her jewelry and clothing away from Tros' ship.

There was smothered whispering and laughter; he had difficulty in arranging the end of the rug to hide her and yet leave air enough. He had to tie the bundle with a rope and yet not show the outline of her figure, and not disarrange her hair. But it was done at last, and she promised not to move or speak again until he should unroll the rug and leave her to her own resources.

"Though only the gods, if there are any, know what your resources are!" he remarked as he tested the weight of what he had to carry. She was lighter than he guessed; and she was so small, he was confident that none would suspect a woman hidden in the rug.

Then, though the wind was hardly breathing, he employed the sail to avoid thumping of oars against tholepins, and with infinite patience, in silence, he steered until they drifted into the somber shadow of one of Caesar's ships.

There a sudden voice, gruff and ominous—a clank of armor up above them on a bireme's deck—a head under a helmet leaning overside, half seen in dim light from a lantern:

"Halt there! Who are you?"

"Fish!" cried Apollodorus. He tossed up a dozen big ones. "In the morning I will bring green corn and melons."

"Don't forget it! Hey! Halt there! Who are you!"

But the boat had drifted on and in another moment it had nosed the wharf, where armed men sprang out of the night. There was torchlight at a guard-house fifty feet away.

"Is Olympus here?"

Olympus, taller than the Romans,—like a goblin in his long black cloak,—loomed up among them.

"You, Apollodorus? There, did I not say I could find him!"

"Magic! I am afraid of you astrologers," said a Roman voice. "You make me dread a night's sleep! Let me look at that man—is he armed? Come up there, you. Are yo Apollodorus? Let me see that bundle. What is in it?"

Apollodorus hesitated.

"What is in it?" echoed Olympus' voice, and the very star of heaven seemed to hold their breath.

Apollodorus came up from the boat and laid the bundle on the top step at the

Queen Cleopatra

Roman's feet.

"Heavy!" he said. "Is Caesar fond of books?"

"Books? He has been sending for books from the library all day long," a Roman answered. "But if you are the charioteer Apollodorus, what have you to do with such things?"

"Nothing. But this war and rioting mean ruin when you depend on racing for a livelihood. I won a library of ancient Greek books from a man who could not pay the thousand minae he had betted. Books are no earthly use to me, and some of these are so old and brittle that they crack to the touch; but I have heard that Caesar values that kind of trash, so if I may wait here until morning—"

"Why did you come by water?" asked the Roman. "And at this hour?"

"To have come from Eleusis by chariot might have shaken all these books to pieces. And the clumsy fools who guard the Canopic Gate would probably have thrust their fingers in. What do they know of ancient books, any more than you or I do? Even as it is, I fear—"

"If you have any records there of Alexander the Great?" Olympus suggested.

"They found none in the library that Caesar did not know already."

"What I have here is all over my head," said Apollodorus. "But I was told that the great Alexander had something or other to do with it—though I forget what—something about his General Lagos."

Olympus offered a suggestion. "Caesar might prefer to see such books before another touches them?"

A Roman answered:

"But that is a strange-shaped package to contain books."

"They are brittle," explained Apollodorus. "I laid the rolls all touching one another on a plank and covered the lot with matting. However, open and look if you see fit."

"No. Lift that rug and drop it. Let me hear if there are weapons. By Bacchus, did I hear you throwing fish to the biremes's crew? Have you more? You have? I'll send a man down to the boat for them. Here, let a soldier carry that."

"No, I can lift it easily, and I know how best to balance it."

"Bacchus! The fellow is strong or that isn't as heavy as it looks! Pass him along, Olympus. Tell Ahenobarbus that I sent him."

Shadowy Olympus seemed already to be well known to the guards on duty at the series of gates between the waterfront and palace. One by one they challenged, peered at him, grounded a spear-butt and left him to open a gate for himself, until at last he and Apollodorus stood in lamplight in the courtyard at the palace entrance.

Statuary, looming in the dark, resembled half-seen spirits. Murmuring of voices and the soft sound of a zephyr in the trees—the flap of a neglected awning and the swaying of a bough in purple gloom suggested spirit movement. Even when Ahenobarbus strode out from the porch and, nodding to Olympus, stood hands on hips to peer into Apollodorus' face, the spell of mystery was still there. Grizzled, armored, with a bandage on his naked thigh,

Ahenobarbus might well have been a guardian of Hades.

"So—this is ApoUodorus, eh?—A handsome fellow! What is in that bundle?"

"AH that I have in the world, unless Caesar can restore to me my stable from the rogues who—"

"Ask for no favors to-night. He is vexed. I heard tell he has found the Alexandrians' treasury as bone-dry as a last year's bottle. Talk to him of horses, he will like that; if he likes you, trust him to be generous without the asking.

Leave that bundle in the corner. I wiU take care of it."

"You appear like a man to be trusted with anything except a pretty woman's virtue," said ApoUodorus. "But it happens I have a present here for Caesar—something that will put him in a splendid humor—an actual reHc of Alexander the Great and his General Lagus."

"Dioscuri! What is the nature of it?"

"Caesar may like to see that for himself."

"But he will blame me if it turns out to be a hoax of some sort."

"Take my word on that count," said Olympus. "Caesar wiU value highly what Apollodorus brings."

"Oh, you know what it is? WeU, Caesar seems to trust you. Did he teU you he would see ApoUodorus? Take him up then—but wait! I had better take a look at that bundle after all."

Olympus intervened. "How would it be to send up word to Gaesar that Apollodorus is here with a present for him You might ask permission to admit him without opening the package."

"No. By Bacchus! I will take a chance on you. Tell Caesar it was I who found Apollodorus. Stay! You, Apol-lodorus, I have heard you are Cleopatra's lover. Find her Let me lay hands on her, I will take her to Caesar, anc guarantee your fortune!"

"Would he take her head off?" asked Apollodorus.

"Only Caesar knows that. But I know this: he would pay a price for her that would make Croesus look like me without a sesterce! Can you find her?"

"I will show her to you."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Bacchus! If I thought you meant that I would see the tailor now about my tribune's uniform!"

"I do mean it."

"Hold your tongue about her then, and take Caesar your gift. Afterward come back here and talk to me. If you can show me Cleopatra in the morning, you and I will die rich. Go on—take him up, Olympus."

There was a sentry at every landing on the stairs. The tramp of men patrolling the long corridors was deadened by such carpets as few Roman eyes had seen, but there was a clank of armor that divided up the silence into measures and the very portraits on the passage walls, half seen in flickering lamplight, seemed to listen for the stroke of destiny.

At a door on which turquoise bosses held in place the polished tortoise-shell a sentry halted them. He seemed to know Olympus, for he put his head in through the door and whispered to a man inside, who admitted them.

Queen Cleopatra

The room was so familiar to Apollodorus that he knew each panel of the ivory-embellished walls, and he could concentrate his whole attention on the man who sat framed, as it were, by the curtained marble of an open window against a background of starlit purple sky. Two secretaries faced him at a table; one was checking figures on a tablet. Caesar, his toga thrown over the ivory chair-back and the white of his tunic relieved by a broad stripe of purple, one leg thrown over the other and his back half turned toward the door, was dictating to the secretary nearest to the window.

"Who is it?" he asked, pausing without turning his head, which was as bald as the ivory chair-back, except for wisps of gray above the temples and a fringe of gray above his neck.

The voice of a freedman seated on a stool beside the door announced:

"Olympus, the physician—and—"

"Apollodorus, the Sicilian," Olympus added.

"I will see them presently," said Caesar. "Write:—unsatisfactory state of the treasury which obliges me to take action that I might not otherwise have contemplated.' Wait now. Read it to me."

The secretary's voice began to drone. Apollodorus laid his bundle down and carefully undid the rope. The bundle moved; he pressed it heavily to intimate the time had not yet come. Then Caesar's voice again—low, matter-of-fact and laden with a rather weary dignity:

"If the Minister Potheinos can produce proof that, as he says, the Princess Cleopatra is either dead or in the hands of enemies, so that there is no doubt she will not return to Egypt, then, on confirmation of the proof, and in the interests of Egypt, I will—change that—as the representative of Rome—no as the authorized representative of the Senate and the Roman people—have you got that?—acting as executor of the will of the late King Ptolemy and in accordance with the prerogatives of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus recently assumed by me, I will take such steps as are necessary to confirm Prince Ptolemy as king co-regent with his younger sister the Princess Arsinoe, but subject to the unconditional recognition in full of all debts incurred in the name of Egypt by the late King Ptolemy and subject further to a garrison of Roman troops at the expense of the Egyptian Government as guarantee—What is that noise? Will you tell those people to keep silence!"

But the noise was the unrolling of the rug. The secretary stared, lips parted, an expression on his face of curious astonishment.

Again Caesar's voice: "It would be preferable, nevertheless, that the Princess Cleopatra should be found and, if guilty of treason as charged, should be dealt with according to law, which in all civilized countries provides—"

He turned at last, a trifle irritable. Cleopatra faced him.

"You are Caesar?" she asked. The royal voice, that never failed her to her dying day, was tremorless; her dignity—the last and greatest of the long line of the Ptolemies—revealed to him that he had met an equal.

"I am Caesar."

"I am Egypt."

Caesar gave an exhibition of his instant self-command. He stood up, bowing, and saluted with the gracious Roman uplift of the right arm.

"Though you seem to have preceded welcome, nevertheless, I welcome you," she said, acknowledging his bow. "I trust they have made you comfortable. If your officer have left me my apartment—"

"It is untouched," Caesar answered. Then his weary lean face lighted in the smile that melted anger even in his enemies. "The tale they told me of your death appear as false as that other, that we Romans leave manners behind us when we travel."

"If you came seeking truth, you will do better to speak with me than with my enemies," she answered. "Caesar, are you not ashamed to listen to a eunuch's lies about a queer who never injured you or Rome?"

There was no shame visible, but his changed expression made it obvious he had been bored until she came. He offered her the ivory chair in which he had been seated. His secretary brought another and he sat down, facing her.

"You may leave us," he commanded.

Bowing—unnoticed—secretaries, freedman, Apollodorus and Olympus backed away. The freedman, coming last, only partly closed the door. They stood outside to listen. They heard Caesar's footfall. Then the heavy hardwood, overlaid with turquoise-studded tortoise-shell, was suddenly and firmly shut tight in their faces.

CHAPTER XVII **"Who that is born in a womb is not a member
of a mystery?"**

The majority of men and women, the less they know, the more they talk. But genius asserts itself in crises, saying only that which is essential and relevant.
FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

CLEOPATRA BEGAN by taking Caesar's magnanimity for granted and by proving to him that her own was on a plane with his:

"I grieve with you over the great Pompey's death. I did my best to save him, knowing well you would have found some way to preserve his dignity in his hour of defeat. But he stepped ashore beyond reach of my protection. However, I saved some of his men; I sent them to Ptolemais, which they now hold in your name, awaiting your clemency."

Caesar was on guard against an appeal to his notorious sex-appetite. Few women neglected that angle of assault, and very many had succeeded in exchanging favors with him; but Cleopatra ignored it, which was a novelty that appealed to the higher, more rarified layers of vanity on which imagination gave his intellect free reign.

He stared at her:

"Presently, you must tell me how; but say first why you have come to me," he answered in a fatherly tone, of voice; her youth had touched a sentimental chord in him that had not vibrated for many years. He was lonely and that unexpected emotion rather thrilled him. She recognized it—stirred it again subtly:

"Are you not an honorable Roman? I have no right to imagine you will deal unfairly with me."

"What do you wish me to do for you?" he asked.

"To inform yourself, Caesar, and to use your judgment."

"You are confident that information will induce me to protect you from your enemies?"

The tone of his voice implied that he already had heard stories none too-creditable to her.

"Protection?" she answered. "I could have gone to Philae, hundreds of leagues distant up the Nile, where no enemy could reach me by any means. But that would have meant continuing a war that I see can be prevented. Do you approve of civil war? You who have been forced to fight one? Would not you have welcomed personal danger if you could have saved Rome from all that bloodshed?"

That was exactly the sort of flattery he liked. He, who had plunged a continent into fratricidal bloodshed, relished more than any one the credit for desiring peace.

"You are no longer in personal danger," he assured her. "I will protect your

life in any event."

She held to her point: "Neither you nor I consider that important," she retorted. "Did you ever see the Nile where it reaches the sea?—how it freshens the sea?—how it blends? —and how at last a new land rises at the meeting of the waters? So are Rome and Egypt meeting now. It is their destiny. It is for you and me to decide whether we will oppose destiny or ride on its torrent, using the helm of Wisdom in the bark of courage."

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Like you, Caesar, I am older than the world. But I was born into this body twenty years ago."

"As queen, do you believe that you could govern Egypt?"

"Egypt?" she answered. "I am Egypt. The spirit of Egypt guides and governs me. But men must be fit to be governed before government can touch them. Man is the hardest of all animals to govern, because nothing else in the universe is so treacherous—so deceitful."

"I am a man," said Caesar. "Do you propose to trust me."

"As an animal-man, no. As a godlike man, yes. I speak to you as Egypt, meeting Rome."

"I have been told," said Caesar kindly, "that you are not yet even recognized as Queen of Egypt."

"Do you let a eunuch do your recognizing for you?" she retorted. "Is the opinion of such vermin as slew Pompee on the beach a weighty matter in your judgment?"

"I have spoken with your brother, and with your sistt Arsinoe," said Caesar.

"Doubtless you have formed your own opinion of them also," said Cleopatra.-

"There is no need for me to tell you mine. If you had not spoken with them, I would have preferred that you should, before talking with me. I would think less highly of you if I thought you incapable of forming a clear opinion unaided."

"Why should you think highly of me?" he asked, provoking her to flatter him again.

"Are you not the master of the Roman world? And can a man attain to that without valor and excellent judgment:

Caesar's smile softened. He enjoyed a logical, well-turned compliment as much as he despised mere toadyism. Her spirited assault disarmed him; and all the while, at the back of his eyes, there was conjecture[^]speculation—of portunist curiosity, that she detected the more readily since he was at no great pains to conceal it.

"But are our positions parallel," he asked, "since you are not yet recognized as Queen?"

"Not recognized by whom?" she retorted. "Do you make the mistake of thinking Alexandria is Egypt? I am anointed and crowned with the double crown, Pharaoh of the Upper and the Lower Nile. I am high priestess of Isis. Nor did I seek those dignities; they were conferred on me by those who have the right to do it."

"I sought dictatorship of Rome," said Caesar, hoping to put her on the defen-

Queen Cleopatra

sive; but he failed.

"And were you, therefore, recognized at once by all the Roman world?" she answered. Or were you, too, once on a time a fugitive because your enemies sought your life, knowing they could not otherwise prevent your ultimate success? The thrust was too well aimed for him to parry it. He bowed acknowledgment.

"Did you receive my invitation to present yourself here?" he asked.

"No. The first I heard of your arrival was from my Lord-Admiral Tros, who sighted your fleet at sea."

Caesar raised his eyebrows almost imperceptibly:

"Tros of Samothrace?"

She nodded. Caesar frowned. But she could not keep the laughter from her eyes; their sparkle was contagious; Caesar's frown vanished.

"Was it Tros," he asked, "who brought you back to Alexandria?" He began to smile reminiscently. "Tros has done me many an injury; but never a favor of his own free will! Did he bring you here at your command? If you can manage Tros you have not much left to learn of the art of government!"

"Tros wished to take me to Britain," she answered.

Britain was a subject Caesar was not anxious to discuss.

"Where is he? Will he come here if I send him an invitation?"

"Provided that I countersign it. Tros is as much mine as Egypt is. You may as well understand, Caesar, now while it is not too late, that with the exception of my brother and sister, their ministers, and certain Alexandrians who dislike high thinking and mistrust me because I trust my intuition rather than their wantonness, all Egypt recognizes me as Queen. I am told the city received you none too well."

"They killed nearly a score of my men," said Caesar. "Pothinos has had the impudence to assure me that the incident expressed the genuine feeling of Alexandria—a feeling that I may feel urged to chasten."

Cleopatra instantly leaped into that breach. "Welcome to Egypt, Caesar. I invite you to remain here, and to settle the succession to the throne as nearly in accordance with my father's will as you consider practicable. I undertake to repay all the money my father borrowed from the Roman Senate. If you will accept that invitation, I promise you the friendship of Egypt and whatever help you need in securing your own position in the Roman world—men—ships—money—corn and supplies—influence. Your mind may be at peace regarding Egypt; you may turn your full attention on whatever problems occupy you elsewhere."

Her frankness—her alert self-confidence, as reckless as his own, amused him and aroused his admiration. But he could not doubt that she counted on more than his sense of gallantry and fairness to protect her in the event of their not reaching an agreement. A suspicion of her lurked yet in his mind.

"You raised an army to oppose your brother. Where is it?" he asked suddenly.

"Has Tros brought troops around by sea?"

She laughed. "Who would be fool enough to bring such an army as that against Caesar? You have only a few ships; and men, but are you not destiny

in human shape?"

That almost staggered him, though he was used to high-flown compliments as well as scurrilous abuse.

"And you?" he asked.

"I told you: I am Egypt. If you find it easier to understand, you may think of me as the sluiceway through which the great gods choose to pour anew wisdom that reigned in the world in the old days. That will prevent you from thinking of me as wise, which I am not."

"You appear to me exceedingly wise for your years," said Caesar, "except when you talk about gods. Do you believe in them?"

"Whoever truly knows himself knows more about the gods than any priest can tell him," she retorted.

Caesar fell back on sarcasm. "Do you suggest that we should sit here like a god and goddess on Olympus and define the destiny of Rome and Egypt?"

"I propose we should let wisdom enter into us," she answered.

"I, too, am a high priest," said Caesar, "I am Rome's supreme pontifex. I have had frequent occasion to congratulate myself on the wisdom of holding that high office, but I have never noticed any wisdom that entered into me directly as a result of it. Do you find that the high priesthood of Isis gives you more than a political advantage?"

"It is a dreadful obligation and no advantage to me whatever," she answered.

"If I were not what I have been anointed in proof that I am, there is many a course I might have taken that would have resolved the surface of my difficulties. But I am taught, Caesar, to arrive at definite objectives by means that are not at all easy to define because they are spiritual."

He smiled again, amused by his own sarcastic humor:

"Would you call that rug in which you rolled yourself spiritual means?" he asked.

"I call it using spiritual means to challenge your greatness," she answered. "If you are as great as I think you are, we will very readily reach an understanding, and neither Rome nor Egypt nor you nor I can be anything but gainers by it." Caesar stared at her. He had talked with Vestal Virgins, who were inscrutable in their own way, but even the Vestals had always impressed him as hiding cynicism underneath a cloak of piety. This girl apparently hid nothing, and she spoke from conviction that seemed to him entirely unassumed.

"Are you the mouthpiece of the priests?" he asked, with a slightly tart inflection in his voice.

"Is a lamp the mouthpiece of a lamp?" she answered. "Or do they both have flames? One can be lit from the other, but are the flames not separate?"

Only then did it dawn on Caesar that she was speaking so well and naturally that he had not noticed what language she was using.

"At twenty years of age, how is it that you speak Latin. and Greek with equal fluency?" he asked. "You speak Latin as well as Cicero does."

"I also speak Aramaic, Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Coptic, two of the Nilotic dialects, and the ancient language of the Land of Khem, besides Greek."

"You speak," he said, "as if familiar with the poets and philosophers."

"Why not? Were Plato and Pythagoras, Sappho and Homer, for in-

Queen Cleopatra

stance, born under a curse that we should know only their names and not their message?" "But who taught you?" he asked.

"They did! Who taught birds to fly? Who taught you generalship?"

"But in twenty years? I was forty before I had an army under my command."

"Perhaps you were too eager. Impatience is like nailing shadows to a wall."

Caesar laughed at that. "True," he said, "I have crucified many a shadow!

Does the wisdom of which you show so much evidence include a practicable plan for governing Egypt?"

"Try me!" she suggested.

He was a man of very swift decisions. He endeavored to conceal from her that already he had made up his mind; but his silence and the glitter in his gray eyes gave her more ally misleading. She, having nothing to conceal from him continued:

"Rome needed you, and Rome has had to bring you forth in travail, but not all strong governments need such a baptism of bloodshed. You were unexpected, but the god; do unexpected things, and you appear to me to be send by the gods to deliver Egypt into my hands. Nothing is done uncompensated. Conquer Egypt I am sure you can not—now at any rate—and there is no need. But you can hold Alexandria. Whereas I can not hold Alexandria at present, but I can rule Egypt, because the priests accept me in obedience to a hierarchy that is as far above the priests, and you and me, as we are higher than the slaves around us."

Caesar frowned again. The only hierarchies he could tolerate with equanimity were those that, like the Roman priestly colleges, depended on the civil government for their prerogatives and perquisites.

"Mysteries," said Caesar, "are an open invitation to investigate what lies behind them. A government that tolerates a power greater than itself is not a government."

"Can you control the moon?" asked Cleopatra. "Do you understand the mystery of birth? Are the stars your servants? I will answer for you: yes—if you obey the law that they obey too. But do you know the law? And do you know the mystery beyond it?"

"Is Olympus the man who has taught you?" Caesar asked. His tartness seemed to intimate that there were ways of compelling Olympus to reveal the sources of his knowledge.

"No," she answered. "Olympus is a great physician, an astrologer and a very faithful friend, who patiently reminds me of the day, whenever darkness hides the sun."

"He is a member of a mystery."

"Who is not?" she retorted. "Who that is born in a womb is not a member of a mystery? Caesar, are you so wise that you can look at rocks and trees and rivers and reveal to them their origin?"

"I begin," he said, "to realize why certain politicians hate you, and why your brother can not bring himself to speak of you in civil terms. Explain to me why you have refused to follow precedent by marrying. It appears that one of the chief complaints against you is your refusal to marry your brother—a

mere formality, I don't doubt, but a rather obvious solution of the strife between you. I understand that several Ptolemies have followed the practise, following the is your objection?"

"There would be none," she said, "if I were not anointed Pharaoh. If I were a man I could marry whom I pleased, because the woman would submit to me. But I am a woman, and yet Pharaoh—high priestess, too, of Isis. It would be the rankest blasphemy and sacrilege for me to bow that crown beneath a husband's yoke."

"You are a pledged virgin?"

"No. No more than you are a pledged enemy of nature. But as dictator of Rome is it lawful for you to subject yourself to any master? May you bind yourself and Rome in an alliance, as the lesser of two powers? Neither may I submit my royal crown to any one. On that day my crown would become forfeited, and though I might wear the symbol of authority, the gods would cease to recognize it."

"Your confidence in the existence of the gods is what surprises me most in you," said Caesar. "I have pondered over Plato's version of the teachings of Pythagoras, and I believe there is no system of philosophy or religion that is quite unknown to me. But the gods remain farther away than ever. The more they are studied, the more they seem to me to become figments of imagination or else nature forces."

"You should learn to speak to the gods in their own language, Caesar. Then they would look through the veil and reveal themselves. I never speak to any man in any language other than his own, because I wish to understand him and that he should understand me. Should I speak to the gods in Greek or Latin?"

"What language do they understand?" asked Caesar.

"It is a heart-language—unspoken and not difficult to learn."

"I believe I will ask you to teach me," he answered. "I am sure of this: that Egypt will be safer in your hands than in your brother's. But I am equally sure that your brother's cause is stronger at the moment and that his claims are not to be ignored. Now, tell me about Egypt. Tell me all you know about it. I will listen until you are too tired to continue."

CHAPTER XVIII "I will settle the succession to the throne this morning."

As harp responds to harp, so equals know each other, though their natures are as day and night apart. Equality is equal vibrancy, responding in the same degrees and to the same extent (however differently) to a primal impulse.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

"WHAT A GLORIOUS MORNING," remarked Caesar. "Do you notice the brilliant white caps? Now I know what Home meant by wine-dark sea." That aristocratic tone of voice and accent were habit; to him when events were entertaining. Weariness, lassitude even some of his pallor had vanished. He was wearing bay-leaf chaplet that made his baldness hardly noticeable. An Alexandrian barber had been found, whose fingers, with the aid of blended oils, had kneaded and relaxed his facial muscles until he looked scarcely forty instead of over fifty; as he actually was.

No Roman could wear tunic and toga more gracefully none more impudently could defy tradition, or revive it for his own use. His toga was purple, embroidered. Marian in theory—the self-appointed leader, that is, of the ultra democratic party, as opposed to the nobility whom Pompey had upheld—he had assumed the royal costume of the ancient kings, making himself used to it before reappearing in Rome, that had cast forth kings long centuries ago and now reviled their very name.

Potheinos, seated near him on the awninged balcony, looked nervous, though he could see the Ptolemaic fleet at anchor far outnumbering Caesar's: though he knew (and thought that Caesar did not know) that General Achillas with an army twenty thousand strong was marching on Alexandria. He could see, too, sunlight flashing on the oars of Tros' ship, its long-tongued golden serpent headed straight for the harbor entrance; but Potheinos, unlike Caesar, was uncertain what that might portend.

Aware that Caesar was no fraction less ambitious or more scrupulous than himself, he was all the more jealous of Caesar's easy manner, of his good looks, of the calm self-confidence with which he made nothing of dangers that it was Potheinos' business at the moment to exaggerate.

"A beautiful morning, yes," he answered. "But glorious? Caesar, your glory may vanish as swiftly as that of the weather can do. Let me urge you to listen to reason and recognize facts."

Caesar smiled at him. His breakfast had been exquisitely cooked. The sea-air, sunshine, comfort, after years of strenuous campaigning frequently without the bare necessities of life were so exactly what he needed that Potheinos' impudence was not worth noticing. And now here came Tros of Samothrace, a constant and resourceful enemy, who had fought him in Gaul and Britain, and who could easily destroy his whole fleet under the palace windows, but

who would have to refrain from doing it because of old-fashioned scruples! Tros had agreed to a mutual truce and that was too amusing to be offset by a eunuch's lack of manners.

And it was fun—a self-indulgence in extravagance exactly of the sort he best loved, since it was extravagance of intellectual audacity—to occupy a city of nine hundred thousand with an army hardly large enough to defend the Lochias, and with a fleet that he had stripped already of its armament to help to fortify the palace.

Possibly the most amusing thought of all was the unquestionable fact that Rome was wondering what next? He was master of Rome, and he knew that Rome knew it—knew that the longer he should stay away and keep Rome guessing, the less guesswork he himself would have to use, because half of Rome's troubles would settle themselves if Rome were let alone; the other half would readily respond to that touch of genius he knew he could apply. Rome, Alexandria, and most of the rest of the world was speculating, worrying; no better reason could exist for Caesar's peace of mind, and he was consequently reveling in rest, the first time in a dozen years.

"Reason?" he said in his pleasantest voice. "There is a wide difference between that and argument. But argue if you wish."

"Caesar, you are a great philosopher as well as a great general. I would like to be your friend, although, of course, at this moment I am to all intents and purposes your prisoner."

"Not at all. Not at all." Caesar stared at him. "You can go when you please. I am informed that your spies come and go rather frequently."

"Let us put it this way then: Prince Ptolemy is your prisoner."

"If that were true," said Caesar, smiling again, "neither you nor he would have the least excuse to doubt it."

"Well, since you say so, Caesar, I suppose it is so. Nevertheless, for him to leave the Lochias would be to surrender the whole organization of government into your hands and those of his sister, the Princess Cleopatra, who I am informed has made her way secretly to you in order to usurp' his rights!"

"His rights? I am here to arbitrate the question of the title to the throne," said Caesar. "Possibly possession, in the absence of the other claimant, might suggest the logical solution. You will naturally bear that thought in mind.

However, the prince is under no restraint. His sister came to me near midnight and stated her whole case—I may add, with great command of logic. You appear to have driven her off the throne and I am inclined to credit her statement that to have returned to her palace by any other means than those she used would have led to her death at your hands or by your orders."

Potheinos violently shook his head: "Oh, no! Oh, no!"

"I have been deeply impressed by the Princess Cleopatra's veracity," said Caesar.

Potheinos hesitated. Forcing suavity again and leaning forward, tapping his own knee with nervous fingers, he essayed to turn back the discussion to the point he started from:

"Caesar! May I beg that you will listen to me. You are probably more mentally exhausted than you realize. This Roman civil war has taxed your

Queen Cleopatra

uttermost resources. It has kept you from making yourself conversant with the most elementary facts. I am here to warn you against errors that may overwhelm you. I know you were seized with illness on the day of your arrival. Ill-health leads the best of us sometimes into mistakes too serious to rectify. Olympus treated you—I trust with satisfactory results—but beware of that fellow! Beware of him! He will stop at nothing!"

"He will stop at nothing short of thinking me an ingrate, unless I remember to reward him," remarked Caesar. "I am glad you mentioned it. He is an excellent physician."

Suppressing irritation, swallowing regret that he had mentioned Olympus, Potheinos tried again:

"Nothing, I believe, but illness, undermining judgment, could make you expose yourself to such dangers as those that at this very moment surround you. Caesar. Possibly better than you, I appreciate how valuable you are to Rome; and, as I said just now, I wish to be your friend. What would happen to Rome if you should meet disaster here—now? What would happen to Egypt, if Rome should resume her civil war? I shudder to think of it! You are the hub of the Roman wheel. Believe me, Caesar, I am the hub of this wheel and I know what it would mean if Cleopatra were to gain another foothold. She is a broken spoke that would wreck the chariot. She is immoral—recklessly extravagant—indifferent to anything but personal success and her own gratification. Here I am in Egypt with my hands on all the intricacies of the situation. You should be in Rome, where every minute is an hour in which your enemies may prepare against you. Caesar let us recognize ourselves as indispensable, each to the other. Trust me to put Egypt in your power, since Egypt is as necessary to the Romans as the Romans are to us. But let me trust you in return to act in the best interest of Egypt by assisting to establish Prince Ptolemy as king, with myself as his principal minister."

"I notice that in your zeal to improve my circumstances you do not forget yourself," Caesar answered, and it took Potheinos measurable moments to recover; but, magnanimous as ever, Caesar came to his assistance with this remark:

"Do you think Prince Ptolemy incapable of government without you?"

"I regret to say yes. He is very young. He has been educated by Theodotus, an unprincipled rogue whom you deservedly drove from your presence. Theodotus, for his own ends, taught him so much self-will and so little of the art of government, that it will need my ripe experience as well as Rome's friendship if Egypt is to be saved from anarchy. I blame our present difficulties wholly on Theodotus."

"And who appointed him?" asked Caesar.

Potheinos did not answer. Caesar asked another question:

"Were not you and he and General Achilles a triumvirate? Is there a council of ministers?"

"Yes—men of no importance. Power is in my hands—spies—influence—appointment of officials—I control all Egypt. Trust me and I will see to it that Rome receives repayment of the loans, and in addition there shall be a hand-

some tribute for yourself—a sum sufficient to enable you to grip Rome firmly. I am a statesman, Caesar, like yourself. I understand your difficulty. You need money, and Rome has none. But to enable me to get that for you, you must let me have the credit for persuading you to go away. That will increase my popularity beyond the point where imposition of new taxes could destroy it. Do you see my point?"

"I would prefer to see those other ministers," said Caesar "Do I understand you to admit that you had power to remove Theodotus at any time?" Potheinos' mental wriggle out from under that dilemma was as physically obvious as his exasperation.

"I am not God. I am not responsible for other men's fate. I am a minister endeavoring to serve my prince—"

"And simultaneously me?" suggested Caesar. "Your influence might take a stronger grip on my imagination if no men were being better" fed. They grumble that the co-delivered at your order is so full of weevils they can hardly stomach it; and the wine, they say, is worse. My men are not epicures; they and I have eaten many an unpalatable meal together."

Caesar's Olympian insolence was more than Egypt's Minister of State could suffer without losing self-control. The manner rather than the words offended him. He bristled.

"Let them reckon themselves fortunate that they are fed" he answered. "They invade us. They have driven out our palace guards—"

"Incapables, whom they have ably replaced," Caesar interrupted. "Fie on you, Potheinos! Do you think that I appropriate this luxury while gallant men are ill-fed?"

Potheinos had enjoyed an almost absolute authority to long to take that scolding meekly.

"Shall I starve our Alexandrians in order to feed unwelcome intruders?" he retorted.

Caesar's smile became less pleasant, deepening sardonic furrows near his mouth. But the reply, if he intended one died still-born. Suddenly he stood up. Instantly the eunuch could not help but know he was dismissed from mind as totally as when a sunrise banishes the images of night.

Gracefully, as if he did the honors of a whole world Caesar strode toward her; and if Cleopatra ever in her life was wholly gratifying to the eye, she was that minute as she stepped under the awning. Sunlight or her own soul—something had dispersed the tragic shadow she inherited from Ptolemaic forebears—shadow sometimes making visible the strife between her higher and her lower nature—between vision and the need to temporize. She was as confident that morning, as radiant as if her battle for a throne was won.

And she was dressed as modestly and simply as if all Greek art had lent itself; her hair (that vanity too often cheated into tortuous design) as subtly pleasing as her ivory-white chiton, edged with old-rose—Doric strength of line and Oriental subtlety of contour blended for her by the genius of slaves from Hindustan. No jewelry—except one pearl that Tros had given her, that seemed to nestle in her hair; and smaller, black pearls on her sandals that displayed those feet, which, if Apollodorus said truth, should be set on nations'

Queen Cleopatra

necks and leave them satisfied.

And she was framed by dusky women—Ethiopians from far to southward of the Cataracts—tall, handsome, Amazonian, proud-seeming savages, whose two-thirds nakedness increased her modesty; their barbarism, magnified by peacock-feather fans, made Cleopatra seem so exquisitely civilized that even Caesar caught his breath. And he was not a tyro in the world of women. Slaves set a couch for her under the awning, but she walked to the marble rail and stood there, shading her eyes with her hand a moment as she gazed at Tros' ship smiting up the harbor water into egg-white foam. Her eyes then, holding in their depth no hint of doubt or trouble, answered Caesar's smile, her own apparently as confident of friendship as if she and Caesar had been playmates since the sun first shone on Egypt and the comedy of human history began. '

"They make you comfortable? Are you rested, Caesar? I suppose a soldier, such as you are, easily recovers from a midnight conference, but it was inconsiderate of me to keep you talking until nearly daylight. Do they bring you reasonable food? And is your health good? Should Olympus see you?"

Art—audacity—restraint—that was a trinity that Caesar gloried in—aware, as any able man must be, how often he had fallen short; how seldom, but how brilliantly then he measured up to it. Accustomed to the flattery of sycophants, to hatred, to the fear of the defeated, to the impudence of fortune-hunters, he appreciated novelty, and he had thought that there was nothing in the world that could renew his faded sense of fresh experience awaiting. He perceived intelligence that understood him—in itself a novelty; for not his closest intimates had come near doing that.

"I realize a soldier's life is nothing unless compensated," he said, smiling.

"By a victory?" she asked.

With a habitual gesture, using one forefinger to arrange the scant hair underneath his wreath, he answered:

"No, I have been surfeited with victory. Defeat is what I meant."

"You? That is an almost godlike attitude. It is thus the gods themselves incarnate!"

With a eunuch's tactfulness, relying on his lack of sex to privilege impertinence, Potheinos chose that ill-selected moment for a flank attack on Caesar's will, experience of harems, where he had his early education, telling him that Cleopatra had already weakened it by her assault in from. "Caesar," he said, "behold your opportunity! What tri-umph! How she will adorn your triumph!—What furor! what ovation when you lead her through the streets of Rom And afterward—what envy! What a resolution of all difficulties! We—I mean her brother—would rejoice with genu-ine affection, knowing her to be' in Caesar's lavish household

Cleopatra did not even turn her back on him. She did not recognize him by ignoring him. She subtly flattered Caesar by her confidence that he would deal with that insult as promptly as palace servants would have dealt with an in-truding scorpion.

And if Caesar ever dallied when a drastic stroke was needed, then the light-

ning also lingers on its way. His suave voice rose a half-note, and his words were crisp, although his manner was, if anything, more careless than it had been

"I will settle the succession to the throne this morning he said curtly. "Go and assemble those assistant minister of whom you spoke and ask Prince Ptolemy to bring the) to confer with me an hour before noon. Go and do it."

Potheinos" sought to bolster up his dignity by turnin away laughing to himself and muttering. His shrug sug-gested unsuspected weapons in reserve. There was a Roma sentry posted near the steps that led down to a garden an to a marble pathway between one wing of the enormous palace and another; he went by the sentry sneering and ignoring his salute, then beckoned to his secretaries to ap-proach him up the steps and, whispering, walked dow between them with the best air he could muster of having had the better of an argument.

"That is an individual," said Caesar, "who may force me to recall that there are short ways out of disagreements."

Cleopatra let the subject drop as if it held no interest, Tros' ship, already near the royal - wharf and dwarfing Caesar's biggest—with its purple sails and splendor making all of Caesar's fleet look shabby—served to remove the conversation into safer channels.

"You sent your messenger to Tros of Samothrace?"

""Yes, in a pilot boat at dawn. I sent another to Tiberius

Claudius Nero, who commands my fleet. There might have been an incident."

"He fears Tros?"

"Sailors are a superstitious breed. Tros was extremely lucky in his raids against me; lucky and resourceful."

"Tros said you are the most brilliant general on earth."

"He believes that if he said it," Caesar answered. "Tros is a brave man—masterful—but lacking humor. He will fail inevitably, not because he lacks enthusiasm or resourcefulness, but from expecting other men to share his own ridiculous ideals."

"Fail in what?" asked Cleopatra.

Caesar hesitated. He had never in his whole life let another mortal see what underlay that handsome mask that he presented to the world. An impulse now to do it tempted him. But habit dies hard. Curiosity had ever been his guiding passion. Stripping women naked was a violence that grew uninteresting after long use. He desired a far more intimate indecency. But he suspected, if he would uncover her soul, he must first expose his own.

"Last night," he said, "you spoke of sacrilege—of not submitting your divine rights to a man's authority."

She nodded.

"But are you a lone divinity? A solitary star? Do gods and goddesses not love each other?"

"They must recognize each other first," she answered. "But I asked you wherein Tros must fail?"

Again he hesitated. They were side by side, she leaning on the marble railing. Slowly, with a sort of languid interest, she looked up and he recognized in her

Queen Cleopatra

violet eyes intelligence and fearless will that suddenly inflamed him.

"Tros will fail," he said, "because Tros lacks the immortality that you and I have. When he is dead, none will remember him. He will die. He will cease. He will leave no record written in the very laws of men and graven so irrevocably in the substance of their lives that when they eat and drink and make war, when they pray and when they change their governments, they shall remember him. They shall forget not Caesar!"

"They may blame you," she retorted.

"Blame and praise are equal—both one, when they are the echoes of success," he answered.

"And who judges the success?"

"The man! The woman! I, Caesar, am the judge of Caesar. If you let another judge you, Cleopatra, you are less than he is—howsoever small he is."

"I am a Ptolemy," she said, apparently not lit yet by the fire that he had let blaze. "I inherit what the Ptolemies have taken from the gods, and I have added to it more than all they took, though even I know not yet what that is. I am a woman. When I go, and if I will, I leave a son behind me. So if they forget me, they shall know him. Who is your son, Caesar? Is he like you?"

"I have many sons," he said, "by many women."

"Were they women who bear Caesars? Or were they poor fools craving pleasure, and their children accidents? Have you a son who bears your name?"

"No, none—not even Brutus," he said, smiling whimsically. "Brutus attempts to judge me—loves a lost cause—loves nobility of word and stoops to ignobility of deed win fools' praise. Brutus was with Pompey at Pharsalia. He never owns me as the author of his being unless maganimity is what he craves. He is himself less merciful than Cato, whom he claims as relative—with but a thousandth of old Cato's iron in him."

"Brutus' mother—was she worthy of you?"

Caesar smiled again.

"Servilia was generous when I was hounded like a criminal. Her husband—" But the conversation had descended to a less exciting plane than that on which he launched it. "We were talking about sons unborn yet," he resumed. The gleam of battle in his eye. He meant to strip away that mask he could not penetrate. "You had in mind—?"

Her eyes, as baffling as his were piercing and as deep' wise as his were brilliantly wilful, met his, understood his and inflamed him further without yielding anything.

"I was thinking of Apollodorus," she said. "Caesar, Herod stole my Lolliane. If Apollodorus had her she would keep the artist from becoming warrior. I need Apollodorus, but I need him anchored to a woman who, in turn, is bound by gratitude to me."

"Herod?" he asked. "Who is Herod?"

"The Governor of Galilee, under Hyrcanus, high priest of Jerusalem."

"Yes, yes. Now I remember Herod: a discreet young person. He attached himself to Pompey's cause until the cause was lost, and then sent emissaries to me

at Pharsalia. Yes, Herod shall let Apollodorus have his Lolliane!"

"Caesar," she said again; and suddenly he saw another phase of her. Now she was definite in turn and in her own way stripping naked what she saw that he must see if mutual advantage were to come of meeting. Calculating, cool audacity—he loved it! She could dare to be a hostage in his hands; and she defied him to defeat her even so. "Caesar, end for Esias the Jew, first, before you try to settle the succession; because Potheinos will use your demand for money a very powerful leverage against you. But if you promise the Jews full rights as citizens, the Jews will work against Potheinos. And Esias trusts Tros, so let Tros come with him. Unless you win over Esias the Jews will work for my brother, who is in debt to them and easy to manipulate."

"And you?" he asked her, thoroughly enjoying being told by a twenty-year-old girl how he should use his almost superhuman skill of statesmanship. "If you wish to win two-thirds of Alexandria," she said, "and mind you, I speak now of Alexandria, not Egypt— win the women of the Gardens. Show them consideration Don't let Potheinos tax them to pay Rome's indemnity, because he will, unless you prevent it. That would make them talk against you—at a time when men are influenced because their minds are made stupid—like moths at a lamp."

He smiled. He understood that perfectly. "So much for Alexandria. And Egypt—?"

"I am Egypt."

The confidence of that assertion puzzled him. He eyed her with another kind of curiosity—a deeper interest.

"Don't let Potheinos loot the temples to pay Rome its money, or to pay you," she went on. "Alexandria is foam-scud—moonlight on a surface—ever-changing. Egypt is the deep sea and never changes. Alexandria is tears—laughter—appetite—gaiety. Egypt is religion. Win the ancient priesthood—your ally is Egypt. Lose the priesthood—and though you drive a spear in Egypt's heart she will continue and destroy you with all your works."

"And you are Egypt?" he said, looking straight into her eyes. He took her hands in his.

"If you win Egypt, you can win the world," she answered. "But if you forget that I am Egypt, you will lose me and the world too."

"You oblige me to wonder who taught you to speak like a goddess!"

"You. You have stirred the wisdom in me."

He looked from her toward the sentry by the stairhead who was gazing at them both. It was the sentry who suggested action.

"Let Apollodorus bring the Jew," said Caesar. "I will summon Tros. And as for Egypt—"

"I will answer for Egypt," said Cleopatra. She could look weak in the moments of her greatest strength—unconquerably strong when she was so weak she had nothing but men's promises to lean on.

CHAPTER XIX "Royal Egypt—Pharaoh of the Upper and the Lower Nile!"

There are times when silence is an overwhelming conqueror, though they are few who understand it and its uses FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

CAESAR HAD INSISTED on a meeting in the forenoon to allow Pothinos scant time to gather friends around him and no opportunity at all to stage a demonstration. Nevertheless, Pothinos had worked a miracle by using scores of mes-sengers. Every available square-foot of the throne-room was occupied by some one on whom he thought he could depend.

There was a gallery around three sides; beneath it, half-hidden by the Babylonian draperies—on platforms rising nearly to the level of the throne—a drunkenness of color in subdued light—sat as many of the notables of Alexandria as could be crowded on the gilded seats, the women to the front for Caesar's sake (and they were gloriously dressed, good-looking women for the most part, because the Alexandrian climate and the Macedonian strain diluted by the blood of many other races runs to exotic loveliness as long as youth lasts). From behind the gilded wooden grille that screened the gallery another thousand lesser notables looked on, including women who were doubtless much less beautiful.

The gilded cornices, the columns of assembled onyx pieced together to preserve the natural design, the dais built of marble, malachite and silver with the famous golden lions supporting thrones of glittering electrum, canopied with cloth of gold and backed by a screen of ivory set with emeralds, provided Olympian splendor fit for drama of the gods; and the thrones were vacant, which produced a strong thrill of expectancy.

By every column stood a Ptolemaic guardsman, gorgeous in brass and crimson—bigger, more important-looking and to the eye more dangerously armed than Caesar's men, who stood in double lines in two detachments, one on either side of the great bronze entrance door, under the command of six decurions and Ahenobarbus the centurion. They had a standard with them and six trumpeters.

Ptolemy's seat was alone, in front of fourteen ministers, all dressed like Romans with the far-fetched notion of persuading Caesar that he had to deal with men whose mentality was on a level with his own and who perfectly understood the Roman point of view; but they had the Alexandrian vivacity and restlessness, not lacking dignity but much less strong appearing than the Roman manner, making togas seem incongruous. Young Ptolemy was pale and blue beneath the eyes; his golden chain-mail, worn under the toga, made him appear fragile, and he found the golden bay-leaf chaplet that Pothinos had persuaded him to wear, too, as a compliment to Caesar, oppressively heavy; he kept moving it with waxy-looking fingers—motions that made the

Alexandrians chuckle because they suggested caricatures of Caesar's habit of adjusting his own scant fringe of hair with a forefinger.

Potheinos' chair was exactly behind Ptolemy's, where he could whisper to him, forward of the seats of fourteen other ministers, to the right of the throne-dais as one faced it from the entrance.

Caesar sat facing Ptolemy, with Calvinus beside him and twelve lictors in their red cloaks standing in a row between him and a table at which Faberius, Caesar's secretary, sat with several assistants. Caesar's imperator's cloak, his golden ' wreath and aristocratic air of confidence, with sunlight streaming on him from a high-set window produced a cameo-! like effect, exaggerated by contrast with Calvinus, who was a bronzed and bullet-headed veteran—a coarse man polished by promotion.

On Ptolemy's side of the room, toward the door and therefore farther from the thrones, there had been set one lone and unimportant-looking chair. It was the only chair in sight unoccupied, and it was plainly meant for Cleopatra, who, if she should be so ill-advised as to appear and to accept that solitary seat, should look less like a queen than like' a prisoner awaiting verdict. There were no tall ostrich-feather fans—no canopy, like that which had been stretched on gilded poles above Ptolemy's seat. There was not even a foot-stool or a mark of royalty of any sort.

Caesar and Ptolemy faced each other across a carpet that was one of the notorious wonders of the world, though it was not a compliment to Caesar. Along the whole length of the wonderful mosaic floor it flowed, descending from a cataract, that was the throne steps, to a delta amid sculptured palm-trees by the bronze door; it represented River Nile, of Nile-blue, realistically, swarming with the Nile-birds, fish, reeds, hippopotami and crocodiles, the Nile boats and the temples on the banks.

The slaves who wove it were a present from Orontes, King of Parthia, who had not so long ago defeated Crassus, capturing uncounted Roman standards—a defeat so shameful that the Romans set their teeth at mention of its name.

An interminable wait for Cleopatra had not produced any noticeable change in Caesar's manner. Anticipation was straining all other nerves than his to the verge of hysteria, already aggravated by the stifling heat. When Ptolemy, responding to a whisper from Potheinos, stood up at last and a black slave struck a golden gong for silence Caesar appeared only mildly interested, but the fans beneath the balcony ceased swaying. There was breathless silence when the last reverberations of the gong died down amid the sculptured palm-leaf jungle of the ceiling. Ptolemy's young, querulous, indignant voice rose like the plaint of a eunuch-priest in an Ephesian temple.

"I am offended by your lictors, Caesar. They are contrary to custom, and I know the Roman law about it; whether you are consul or dictator doesn't matter; when you enter an allied and friendly state it is forbidden to bring lictors with you."

Caesar remained seated. "An allied state," he retorted calmly, "keeps the terms of its alliance. And a friendly state is one which does not harbor enemies of Rome or resist Rome by force of arms."

Queen Cleopatra

Silence again. Potheinos began whispering to Ptolemy from behind him. Calvinus watched Caesar with the corner of his eye and with the grim ghost of a smile; folding his arms he thrust his legs out, patient but contemptuous. He shot one swift glance in the direction of Ahenobarbus at the door.

"I object, too," Ptolemy continued, taking his words from his eunuch-minister, "to the spies and secret agents you have sent throughout the city spreading false reports. You have no right to misinform the populace and to try to set them against me. I have twenty thous—"

Potheinos checked him. He turned to remonstrate.

He and Potheinos argued in angry undertones, the other ministers all leaning their heads toward them, trying to make it seem like an official and dignified conference. Caesar had plenty of time to frame his answer, but he kept it until they had finished arguing:

"They can hardly be said to be secret agents, since you say you know about them. I have been gratified to learn that certain Alexandrians—your subjects—who appreciate that I am here to settle the succession and to restore order, have been spreading news to that effect."

Again Potheinos whispered, the other ministers all nodding confirmation.

Ptolemy, with a grandiose gesture of ultimatum, shouted at Caesar:

"It is common knowledge that your way is to employ a horde of spies and that their business is to corrupt the people. They spread propaganda about your alleged invincibility. Your agents here are nearly all expatriated Romans, who would like to regain their citizenship by earning your good-will. You are welcome to every Roman in Alexandria. I wish you would take them all away with you."

He threw the Roman toga from his shoulders and resumed his seat, glaring with indignation. Potheinos appealed to the crowd beneath the balconies by shrugging his eloquent hands and shoulders.

Caesar sat still, although Calvinus again glanced at Ahenobarbus, who strode out and stood on the carpet between the platoons, so that they now faced him from both sides and he could direct them, instantly. There began to be a murmur in the gallery, but Caesar stood up, after he had thought a moment with his long lean fingers stroking at his chin. When he spoke his voice was unexcited:

"I am not here to discuss unimportant details of local government, but as the representative of Rome and the executor of the testament of King Neos Dionysos, Ptolemy the Thirteenth. Let the testament be read."

He sat down, crossed a leg over his knee and carefully rearranged his tunic. A secretary at the table stood up and unrolled a scroll of parchment.

"Is that the original testament?" Potheinos asked.

There was no answer. Potheinos shook his head violently, but Caesar affected not to notice him; he held out a hand for his tablets, which a slave at the table passed to him, reaching between the row of lictors. He began to make notes on a tablet and the secretary started reading in a singsong voice.

Whether or not he was deliberately chosen for the purpose, that secretary was a Gaul, who happened to know no more of Greek than how to read the alpha-

bet and spell the words. He mispronounced it so abominably that it was next to impossible to understand a word of what he said. People ceased to try to listen. Some one cried out from the gallery that the whole proceeding was an insult. There began to be more than a murmur—a mob-note—a premonitory warn-ing of the city's temper, and there sounded the ominous clangor of swords on shields as, unseen from the throne-room, a platoon or two of Caesar's legionaries drew attention to their presence in the gallery, their backs against the outer wall. In the midst of that excitement Potheinos stood up as if to speak.

But though his mouth was open riot a word came forth. A thumping on the bronze door interrupted him. He turned, like everybody else except Caesar and Calvinus, expecting to see Cleopatra enter—ready to enjoy her mortification when she should see the wretched seat provided. In the sudden hush the secretary's voice seemed so loud that he grew embarrassed and subdued it, but he went on stammering and droning mispronunciation of the antiquated Greek.

Ahenobarbus barked his legionaries to attention. The throne-room echoed to the thump of spear-butts, grounded with Roman precision. Black slaves swung the double door wide—and there came a gasp from gallery and platform. Only Caesar did not look up; he was showing Calvinus the notes that he had written.

Framed in the open door, barbarically splendid, Tros stood, with a jeweled gold band binding the black hair that fell to his shoulders—dressed in his gold-embroidered crimson cjoak above a purple and gold tunic—wearing his great green scabbard and its sword with the jeweled hilt. Behind him, even more extravagantly dressed in eastern silks, Esias stood; he stroked his gray beard, much less confident than Tros of the advisability of facing that assembly.

Tros' voice rumbled something. Ahenobarbus, beckoning him forward, threw a hand up and announced him in the voice of a centurion on parade: "The illustrious Lord Tros of Samothrace!"

There was a murmur of excited interest. Caesar glanced up, smiling a little grimly. It was almost better to watch Caesar's face then, than to observe how Tros strode forth along the center of the carpet and, craftily bowing his thick neck for a moment in the direction of the vacant thrones, thus avoiding any personal obeisance, advanced with a deep-sea stride hke some barbaric messenger from Neptune coming to enforce Olympian decrees.

Esias followed, but Esias appeared timid, and apparently in two minds between brazening it out and looking as obsequious as possible in spite of the fact that he was wearing silks worth a nobleman's ransom.

Caesar remained seated. Tros saluted Caesar with an air of stubborn mistrust, which Caesar answered with an exquisitely calculated condescension, turning at once to order the two nearest lictors to set chairs beside his own. The throne-room gasped at that, but Caesar appeared to enjoy the sensation, perfectly aware that he was scandalizing Alexandrian society. None—not Caesar himself—knew yet what the arrival on the scene of Tros portended. Some thought Tros a pirate. Others seeing him so fabulously and richly dressed,

Queen Cleopatra

believed him an ambassador, perhaps with promises of military aid for Caesar. Some had heard a rumor that on Tros' ship Cleopatra had returned to Alexandria to make her way to Caesar in the night. And some again had heard amazing tales of how Tros came near slaying Caesar when he warred against him amid far-off islands to the north of Gaul. All Alexandria had seen his ship and wondered at it.

But Tros might be explained away. Esias was an unforgivable offense. Receiving him, returning his salute with condescending cordiality—above all offering the Jew a seat beside his own, Caesar either betrayed his ignorance or else, as his smile appeared to indicate, deliberately flouted court and king. It was the policy of Alexandrians to give the Jews exactly as much freedom as should make existence tolerable—not another privilege beyond that. They were rigidly restricted to the Jewish quarter. They were neither the equals of Alexandrians before the law nor were they ever admitted to reserved seats at the games. Society and law combined to give them no chance to impose a tyranny of money or to achieve that recognition that perhaps might lead to the control of the affairs of state. Jews did their business with the palace through an intermediary, they remaining at the outer gate. There were no exceptions. Caesar began talking to Tros and presently to Esias in a low voice, smiling, seeming not to look into his eyes yet missing no shade of expression. Tros answered curtly; Esias nervously but with dignity; then they took the seats the lictors placed for them. The secretary, having read the testament, sat down then, neither he nor any one the wiser. None had listened. Caesar spoke to Calvinus, the tribune nodding as if confirming information.

On the other side of the Nile-blue carpet Ptolemy was listening to Potheinos' urgings. Finally he seemed to assent to some proposal and Potheinos beckoned a slave; he sent him hurrying out through a door half hidden by a screen below the balcony. But Calvinus observed that; a moment later a decurion, two legionaries and a Greek slave went out through another door. Potheinos' slave was brought back noisily protesting.

That was the spark that lit the conflagration. Shrugging his shoulders almost to the ears, and dropping them as if he let go all responsibility for what he knew was coming Potheinos rose to his feet behind Ptolemy and, pointing a finger at Caesar, began:

"Most honorable Caesar—"

Caesar interrupted him. He stood, and in the voice with which he had so often stirred his legions—calm and yet thrilling with tremendous power—he sprang his first sur-prise:

"My information is: that those messengers you sent at my request to General Achilles to instruct him to disband his forces at Pelusium, were waylaid at your secret instruction and one was killed, the other wounded. Esias tells me that the wounded man was thrown into a shed belonging to himself, and that Achilles is advancing on Alexandria with twenty thousand men. I would appreciate your comments."

But Potheinos made none. Caesar had stolen his thunder. Utterly bereft of a retort—aware now that his own mismanagement had risked a crowd of Alex-

andrians as hostages in Caesar's hands within the palace, whence they could not possibly escape without the Roman's leave, Potheinos sat still, choking his emotion.

"You had hoped," said Caesar, after a dramatic pause, "to surprise me with that army under General Achilles. You assented to this conference to gain time, and expecting at the same time to allay any suspicion that I might feel. You brought these notables to witness such discourtesies as you should see fit to address to me either in person or through the lips of your young king, intending thereby to increase your own prestige. But I assure you I am capable of protecting myself and my friends, as well from your insolence as from that violence which you have had in preparation since the day those messengers were sent."

He paused, his blue eyes casually glancing at Esias, the sardonic flicker of a smile escaping him as he observed the Jew's embarrassment.

"I am much beholden to Esias for the information."

Not having betrayed that information, which, in fact, had been reported to Caesar by his own spies, Esias made extravagant gestures of protest, but those convinced nobody; there was a rising murmur of execration, checked by Aheno-barbus, who ordered a trumpet-blast to restore order. Esias now had no alternative than to claim Caesar's protection, and finance, to that extent at any rate, was now amenable to Rome. Not an Alexandrian was there who did not realize that situation perfectly. A voice yelled from the gallery:

"We will burn the Jews out! Then what?"

Caesar resumed as soon as there was silence. With a gesture he dismissed Potheinos from consideration and addressed himself directly to the young king, who glared with livid hatred:

"I am amazed to learn to what devices you, Prince Ptolemy, have stooped in order to deprive your sister of those equal rights which she inherited. That testament, just read, entrusted to the Roman Senate and the Roman People full responsibility as its executors. That you have taken it upon yourself to overthrow by violence a scheme of government determined by your father under Roman auspices I find unfilial—unfriendly— and without a precedent, except in the recorded annals of those peoples whose unwise rulers, on the advice of ministers sometimes, and sometimes against the advice of ministers, have brought on their own heads ruin."

He was irritating by intention. It was more his manner than his words that rankled. He was speaking—and he knew it—to a prince whose pedigree entitled him to precedence above all rulers of the known world. Notwithstanding parricide and misrule, not a family on earth was prouder than the line of Lagidae, to whom a Caesar was an upstart— a mere adventurer. And he rebuked him in the presence of nobility who, in spite of their delight in lampoon and all manner of irreverence, delighted equally in glamour of the throne and in monarchic principles.

Prince Ptolemy, flushing passionately and encouraged by the growing murmur, stood up and confronted him. Potheinos, well aware that Caesar for the moment had the upper hand, attempted to restrain the boy by tugging at his cloak, but Ptolemy shook his hand off petulantly:

Queen Cleopatra

"Caesar," he shouted, "you should be ashamed to invade my palace like a robber and command me what to do, or not to do! My General Achilles shall discuss that with you— he and twenty thousand men! I cast my sister out. She has come back and deceived you, as she has deceived plenty of others by her witchcraft! Many besides you have had experience of her! But have her and welcome! Only go away!"

His golden armor and the over-heavy golden wreath—hereditary pride of gesture—childish anger—made him less absurd than pitiable; but Caesar did not spare him; he answered with disdain, more mortifying to the boy, and to his ministers, than if he had offered violence:

"That sort of language may accomplish what you intend when you address your dancing-girls, but it only shows me that your tutors neglected their duty. It is possibly my duty to remove you to Rome, where you would have less opportunity to make yourself ridiculous."

The unintentional clang of a Roman's shield against a breastplate, breaking on the silence, sounded loud and ominous. It startled Ptolemy into even less restrained speech. Throwing off Potheinos' hand again, he shouted:

"You, Caesar, of all demagogues in regal garments: You with your little remnant of an army! Precedents and restoring order! You, who have defied your own laws! You, the rebel who invaded Rome! You, who have ruined every land on which you set foot! Go! Take my sister to Rome! Take her and welcome!" (He was choking.) "But begone! Or I will crucify your little army one by one—aye, crucify them! —to the masts of those impudent ships that you have dared to moor beneath my balconies! Begone, and leave me here to reign alone!"

"You will reign according to the treaty and your father's testament, or not at all," said Caesar. "Let me warn you: it is easier for me to remove you from the throne for ever than to talk about doing it."

Then Ptolemy's passion overwhelmed him and Potheinos' efforts to restrain him only aggravated rage. He turned and slapped Potheinos' face. He struck another minister who dared to try to remonstrate. Gnashing his teeth he snatched his golden wreath and hurled it on the floor at Caesar's feet.

"There! Tread on that! Amuse yourself by spitting on it! You, who talk of treaties and restoring order!—Ho!" he shouted. "Alexandrians! This Roman, with his pirate and his Jew, has insulted Egypt!"

Pandemonium broke loose. Excitable at the best of times and liable to lose their heads in any crisis—realizing now that Caesar possibly intended to retain them all as hostages, those notables began to give an exhibition of the city's temper, men's and women's voices vying in a tumult of execration that brought all twelve lictors closing in on Caesar to protect him.

But if Caesar was disturbed he showed no sign of it, not even glancing in the direction of his guards. Ahenobarbus served a warning with one trumpet-blast and followed that with the heavy tramp of armed men as he made his legionaries mark time. His second warning was a blast from all six trumpets—a clamorous, raucous, insolent ta-ra-ra, ending on a high note like a herald's challenge.

And then silence—sudden and still as the coming of death. Some unexpected thing had happened—nobody knew what. Even Caesar's eyes now turned toward the legionaries, who had halted after wheeling into double line with trumpeters behind them. In front of them Ahenobarbus stood with sword drawn. Suddenly he raised it and the throne-room echoed to the clang of sixty shields on armor as the legionaries moved in thrilling unison and stiffened in salute. It was moments before all eyes turned toward the dais-

She had entered by the door behind the screen of emeralds. She was already seated on the right-hand throne, a scepter in her hand, and on her head the double crown of Egypt. The black Amazonians behind her rhythmically swayed the ostrich-feather fans, and in a rigid row behind them were a dozen Gaulish guards commanded by a man who might have been Olympus, only nobody had ever seen Olympus in a helmet, wearing armor. Charmian, in pure white, looking frightened, stood beside her; and to the right of the throne, wearing a wreath of roses, and his handsome face lit with amusement, Apollodorus waited for the exact, artistically chosen moment to announce her. Suddenly he threw his hand up:

"Royal Egypt—Pharaoh of the Upper and the Lower Nile!" he chanted in a voice that filled the throne-room.

Caesar, Calvinus and Tros saluted her. Esias stepped into obscurity behind the breadth of Tros' back. The lictors, taking their cue from Caesar, raised their fasces, and at sight of the upraised ax-blades all Ahenobarbus' trumpeters let rip a fanfare.

Cleopatra sat still, smiling with the mystic calm that gazed on Nile and desert from the faces of the statues of the olden kings—the symbol of the soul of Egypt.

Ptolemy threw his cloak over his face. He wept. He shouted he was cheated by a wanton—by a she-dog—by a pupil of the Didascalion—by witchcraft. Caesar went to him and in a low voice, audible to none except the prince himself, spoke like a father to him. It was possible to hear the bat-like rhythm of the fans behind the throne.

Ptolemy ceased weeping, amid dreadful stillness. There was drama yet to come, so the Alexandrians sat straining—breathless—and Cleopatra neither spoke nor moved, although Charmian seemed to be whispering to her. Caesar strode back to his own place where he stood and lick his upper lip, selecting words to rivet the sensation a snatch bloodless victory.

But rage seized Ptolemy again. He stood up, gestured at Cleopatra as if hatred could destroy her. Three times in succession he clenched his fists as if he picked up filth. Three times—pausing, as it were, to see the straightness of his aim—he hurled imaginary missiles at her—symbolism that his nurses or the slave-girls may have taught him. Then he turned on Caesar, struggling to suppress the sobs that broke his voice:

"Do you suppose I want a throne that I must share with her?" he exploded.

"She will watch me—she will set traps—she will interfere—am I to be a prisoner in my palace Hers and yours? I know—everybody knows what has happened! She and you—"

A raised hand, made him pause, for Caesar's anger was hypnotic when a mat-

Queen Cleopatra

ter touched him personally and he chose to let his face and attitude declare it. Words fro: on Ptolemy's lips.

"If you feel that way about it, you may leave the Lochias," said Caesar.

Ptolemy clenched his fists and shouted: "I refuse to leave the Lochias!"

The furrows around Ceasar's mouth resembled chisel strokes on marble as he answered:

"Then listen to me: a king, in Roman eyes, is only as, important as his own good sense may make him. Present difficulties are the outcome of mismanagement, which I can readily perceive has not been wholly your fault. But the future must depend on present wisdom, and of that I see no signs. Do you propose to let me see how wise you are? Or will you leave the Lochias and show me how incapable you are of solving your own difficulties?"

From behind Ptolemy Potheinos was whispering, whisper ing, the other ministers, like dummies in a row, avoiding compromise by saying, doing nothing. There was somethin not altogether unworthy of admiration about the eunuch efforts to save the situation; he appeared to have forgotten his own feelings and even his own dignity—to be thinking solely of his master's interests.

Ptolemy's next answer, shouted like a spoiled child's, was addressed as much to Potheinos as to Caesar:

"No, I will not leave the Lochias! I have my father's palace. I refuse to leave it! I will stay here. Let Achillas hurry before Caesar can summon reenforeements! Caesar has the whole world to draw soldiers from, has he?—So—then if we give him time he will defeat my army! Then she and he will have everything—everything! No! I stay here! Let Caesar do whatever he wishes until Achillas comes!"

"Incipient wisdom!" remarked Caesar. "I perceive the signs of germinating common sense! But to instruct you fully is likely to cost me more trouble than Achillas' army has the slightest chance of doing!"

"Trouble!" Ptolemy retorted, pointing at Cleopatra. "There is your trouble! She bewitches every one who sees her for the first time! She will wear that purple cloak of yours tomorrow—and then you will either wring her neck and throw her in the sea or else take orders from her! Come away, Potheinos!"

By main force Potheinos and two other ministers restrained him, forcing him down in his chair. The Alexandrians, who riotously loved their liberties, preferred, nevertheless, that their kings should seem omnipotent—would rather that their tyrants should preserve at least an air of tyranny. But Ptolemy forestalled their burst of indignation by beginning to shed tears again, collapsing in his chair and covering his face.

Potheinos put a word in:

"Caesar, you can see his Majesty is unwell. He is nervous."

Once more Caesar crossed the carpet. He called for the vacant chair that had been meant for Cleopatra. He sat beside the boy. With something of the skill that he reputedly employed in wooing women he began to coax him, calming him, suggesting to him possibilities that might ensue if he should rise to the occasion and behave himself more like a monarch and a man of courage.

Sulkily the prince began to yield, and Caesar took him by the hand. At a nod

from him the lictors raised their fasces. Instantly Ahenobarbus ordered a fanfare by the trumpets and his legionaries clanged a bronze-on-bronze salute. Caesar then led Ptolemy toward the dais, up the steps, and to the throne beside his sister, all the notables applauding until the room grew thunderous. Cleopatra neither spoke nor moved, but Chairman's eyes were like those of a victim waiting for the executioner; it was not clear which she dreaded most, young Ptolemy or Caesar.

"O Alexandrians," said Caesar, speaking from before the throne when the applause had died, "I urge you to remember: a treaty is binding. A monarch's testament may not be set aside except by mutual consent."

If he was conscious that the Alexandrians regarded him as champion of treaty-breakers and as archrepudiator of traditions, he betrayed no sign of it. Himself among the foremost orators of Rome, he none the less omitted oratory thus immeasurably strengthening the force of his appeal. Magnanimously letting pass the scene that they had witnessed, and the insults to himself, he concentrated on the need to settle differences; himself he took the first step: "Nothing would be easier," he went on, "than to end with violence what these misunderstandings have begun. It would be well within my reasonable privilege—an act of justice even—to retain you all as hostages to guarantee tranquillity and the fulfilment of those lawful claims that I, as Rome's chief magistrate, am here to prosecute. But I prefer another method, weary as I am of violence and carnage, and unwilling as I ever have been to resort to force of arms so long as milder means remain untried."

He spoke as if he honestly believed his own words. But there were some who saw the crow's-foot wrinkle at the corners of the eyes of Calvinus, his freedman, who had known him intimately many years.

"So you may go," said Caesar. "You may pass out from the Lochias. And you may come when loyalty impels you to do homage to the Queen and King, who occupy the throne together in accordance with their father's testament and under the protection of the Roman People. For the present"—he looked sharply at Pothinos—"I will recommend no change of ministers, since men familiar with past events are sometimes better capable than substitutes of reuniting broken threads—a purpose to which I, also, will address my efforts."

Pothinos, meeting his deliberately searching gaze, stood up and bowed to him, then made obeisance to the thrones. The other ministers immediately followed suit, more humbly arousing the mirth of the Alexandrians. There began to be laughter, and comment shouted from the gallery:

"Make all of them into eunuchs, Caesar! They would be even more amenable!"

"Draw their teeth, too!"

"Give them Roman citizenship!"

Caesar blazed in to their rescue. He could make men breathless with his sheer restraint of white-hot dignity.

"If force of arms is needed to support authority, I have it!"

At the words Ahenobarbus sent another trumpet-peal resounding through the room; and when the clamor of that had died Caesar arrogated to himself a

Queen Cleopatra

privilege that no crowned head of Egypt ever yet had let slip from his own grasp: he dismissed them, with a regal insolence that cost him many hundred men before the Alexandrians at last submitted.

"You may do your homage to the throne—then go, and spread the news through Alexandria."

And so the tense scene ended in the calm of ceremony— ominously quiet, like a lull before a simoon. Marshaled into line by Caesar's lictors and the palace guards, the galaxy of beauty that Potheinos had assembled to seduce the calvus moechus looked a little drooped and disappointed as it filed by. And yet not so meek as its obeisance, on the surface, indicated. Bowing to the two thrones it divided its attention between Caesar and the young girl queen, who sat as mystically calm as if that double, crown of Egypt had in some unfathomable fashion deified her—she who—rumor had it—came to Caesar rolled up in a carpet in the night.

Caesar, standing well away from both thrones, viewed the Alexandrian nobility as if he were a purple god from high Olympus meditating what new destiny his genius should presently provide.

CHAPTER XX "Egypt—could you make Rome wise?"

Only the immoral are disturbed about the semblance of morality. The actually moral care no more about it than a fish cares for the name by which men call the sea in which he swims.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

UNDER THE STARS, on the palace roof, resting against a marble balustrade over which she gazed at the harbor, Cleopatra stood alone between Charmian and Olympus.

"When you are gloomy like this," said Charmian, "I am more afraid of you than of your enemies."

Olympus signed to her to keep still, but she was now and then as suddenly jealous of Olympus as if she thought him responsible for all their difficulties.

"Night is the mother of day," she said, quoting the Isis ritual. "Out of the gloom, lo! glory cometh!"

"Out of the dark the knives of murderers!" said Cleopatra. "How can you prate of good, when there is only evil! Caesar has intensified the evil. He arouses enmity and dallies with it—cat-and-mouses with it!"

"Would you have him burn the city?" Charmian asked.

"I would have him open his eyes and see his opportunity
I can do nothing now without his aid; and his army is
too small for anything but guarding the Lochias. Is he
afraid of me?"

"I think he is not afraid enough, and he admires you too well," Charmian said darkly.

"He is slow," she answered. But as if to mask the under-lying meaning of that she added, "Has he not been warned how Arsinoe and Ganymedes are plotting to join Achillas? | Does he not know that Potheinos is planning to murder all of us?"

"He knows Potheinos and Ganymedes mistrust each other," said Olympus.

"Probably he waits the outcome of their jealousy."

"And meantime, does he mistrust me? Do you suppose that Samothracian forgot to warn him against me?"

"No," said Olympus, smiling. "Tros told Caesar you will snare him to his ruin. Calvinus and all Caesar's officers are still laughing about it. Caesar has sent Tros to Herod and to Mithridates of Pergamum and to Antipater, Herod's father. Tros refused at first to go, saying he was your admiral and that his ship needed repairs. But Caesar threatened to destroy his ship, which was helpless for the moment, being careened and mended below the water-line. Caesar promised, on the other hand, whatever Tros might ask in reason after his return from Syria. So Tros agreed. But he warned Caesar against you again so tragically that Calvinus mocked him."

"What did Tros say?"

"Tros said: 'As a crock goes to the well too often, Caesar. you will tempt one

Queen Cleopatra

woman too many!' Caesar answered: 'Do you fear for me or for the woman?' And Calvinus said—'You are perhaps dissatisfied that Caesar did not know you.

"When you are gloomy like this," said Charmian, "I am more afraid of you than of your enemies."

Olympus signed to her to keep still, but she was now and then as suddenly jealous of Olympus as if she thought him responsible for all their difficulties. "Night is the mother of day," she said, quoting the Isis ritual. "Out of the gloom, lol glory cometh!"

"Out of the dark the knives of murderers!" said Cleopatra. "How can you prate of good, when there is only evil! Caesar has intensified the evil. He arouses enmity and dallies with it—cat-and-mouses with it!"

"Would you have him burn the city?" Charmian asked.

"I would have him open his eyes and see his opportunity. I can do nothing now without his aid; and his army is too small for anything but guarding the Lochias. Is he afraid of me?"

"I think he is not afraid enough, and he admires you too well," Charmian said darkly.

"He is slow," she answered. But as if to mask the underlying meaning of that she added, "Has he not been warned how Arsinoe and Ganymedes are plotting to join Achilles? Does he not know that Potheinos is planning to murder all of us?"

"He knows Potheinos and Ganymedes mistrust each other," said Olympus.

"Probably he waits the outcome of their jealousy."

"And meantime, does he mistrust me? Do you suppose that Samothracian forgot to warn him against me?"

"No," said Olympus, smiling. "Tros told Caesar you will snare him to his ruin. Calvinus and all Caesar's officers are still laughing about it. Caesar has sent Tros to Herod and to Mithridates of Pergamum and to Antipater, Herod's father. Tros refused at first to go, saying he was your admiral and that his ship needed repairs. But Caesar threatened to destroy his ship, which was helpless for the moment, being careened and mended below the water-line. Caesar promised, on the other hand, whatever Tros might ask in reason after his return from Syria. So Tros agreed. But he warned Caesar against you again so tragically that Calvinus mocked him."

"What did Tros say?"

"Tros said: 'As a crock goes to the well too often, Caesar, you will tempt one woman too many!' Caesar answered: 'Do you fear for me or for the woman?' And Calvinus said: 'You are perhaps dissatisfied that Caesar did not know your mother?' Whereat Caesar reproved Calvinus, who withdrew from the room to continue his laughter."

Cleopatra leaned against the balustrade and watched the comet in the northern sky that had brought all Alexandria to the housetops, and had filled the temples full to overflowing with suppliants for mercy against heaven's wrath.

"Olympus," she said, suddenly turning again to lean her back against the balustrade, "is there a reigning king, or a living heir to any king's throne, who

would be reckoned fit, by THEM, to see what I saw, hear what I heard, do what I did, at Dendera?"

"That I know not," Olympus answered. "If they have found one fit, then they have in all likelihood signified as much to him."

"At Dendera?"

"Elsewhere possibly. They recognize no boundaries. Wherever food is, thither fly the birds."

"And Caesar?"

"Caesar and his eagles—love-birds?"

She turned away again. Olympus waited silently, aware there was a question coming that he would have to answer yea or nay. His black robe shaded away into shadow by imperceptible graduations, so that except when he moved he resembled a disembodied specter—face and hands emerging out of gloom. Cleopatra watched the comet, and the Pharos beacon—ruby-red against the purple night. Charmian tapped a finger-nail against her teeth, and suddenly nearly screamed at the sound of armor clashing in the darkness near at hand.

"It is only the Gauls relieving guard," remarked Olympus.

The interruption seemed to crystallize a thought in Cleopatra's mind—to make it concrete—almost to explode it. She turned on Olympus as if accusing him:

"Answer me: THEY are the choosers. But what if an unchosen man should storm their secrets and insert himself among the gods? What then?"

"You speak of Caesar?"

"Never mind of whom I speak, but answer me!"

"It is impossible to force the impregnable, on which no violence can be brought to bear," said Olympus. "Caesar can slay men's bodies. Can he slay their souls?"

She tried another angle of assault: "What if I, who have been chosen, choose another? What then?"

"Can you?" he retorted. "Are you wise enough to read a man's heart, and its past, and its destiny? You have had lovers, Egypt, even as this Land of Khem has lovers—nay, devourers! You have tried them and thrown them aside. Were you then such a wise chooser?"

"For what then is my genius, Olympus, unless to test and choose? Men test their weapons. And my body is the only weapon that I have. Shall I yield my body to a man who might beget me weakling sons? Or to a hero? Knowing what I know, shall I submit myself to bearing children who could never know? Or shall I prefer barrenness? If so, for what are a woman's attributes? I am told I shall reign over Egypt. I am told I shall save our Wisdom from the iron forces that would mangle and obliterate it. Shall I do all that, and leave no son to carry on my work?"

"Are you growing old, that there is so much need of haste?" Olympus asked her.

"What does that comet mean? What does the stirring within my heart mean?"

"That means you are excited," said Olympus. "It is a calm mind that receives the reflection of wisdom and again reflects it."

"But the comet?"

Queen Cleopatra

"On its endless round has reached a quarter of the heavens where its influence, for good or evil, possibly can touch you."

"Are you ignorant to-night? Or are you obstinate? Why is it that THEY send no advice—now, when I need it?"

"They are not your owners. You are not their agent. They will let you meet your destiny and conquer it or not," Olympus answered. "They would blame me, should I encourage you to depend on any other judgment than your own. But they will help you when you give them opportunity, though not with violence, and not with any shouldering of your responsibilities."

"Am I responsible for Caesar?"

"That you know well you are not. And yet beware of being so! For I tell you, Tros made no mistake when warning Caesar to beware, although neither of them understood the warning or each other."

Cleopatra laughed—angrily—scornfully. "It was I who sent Tros to warn Caesar!"

"And yet you say THEY send you no advice? Does it occur to you that possibly your brain misread the wisdom of your heart, that had been stirred—who knows how?"

"Well, I warned him!" she retorted.

"Hoping by a law of contraries to—?"

Olympus paused, for there were limits of familiarity beyond which even he forbore to trespass. Suddenly he saw a way of making clear his meaning without risk of giving offense. He went on:

"There is never a lack of warnings nor a dearth of guides. But they in the dark reverse both. They mistake a warning for a challenge. They mistake a guide for warning of a pitfall."

"You are too mysterious," she answered. "Leave me alone to meditate. Yes, leave me, Charnian, but stay near."

There was almost desert stillness up there on the roof. The ceaseless breakers at the foot of Pharos beacon made a murmur in the distance. To the south, beyond the maze of palace dwellings and the Lochias wall, the city rumbled obligato to the silent music of the stars. Now and then Caesar's soldiers challenged, and their voices, with the accompanying clash of metal, were like shots of color rather than as many sounds. Bats' wings were distinctly audible. And then a footstep. Like a god in gleaming white, his toga undulating in the zephyr, pausing from minute to minute to gaze into gloom to the westward—standing like Apollo on a breastwork—walking along the parapet—came Caesar.

Presently he stood still, watching. She did not turn to recognize him; she went on gazing at the starlight mirrored on the purple surface of the sea—at the silvery lines of phosphorus where dolphins wove incomprehensible designs—at the yellow lights of Caesar's ships reflected on wine-dark water.

"What poetry!" said Caesar. "But it lacks movement."

He was suddenly beside her. She nodded a curt confidential welcome, and then went on gazing at the night.

"That comet moves," she answered presently out of the darkness.

"Too imperceptibly," said Caesar. He was very close to her. She said nothing more for several minutes, until the silence became unendurable.

"I begin my campaign to-night to make you Queen of Egypt," he said then. Quietly she turned and met his blue eyes which were brilliant with fire that she had never seen in any man's—light without heat—desire unlimited by scruple—passion like a Roman legion's, disciplined and loosed deliberately at a goal. If she could read his eyes she kept her secret to herself. Her own were pools of violet, alight, too, but with mystery.

"You look so small," he said, "it is hard to believe you can be so great; yet I think that your wisdom is greater than mine."

"It is neither less nor greater. It is different," she answered. "Reason is a man's quality. Intuition is a woman's."

"Egypt—could you make Rome wise?" he asked her, and she trembled now. It was the first time he had ever called her Egypt.

"Are you Rome—or Caesar?" She could speak in colors, for her voice touched chords of nature, and the sound was all in harmony with zephyr, night-sky, bat's-wing breathing and the glow of Pharos light. One word was a jewel; those five words were a magic spell.

The ensuing silence was like a pause between two eternities; it maddened him; he would have taken her in his arms, but she retreated.

Suddenly she caught her breath. A shower of meteors sprayed the whole of heaven, dimming the eternal stars—a moment's cataract of jewels.

"Caesar!" Awe—reverence—gratitude—her voice was vibrant. Then a note of triumph: "That was a message! Whom the gods approve—"

"The war-god justifies!" said Caesar. "Look!"

He pointed westward, toward the Heptastadium, against which the Egyptians had moored their empty fleet. There came a sudden blaze of white-hot light, the din of an explosion, smoke and then a crimson holocaust that lit a whole horizon—red fire leaping along rigging and a mystery of black hulls floating in a crimson sea beneath a panoply of colored smoke.

"They were planning to man that fleet," said Caesar. "I filled a ship with a sort of Greek fire that I took from Tros and sent it down among them, only two ships following."

In silence they watched the flames lighting the whole length of the Heptastadium. Achilles' troops, like demons writhing on a red-hot causeway—silhouetted—ruddy in the red flare—panic-stricken—fought to free the ships that had not caught yet. But the firelight glittered on oars where, almost hidden by the smoke, two of Caesar's biremes were maneuvering for the range. Then javelins—arrows—slung stones, flickering through the firelight—and a movement along the Heptastadium as when a wind strikes standing corn.

Then real wind, from the north, not gusty but enough to carry sparks inland. Mast after mast became a spout of golden flame to fall on burning decks and send a rainbow-fountain skyward, a-splash, as if the flame were liquid.

Presently the sound of shod feet running. Then a legionary, breathless:

"Where is Caesar? Caesar, the Centurion Ahenobarbus sends word that the library on the Bruchium is burning!"

Cleopatra caught her breath and clutched at Caesar's arm. He had the arm

Queen Cleopatra

around her in a moment, hugging her close to him. He was about to speak, but paused to watch a shadowy black figure leap out of the gloom and vanish with a black cloak streaming in the wind behind him— Olympus in full flight. Cleopatra tried to free herself but his arm was like iron.

"Caesar! If you let them bum that library, you—"

She beat at his breast in her effort to break away from him.

"—Thousands of ' years of work!—The Hermetic books. —The lore of Babylon and Nineveh.—The pyramid calculations—all the knowledge of the stars—history—mathematics—"

Caesar's voice at last: "Tell Calvinus to take as many cohorts as he needs and save the library."

Retreating footsteps, and then Charmian, like a white-robed spirit fluttering against the sky, afraid to come near, staring at the holocaust and turning every second or two expecting Cleopatra's summons.

"The library!" she cried out. "Is the only glory of the Ptolemies to perish?"

Cleopatra broke free. Even Caesar's strength was not enough to hold her. But, unlike Charmian's, her voice was quiet, vibrant with intense emotion in restraint:

"Caesar, you might burn the whole world and it would not matter, if only you left that library!"

His high-pitched laugh betrayed annoyance. He was in another mood than to grieve over Hermetic treatises on magic, or the legends of Atlantis, or the measures of the universe.

"Calvinus will take care of it," he said. "A very good soldier, Calvinus. And won't the Alexandrians themselves protect their own books?"

"Go you, Caesar, and direct them!"

"No," he answered. "Let the shadow bum, if it will bum. I desire the image! Books can be written again, and the world is full of them."

"But, Caesar, there are books in there from India and from—"

"I will conquer India." He laughed again—the high-pitched, staccato, nervous neigh of excitement that his friends dreaded as much as his enemies, because it signified that his impetuous will was stirred and nothing had importance in his eyes feist his immediate objective. "A lifetime in a library, poring in books for wisdom? And the woman here, who has the wisdom in her heart and in her eyes! No, Egypt, I prefer you to the library!"

He took her in his arms again, she ceasing to straggle, for his strength was overwhelming now, and comforting besides. She might have called to Charmian, but it was Caesar who did that, over his shoulder, abruptly:

"You may leave us!"

"And perhaps the best woa't bean," Cleopatra murmured, "and the soul of wisdom lives on though the body perish."

Charmian turned away but stood and watched them from the shadow of a stairhead. They were framed against the night sky, half surrounded by a garden grown in granite pots in imitation of the hanging gardens of Babylon. Caesar took her in his arms, and lifted her like a Roman carrying his bride across the threshold—a ceremony dating from the day they raped the Sabine

women. Then he carried her away into the darkness—none knew whither. Clank of armor, where an unseen sentry moved; then silence, so still that the distant roar of fire and shouting blended and became one with the murmur of the waves on Pharos. Charmian walked westward along the roof until she came to the parapet, and leaned there, gazing at the buildings burning on the Bruchium, with figures flitting in and out of lurid smoke and, here and there, the gleam of flame on armor where Caesar's men battled the fire.

It was there that Olympus came to her. He found her weeping—talked to give her time to control herself.

"Luckily," he said, "repairs were being made, and most of the secret books had been stored for the time being in the houses of the chief librarians. Some of those books—the very ancient ones—are not inflammable. They are done on stuff called Pergamos."

"I don't care," she answered. "I think more than books are being burned to-night."

She told Olympus what she had heard and seen.

"Be you faithful to her, nevertheless," he answered. "Stormy-weather friends are links between us and the Universal Soul. Fair-weather friends are parasites."

"She forgot me," said Charmian. "She has always mocked my chastity—but, Olympus, she let Caesar order me away."

"And she forgot me," he answered. "But what then? What if you and I remember?"

CHAPTER XXI "Kneel. Look upward."

Imagination is like a virgin until she bear her living fruit. But let imagination and a strong will choose each other, as the great gods chose, immaculately, in the dawn of time, then lo! the very comets in their courses are as darkness to the splendor that shall come forth!

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

AND NOW A CHANGE took place in Caesar. There was something added to him. His imagination, hitherto as masculine as Mars, discovered realms of views so wholly new to him that for the moment war, and even Rome, were inconsiderable trifles. He beheld a cosmos on a new titanic scale. He realized that he had only concentrated his attention hitherto on one small aspect of immensity; that there were planes of thought on which his intellect might revel without limit—fields of outlet for his energy that he had never dreamed of—glorious realms of thought and action on which lesser mortals than himself could never even challenge him. He was alone, with only Cleopatra for his guide, and she as sweetly, gaily yielding to him as the earth in springtime giving up her secrets to the sun.

He threw off twenty years of age and drove Calvinus to distraction by his indifference to military needs and to the hourly increasing danger. He forbade his secretaries to annoy him even with dispatches from the Roman Senate urging his immediate return to Rome—messages sent twice or thrice a week in fast small ships, that several times were intercepted by Achilles' men, who held the Pharos. He abandoned his daily dictation of the diary on which he had formerly set such importance—ordering his secretaries not to bother about records.

"I will build a new world. Time and history begin when I begin," he told them in one of his grandiose moods.

He appointed Apollodorus master of the ceremonies but employed him chiefly to keep business at bay—dammed to stagnation to manage itself, while he and Cleopatra entertained each other.

They were neither of them gluttons. Meals, that they invariably ate together, were a feast of merry talk and music, flowers, and as little food, as exquisitely served, as might have satisfied two Stoics. They explored the vast Lochias together, praising Alexander's foresight. Together they walked on the acres of roof amid groves of shrubbery in marble pots. By night, alone, they strode the water-front and wove ideal pictures of the world as they would leave it after they had finished playing and their spirits winged into the Infinite. For in that mood Caesar could imagine afterlife among the gods.

Neither was lonely in those days. Caesar, for the first time in his life, had met a woman capable of understanding him and ministering to his mental needs. She brought to him a dawning, as it were, of knowledge of his own self. Not like other women, she saw deeper than the purple cloak, or than the imper-

ator, or than the conqueror whom all a Roman world acclaimed as Caesar, as if Caesar were a new divinity. She saw a hungry soul and fed it from the wealth of her own spiritual storehouse.

"Caesar, how long did your mother live? Mine lived for nine years after I was bom, so I am rich, but I will share it all with you."

Olympus had vanished, arousing no regret in Caesar, who had begun vaguely to dislike his influence. But there were nights when Olympus' erstwhile vigilance was missed—dark dangerous nights of wakefulness and secret wandering from room to room to frustrate murderers like rats, who hid in secret passages and cut their way through panels. There were days when poisoned food was brought to them, when slaves, obliged to taste it, died in agony. And there were days of almost mutiny when Caesar had to show himself to homesick troops and stir them back to confidence with words of praise and boastfulness, of shame and mockery, of stirring memories and golden promises all mingled. He returned to Cleopatra and forgot them, promises and all.

And then a wonder-night when hand-in-hand, alone, identities well hidden in the robes of devotees of Isis, they escaped together from the Lochias and sought a shrine of mystery within a temple, whose vast roof murmured to the sound of hundreds sleeping in the aisles, to dream—the men of fortune and 'the women of unborn children. Cleopatra rather puzzled Caesar by the reverence with which she passed between the rows of silent women, stooping once to whisper to a young wife words that started her weeping happily.

Through heavy doors, that opened at a whisper; up marble steps between immensely solid walls; down passages whose geometrical design was purposeless, unless to symbolize some speechless truth that should reveal itself to inner understanding, if an inner eye could read; through curtains, of four colors glittering with stars that shone in pale light from an unseen source; amid a silence that was awe itself made audible; then downward, toward foundations, until bared feet felt the naked rock and some one in a white robe sprinkled water on their closed eyes with something—Caesar never knew what.

A solemn voice said: "Kneel. Look upward."•

So together they saw Isis, Mother of the Universe, as symbolized in marble, glowing in reflected light.

The shrine was shrouded with the utter blackness of the womb of Chaos.

There was no source visible from which the light came; yet it shone in glory on the marble form of Isis represented as a woman, passionless, mother of sex and yet as sexless as the mystery of time.

They knelt together on a rug worn threadbare by the knees of thousands, which was a strange thing for Cleopatra to do, she being high priestess of Isis by divine right of her royal heritage—and Caesar titular high priest of Rome, who reckoned himself worthy to invade whatever sanctuary stirred his curiosity. But curiosity was latent that night. Cleopatra's mood was overpoweringly gentle, leading Caesar as it were by unseen chains into a mystery that calmed his all-too-easily excited intellect and made him dimly conscious of emotions he had never previously felt.

Queen Cleopatra

The grand, impersonal, enormous loveliness of Isis, that had not been limited by any artist's effort to define a type of beauty, opened up the thought toward infinity—eternity—and let expand those forces of the inner consciousness that crack the very molds of mind and change a man into a nascent demigod. By caring nothing for a surface, save that it reveal the hidden mysteries of form and infinite proportion, he who wrought that image had suggested all the wonder of evolving mother nature. There was not a finished detail to retard imagination by suggesting anything might end; nor any hint of a beginning, to reduce that majesty to meanness. Curve—contour—calm—in an effulgent light that seemed to be the emanation of the glory of an absolute idea, bathed them in such spiritual peace as Caesar had never guessed even existed. Presently, in silence, forth again into the street, by passages as short and easy to discover as the entrance had been narrow and involved—thus symbolizing that descent into materiality is easier and swifter, by a broader way, than the ascent to spiritual understanding.

Danger in the street (for they had come in secret; there were no guards).

Flight, with Cleopatra running beside Caesar, clinging to him, sobbing with excited laughter. Legionaries' challenge—unbelief—then recognition by a guardroom lantern—consternation, and the clang of shields on armor when the cohort formed in ranks with that delirious, maddening music of sound and motion that was Rome's salute to whom she chose to honor.

Then to the roof and that little summer-house, with starlit sky for setting—murmur of the waves on Pharos—challenging of sentries on the wall to break the silence into intervals—and Charmian at last, to play her lute and sing those destiny-adoring colorful Osirian hymns, whose melody was Nile-bank whispering of reeds, the lap of water and the cry of wildfowl.

Then a mystery of dancing. Cleopatra knew the rhythm, and the meaning of the rhythm of the Isis ritual. She knew its dignity, and knew the soundless real music of the spirit that can only be reflected in motion, as when corn is swaying or a bird flies spirally on confident exulting wings beneath the azure infinite of sky; or when a shadow leaps along a mountainside; or when the waves come plunging. And because so absolute is law that even anarchy is subject to it, law was signified by exquisite restraint. The starlight, and a lute, and Charmian's low-voice singing—

And then sleep, together, in each other's arms, like two tired children, until dawn awoke them to another chapter of companionship.

There are two forces, each having seven streams, and they again seven times seven, and so on downward unto an infinity of numbers. They are right- and left-hand—positive and negative—light and darkness—good and evil. Each has many names and many attributes, and in the ultimate the two are one; though not yet, nor for many eons, is their oneness manifested, and until then they are opposites. Their oneness is an occult secret, difficult to understand, and it is madness for the choosers of the left-hand force to meditate their treacheries when the star of the right-hand force is in the ascendent.
FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

CAESAR TOOK NOTHING seriously in those days except the intellectual excitement of exploring Cleopatra's mind. For the time being it amused him to subject himself, if only for the sake of the yet keener pleasure, that he foresaw, of subjecting her when he had plumbed the depths of her mental resources. He confused the mental with the spiritual, imagining they were the same thing.

She was dazzled and delighted by the brilliance of the only man she had met who could hold his own in conversation with her. But unlike him, she never for a moment lost sight of her purpose, to preserve her own throne and to save the Land of Khem from coming under Roman rule—while revealing herself and her mental processes to Caesar with a candor and charm that thrilled even his cynical and experienced nature. He almost forgot in those days that Rome existed. Cleopatra forgot nothing. Rome, and the need to checkmate Rome, was foremost in her thought.

Sending for Arsinoe and Ganymedes, she tried to remove one obstacle to peace, in order to leave herself more free for the constructive purposes she had in mind, by convincing them, as actual eye-witnesses, that Caesar was her lover and strong ally, making the exact truth clear: that she was willing to forget past quarrels and befriend Arsinoe, provided friendship should be mutual and should include the recognition of her own rule.

But Caesar preferred to pave the way for violence. He read one of his fatherly lectures to the girl and insulted Ganymedes by rebuking him in Cleopatra's presence. It was part of his peculiar genius to understand how mortifying such a homily might be to a man like Ganymedes who knew many of the incidents of Caesar's own past.

He rebuked the girl's guardian with calculated, patronizing insolence. Ganymedes foresaw ruin unless he and his charge should escape with as little delay as possible, to carry on their warfare in the open; and Caesar, who regarded all disturbances as opportunities, gave secret orders that should make that indiscretion easy for them.

The next night following that interview, Arsinoe and Ganymedes, with a number of slaves and great quantities of jewelry and palace treasure, escaped

Queen Cleopatra

through the Lochias lines into the city. The news was brought by Calvinus at dawn. He tried to awaken Caesar to a recognition of the danger.

"Caesar, I have seen you have your will of many a woman. Is a woman at last to have her will of you, to the destruction of us all?"

But Caesar smiled, and went to breakfast with Cleopatra on a balcony that overlooked a garden riotous with roses. He appeared pleased when Calvinus told him, later in the day, that Ganymedes had contrived to borrow large sums of money, using Arsinoe's jewels as security, and was busily bribing influential Alexandrians to support Arsinoe and her brother against Cleopatra and the Roman influence.

"Spies keep them in touch with Potheinos. They are spreading the tale that you ordered the library burned. Alexandria will rise and overwhelm us!" Caesar thought not. He preferred to wait until the enemy's plan revealed itself. He felt reasonably sure of reinforcements on the way from Syria and Asia Minor. So he spent hours of every day with Cleopatra and amused himself and her by studying the palace records that pertained to India and almost legendary lands beyond where Alexander stayed his eastward course. Cleopatra encouraged his dream of surpassing Alexander's exploits, since he could have no time to conquer Egypt if he hoped to break through Parthia and rape the riches of the East.

But while Caesar thoroughly enjoyed himself his officers and men grew increasingly nervous and anxious. Information became daily harder to obtain, and the supplies of corn that Caesar had contracted for diminished, although luxuries (for which the Roman troops cared nothing) came in constantly by boat from Syria and Cyprus, so that the palace was well enough fed.

Calvinus spied clumsily; he paid for information at the gate, employing any Alexandrian who cared to run the risk of being caught, and learning, consequently, far more of rumor than actual fact, as well as gathering misinformation sent to him on purpose by Achilles. Now and then he caught an Alexandrian and tortured him in secret; but men under torture say invariably what they think the torturer desires to know, so Calvinus continued to be displeased by the levity with which Caesar received his urgent and constant advice.

Caesar had much better sources of information. Cleopatra's friends, including many of the priesthood, were in communication with her secretly, sending their slaves with messages by night. There was Apollodorus, popular, and fertile with expedients for learning true news. But, above all, the palace barber, Paulos, who had nothing now to do but shave and massage Caesar for an hour a day, spent all his spare time ferreting for facts; and in the one hour of a morning that he spent with Caesar, Caesar learned more than from all other sources together.

Paulos was a timid little man, obsessed with an unholy purpose to become the master-midwife-barber-politician of the world. He was hypnotized by Caesar's greatness. He was afraid for Caesar's life and for his own career; he was afraid, too, that Olympus might inflict some magic curse on him unless he kept in mind the spirit and the letter of his orders. Had Olympus not com-

manded: "Serve him as you would me"?

Where was Olympus? None knew. Paulos actually wondered whether he himself was not Olympus' substitute, responsible to unseen powers for the safety of the man whom Cleopatra looked to for protection.

So from Paulos Caesar learned how Ganymedes had approached Achilles, where he was encamped with a part of his troops in the stadium, proposing to him to proclaim Ptolemy and Arsinoe king and queen; how Achilles had preferred allegiance to Ptolemy alone, mistrusting Ganymedes and refusing to share with any one the power that he saw within his grasp; how Ganymedes had immediately knifed Achilles in the back and had assumed command of all Achilles' army; but how the city did not know that yet, although the truth was rumored.

"And this I learned," said Paulos, "from the Lord Achilles' barber who now shaves Lord Ganymedes, who is careless. That barber is a man named Aristodes, a member of the freedman-barbers' mystery, subordinate to me, as such, in my capacity of High-Grand-Phoenix of the Order. We are a very secret mystery and discipline is rigorous, each barber being bound to tell all except some of his secrets to the craft, so that the craft may prosper; and Aristotles very much wants to learn the secret of my magic remedy for growing hair. Therefore, what I wish to know, he tells me; and he tells the truth, for fear lest I should catch him in a lie—the razor suit you, sir?—should catch him in a lie and have him cast forth from the mystery in ignorance of that great secret that it took me years to discover. And he sent me this information, by a slave whose task it is to carry broken meats to lepers, and who therefore comes and goes unquestioned.

"Head a little more to one side, please, sir. That is a slave much given to consideration of the spiritual problems, since the lepers touch him, when he will permit it, thinking that perhaps he may have touched a royal garment and have received some faint reflection of the royal gift of healing leprosy. Having observed more than one leper to be benefited by the touch, he feels himself in a sense divinely authorized and so is very careful of his speech, not lying—even to defend himself when under accusation.

"And he said this: 'Before the Lord Achilles' death the Lord Potheinos was in communication with the Lord Achilles by correspondence, all of which the Lord Ganymedes discovered after he had slain the Lord Achilles. And the purport of the correspondence was: that the Lord Potheinos should poison the food to be eaten at a banquet that should be arranged to celebrate the resumption of friendly relations between Queen Cleopatra and her brother King Ptolemy. And because no slave could be trusted to conduct such a delicate operation, without perhaps endangering the lives of King Ptolemy and the Lord Potheinos, it was agreed that the Lord Potheinos himself should attend to it. But no doubt Caesar is omniscient and knew all this already."

So when Potheinos, unctuously humble, called on Caesar personally, to arrange the banquet, "not only," as he said, "to celebrate the restoration of a brotherly and sisterly regard, but also to afford me opportunity of making public my submission to your wise' solution of our problems," Caesar blandly walked into the trap. His only stipulation was that Calvinus should also be

Queen Cleopatra

invited:

"For I wish," said he, "to prove to Calvinus that I was serious in certain statements that I made to him about you."

Calvinus was argumentative, indignant, furious and pleading in turns when Caesar notified him of the coming banquet. He prophesied that Caesar would wind up by making Pothinos co-dictator of Rome:

"When you will learn at last," said he, "what agony of mind is. And the sooner the better, Caesar, because I would like to share mine with you!"

However, Caesar changed the subject, asking him which cohort he proposed should supply the guard of honor for the banquet hall, appearing more than usually curious about that detail, finally suggesting names of individual men whom he preferred.

Magic is the universally accepted name for those phenomena whose noumena are unknown to the ordinary herd. But magic is of two kinds, which, however, have this quality in common: they receive their impulse from the will of the magician, somewhat in the way that ripples on the sea receive their impulse from an oar; and if his will lack strength, or if his understanding fail him, he must receive the effect of his magic hurled back on himself with force redoubled by the impulse of his adversary. He who is known as a white magician—he, that is, who takes the right-hand way and whose knowledge is exerted solely with a beneficial and unselfish purpose—need not dread that repercussion more than fish need dread the sea, because he is employing Life itself—the very Life in which he lives. But the black magician—he who takes the left-hand way, whose purpose and whose power are malevolent—is not so fortunately situated. Death is his employer and employee, so that the greater his immediate success, the more certain is his ultimate annihilation.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

A PARADOX is usually entertaining, and it excited the Alexandrian nobility to attend a banquet in the palace, almost as much as it amused Apollodorus to issue the written invitations. Caesar's burning of the Egyptian fleet was an

act of war; the destruction of one wing of the famous library on the Bruchium had been an accident which, far more bitterly resented, had wiped out the last vestige of even superficially friendly relations.

But the Lochias was besieged and beset by troops that theoretically were the hirelings of the invited guests. It was supplied with luxuries from oversea by aliens and disloyal Alexandrians who had to run the blockade kept up in a desultory fashion by the remnant of a fleet supposedly the guests' too, but of whose loyalty to anybody nobody was certain. And it was ostensibly to celebrate a reconciliation between brother and sister, whom everybody knew to be at enmity.

So the invited guests accepted with feelings of mingled dread and curiosity, not many of them doubting that Pot-heinos, though a virtual prisoner in the palace, still held the key to the situation; those who hoped not, nevertheless did not dare to show their enmity to the powerful eunuch. Some hated Caesar as an impudent intruder and despised Cleopatra for her now notorious complaisance—or pretended to despise her; many, on the contrary, admired Caesar's daring, envied Cleopatra, but doubted that a mere four thousand men could hold the Lochias long enough to enable Caesar to secure his position by bringing troops from elsewhere. There were plenty of rumors to the effect that Caesar's real reason for remaining was that he did not dare to return to Rome, where he was supposed to fear indictment or assassination. And there were

Queen Cleopatra

stories that the summoned re-enforcements had refused to come.

Whatever their private opinions, most of the Alexandrian nobility would have preferred to remain neutral until destiny should show its hand, but, knowing that destiny is never neutral, they felt obliged to gamble on the outcome. Necromancers, casters of horoscopes and charlatans of every description did a thriving business, and the reputable fortunetellers (far more difficult to find and much more reticent) were besieged by applicants for inside information of the workings of the law of probability. But whatever the soothsayers said, the ultimate decision was the same; and nobody who had received an invitation stayed away, not even though the personal indignity of being searched at the gate for weapons was expressly stipulated.

Nobody was willing to bet very heavily that Caesar would not retain them all as hostages. He had foregone that opportunity already once; he might not show such calculating magnanimity a second time. So there was a great deal of hasty consultation with the army headquarters in the stadium, with a view of ascertaining what the army's answer would be to any such move on Caesar's part. But Ganymedes made the mistake that Caesar had counted on.

Having stolen command of the army, Ganymedes saw himself triumphant in any event. He was aware of Potheinos' plan, through having read his correspondence with the late Achillas. He pretended for the present to be deputizing for Achillas, whom he reported to be seriously ill, although there were many who knew the truth about the murder. In reply to all inquiries he let it be known that he looked with favor on any one attending the banquet, and he hinted that there might be an agreeable surprise in store; so that there were some who thought he might be intending to seize the Lochias while the banquet was in progress.

Yet another rumor exercised a potent influence. In order to prepare the mind of Alexandria for murder in high places, Ganymedes and Arsinoe spoke reminiscently, of the disgraceful scenes at the court of the late Queen Berenice, oldest daughter of King Ptolemy and half-sister to Cleopatra and Arsinoe; and of the fate of Berenice; and they diligently circulated hints that Cleopatra was encouraging Caesar in debauch compared to which Queen Berenice's had been child's play. They asserted that the burning of the library had been a bonfire lit for her amusement; and though half Alexandria had seen Caesar's men fighting the flames, the lie gained currency. So there was fascination in the thought of seeing Cleopatra at a banquet, drunken with success and, possibly too, with strong wine, blithely ignorant of the fate that was awaiting her. But Cleopatra understood that part of the situation perfectly.

"They expect and they hope to be scandalized," she remarked to Caesar. "Indecency would stir their vanity, in the same way that a public execution does. I have noticed that criminals and public both prefer a public execution—I suppose because it makes the criminal a hero in his own imagination, and the mob feels for the moment like a swarm of sanctimonious gods enjoying justice. They are hoping to witness some one's shame; and they hope—they trust—they are almost confident it will be followed by something even more disgusting in the guise of murder."

"Egypt," Caesar answered, "there is only one offense that mean men find unforgivable. Actual superiority arouses in their minds such persistent and resentful hatred that there are only two possible protections against it, and it is well to use both means constantly. Amuse the vermin with the cruelty and scandals that they love; and keep so far aloof from them that they can not anticipate your next move."

He practised what he preached. Not Cleopatra, and not even Calvinus knew what Paulos the barber had revealed to him. The unfortunate barber, along with the slave who carried broken meat to lepers, had been locked away in a palace dungeon, where tongues could wag in the dark to deaf walls. Cleopatra thought that Caesar honestly intended to make a public show of reconciliation. She was willing to attempt it, but she would have preferred a thorough diplomatic victory first as the safer course.

"Caesar, you will find it is like flattering apes," she prophesied. "They will accept the flattery and then, patterning their grimaces after you, they will imagine they are Caesars. Soon after that they will try to smash the pattern, lest their own eyes recognize the truth and their own hearts mock them."

But Caesar only smiled and kept his intricate intentions to himself, although he did not quite deceive Apollodorus, who found frequent opportunity to discuss developments with Charmian, who, as fearful as she was loyal, drew a kind of Cassandra-satisfaction from having her fears confirmed.

"Caesar," said Apollodorus, "having so few men, is in a mood just now to conquer by his personal endowments, Cleopatra having set him the example. He is combative by nature, and he and she are like two new horses in a team. It is not in Caesar's nature to trust any one, especially any one who thinks. He is in love with her, and he knows she complements his genius. But he also realizes she is likely to outlive him, and he is instinctively jealous of her on that account, although he does not recognize it; if he did, he would kill her." Caesar encouraged Apollodorus to array the banquet hall with all the splendor that the storehouse of the Ptolemies could yield; and he spent amusing hours in Cleopatra's dressing-room, watching her try on robes and jewels, attempting to persuade her to wear the royal robes of Isis at the banquet and puzzled by her refusal. Nothing could have satisfied his own immeasurable vanity more subtly than to appear on the scene as the protector of the robed high priestess of the mystic Mother of the Universe.

Her superstition, as he classified it in his calmer moments, baffled him. He regarded spiritual life as an abstraction—possibly a product, like the smoke from temple altars. Knowing, as none knew better, that the secret of the power of Rome's patricians was their patronage of the state religion (though their private skepticism verged, almost as a rule, on atheism), he was forced to accept Cleopatra's own objections without understanding them:

"No, Caesar. Would you have me lose true music for the pattern of a harp? What are divine rights, if I use them rightly, would become a blasphemy and burn me utterly if I attempted to misuse them. I should lose all Egypt and my own soul, too."

But she loved life vigorously. Caesar amused and excited her. She gloried in submitting to his wishes in so far as they concerned her personally. She satis-

Queen Cleopatra

fied his craving for extravagant display by covering herself in jewels and those half-diaphanous, glistening draperies that came from India in exchange for the emeralds of Egypt—emeralds of which she wore so many that their weight was an actual burden.

Caesar's spies informed him that Pothinos hoped to arouse public sentiment in Prince Ptolemy's favor by bringing him to the banquet without any royal diadem, pretending that all the Prince's jewels had been sold in order to raise the money to meet Rome's importunate demands. But Cleopatra readily consented to relieve her brother from that embarrassment, so Caesar sent the young man heaps of jewels from her treasure-chests, along with his own compliments and a request that he should keep them as a gift; for he was seldom less than generous with other peoples' property, especially when he had in mind a means of presently appropriating more than he dispensed. Pothinos was an extremely wealthy individual, who owned emerald- and goldmines. Caesar secretly gave orders, concerning the disposition of two picked companies of infantry, that made Calvinus raise one eyebrow and release a glimmer of a thin-lipped smile, his normal confidence returning since he knew how thoroughly Caesar could be trusted when awake to danger.

Slaves were none too plentiful, many of them having been pressed into Achilles' service and killed or rendered useless by overwork with the transport when he made his forced march on Pelusium; but fifteen hundred of Caesar's legionaries were told off to line the stairs and corridors, thus freeing numbers of merely ornamental functionaries for the serious task of keeping streams of food and wine continuously flowing to the banquet hall.

That hall was the only part of the maze of palace buildings that confessed to Egyptian influence, in the form of massive granite columns ornamented with Egyptian designs, and a pair of huge symbolic lions that guarded the royal dais; but the lions, although also of granite, had been overlaid with gold-leaf and behind them was an ivory screen that had been brought by yellow men to India, who sold it to Alexander's admiral Nearchos when he explored the Indus.

There were flowers in such profusion that their scent was almost overpowering—festoons of roses hanging from the gilded beams and coiling serpentwise around the columns; bowers and banks of roses to conceal the service passages that led, through stairs in the supporting masonry, to floors below; canopies of roses, held above the tables on the marble finger-tips of statues of the Goddess Aphrodite rising from the foam on tiptoe—and the very foam itself was roses, wind-whipped, as it might be, out of shallow vases on the floor. Lutes, harps, flutes and sistra were concealed in balconies behind billowing clouds of flowers.

The guests, each bringing gifts, were marshaled in an anteroom while names were entered on Apollodorus' scroll—then led to their places by rose-wreathed slaves who had been trained to walk like spirits. The illumination, dim and indirect, reflected upward toward silver mirrors set against the walls between Babylonian hangings, made the whole scene seem to swim in summer

moonlight, so that the effect of the Eleusis revelries was subtly reproduced, with even the sea-sounds half heard through open windows.

Opposite the windows was a stage for entertainers, with a trap-door, hidden among flowers, that could toss the dancers forth or slowly raise them into view like spirits of the twilight seen against the orb of an enormous golden moon.

The singing-girls—half-naked, languorous silhouettes against a starry sky—were crowded on the outer balcony and only glimpsed between the window-curtains. They were temple-trained in the archaic art of so dispersing song that it appeared to be the voice of night itself, not human throat-notes.

The guests arrived through halls and passageways between ranks of Roman men-at-arms; the dais in the banquet-hall was guarded by Ahenobarbus and as many Romans as could stand with their backs to the rear wall like statues; wherever a sentry could be placed without obtruding stood a Roman peasant-conscript, gazing on the scene with pop-eyed wonder and a smile that was part embarrassment and part immodest confidence in Rome and discipline and Caesar.

Below the dais there were tables for Potheinos and his group of ministers, and for such distinguished Alexandrians as Apollodorus had seen fit to recommend.

It took an hour to arrange the others in order of their precedence. Apollodorus, splendid as Apollo, had to pass among them to decide disputes—even to threaten the noisiest with summary eviction—until at last a resounding trumpet chorus brought everybody to his feet. Apollodorus, with six assistant chamberlains, took his stand on the dais and there followed a long uncomfortable silence until he raised his hand as a signal for applause.

It was perfunctory. Young Ptolemy had spoiled the drama. To preserve the theoretical equality of brother and sister it had been prearranged that they should enter simultaneously through doors on opposite sides of the dais, thus meeting at the table in the center and greeting each other with exactly measured cordiality. But urged, and followed by Potheinos and a group of ministers, with about fifty slaves in attendance, Ptolemy came on to the dais in advance of Cleopatra, hoping to snatch for himself acclamation that might later on be interpreted as a popular demonstration in his favor. He looked pale, but alert and confident, affecting a half-mocking gesture of apology for having come too soon; then stood with the smile of a duelist to watch the other door through which Cleopatra was expected.

Seeing he had stolen precedence she kept him waiting until acclamation died and silence filled the vast hall. Then she sent her servants in ahead of her and came forth at last, with Charmian in pure white turning at the door to wait for her, to serve as contrast to her own pearl and emerald splendor and to receive the first smile, that Ptolemy might have had self-command enough to treat with condescending scorn: That gracious little interlude with Charmian provided time in which to grasp the situation.

Ptolemy forgot his part and scowled. She greeted him with playful ease of manner, kissed him, took him by the hand and led him toward the table, he ungraciously yielding amid tumultuous applause, which lasted all the while

Queen Cleopatra

they took their places. Charmian sat with them on one of the four gilded couches between the golden lions, but Potheinos and his fellow-ministers filed down to the tables set immediately below the dais.

Suddenly then a trumpet-blast came clamoring from the main door. Silence fell, utter and unfriendly, in which Ptolemy's high voice was heard answering some formal question that Cleopatra asked. Twelve lictors, solemn and important in their red cloaks, strode forward and divided into two ranks facing inward. They raised their fasces and aroused a murmur of resentment; lictors were a red rag to the bull of Alexandria's pride. But before title murmur gained much headway Caesar strode in, followed after a long interval by Calvinus and a group of officers.

Caesar was in his element. The golden wreath offset the sphinx-like pallor of his face. His smile was of intellectual delight in calm audacity—the consciousness of greatness. He was not indifferent to danger; he delighted in it. Grim silence, with which he was greeted, was a greater compliment to him, and more enjoyable, than tempests of applause that might have indicated passing popularity. He gloried in arousing hatred that he thoroughly despised and knew he could turn into crawling toadyism when it suited him.

The Alexandrians were on their feet, but no one even bowed until he reached the dais, where Apollodorus did the honors. And then one of those strange incidents occurred that may mean little at the moment but over whose deep significance men ponder in the light of subsequent events. Young Ptolemy rose from his seat to welcome Caesar. The Alexandrian nobility gasped as if the very charter of their liberties were snatched away from them and burned before their eyes.

Cleopatra, curled up comfortably on her couch, was seen to whisper. Potheinos, scowling irritably, urged the boy to be seated, in a raucous whisper that amounted to a public reprimand. Ptolemy blushed, pretended he had stood to call a slave's attention to the disorder of his cushions, and resumed his place, leaning toward Cleopatra to relieve his own embarrassment by cursing her in caustic undertones, she laughing, trying to restore his humor. She was willing yet to make her peace with Ptolemy.

Caesar saved that moment by attracting all attention to himself by the magnificence with which he greeted Cleopatra as he took his place between her and Charmian, facing Ptolemy, whom he saluted with a patronizing smile that offended the Alexandrians even more than it did Ptolemy himself.

Caesar appeared to be playing recklessly into Potheinos' hands. There was a speech to be made before the banquet could begin. He let Potheinos make it, giving him opportunity to play, as it were, the overture preparing the guests' minds for tragedy (for there is no weight, nor any enduring value in surprise without deliberate preparation for it).

Mingled in with platitudes and flowery compliments the eunuch managed to insert suggestive phrases:

"Our city, founded by the glorious Alexander, that has never suffered tyranny from aliens. . . . They who accept the city's destiny become the agents of the gods who suitably provide both means and opportunity to solve all riddles. . . .

. Having lost a portion of that wonder of the world—our library—and with a great part of our fleet in ashes, it behooves us to take sensible preventives against future, and perhaps a more disastrous, loss. . . . Justice is a satisfactory solution, unexpected though it sometimes be, and though it take surprising courses. . . . He who is a faithful servant of his king is called upon to undertake responsibilities and even to ignore established precedents, the outcome justifying him. . . . Our goal is peace, and they who stand in the way of peace must take the consequences."

It was a strangely stirring and foreboding speech, but when he resumed his place he had said no word that, taken from its context, could be used against him. Nevertheless, he had more than half confirmed in the minds of the Alexandrians their premonition that surprises were in store. Even the music, song and dancing, that commenced immediately, and the fabulous supplies of food, and wines from the royal cellar, failed to break the spell of strained anticipation. It conveyed itself to the Roman sentries. They were nervous;—a centurion made the rounds among them, issuing low-voiced reprimand.

While the food was gorged and the wine consumed by flagonsful continuous entertainment was provided on the stage. There were lions that danced with women, and then roared and wrestled. There was an ape, as huge and heavy as a Heracles, that had been taught to imitate a Roman officer in armor and helmet; he came nearer than any one to relieving the tension, because somebody called him Cal-vinus, which aroused roars of Gargantuan laughter; but it made Calvinus swear so blasphemously that Caesar had to reprove him for it. It was noticed that Caesar and Cleopatra partook very sparingly of wine and frequently let pass as many as a dozen dishes in succession; so that it soon began to be whispered, by those who did not know how abstemious they both were, that they were afraid of poison.

And Ptolemy's young face was fascinated—therefore fascinating. He appeared to be aware of something pending and to be restraining excitement, watching Pothinos almost constantly and making, only very perfunctory efforts to converse with Charmian. Caesar, on the other hand, appeared to be in the gayest possible spirit and kept Cleopatra and Charmian in gales of laughter, in which Ptolemy hardly ever joined.

It was midway through the banquet when Pothinos arose from his place to perform a ceremony that was considered the profoundest compliment a minister of state could pay. Slaves brought him an enormous dish (it was borne by two Syrian eunuchs) loaded with a favorite Alexandrian delicacy—rice, and olives stuffed with onion and fish-roe, smothered in a mushroom gravy. Helped by the slaves, Pothinos took the dish and, kneeling between Caesar and Cleopatra, offered it in token of submission, murmuring some compliment about his having caused the king of cooks to prepare his masterpiece for the master of Rome and the mistress of Egypt, equal owners, each of a half of the world.

Then, in accordance with inviolable custom, he tasted from the dish first, in proof that it was not poisoned; and it was noticed that Ptolemy watched him with excitement that was almost mesmeric; he put a napkin to his face when Cleopatra picked an olive from the dish with a pair of golden tongs and raised

Queen Cleopatra

it to her lips.

But Caesar begged her for that olive and there was a moment's lovers' play between them before she dropped it in the palm of his right hand. He made as if to put it in his mouth, and she picked up another with the tongs, but dropped it when Caesar changed his mind and, suddenly and sternly glaring at Pothoinos, ordered the nearest of the Syrian slaves, who knelt to support the dish, to take the olive from his hand and eat it.

The slave hesitated. But he read the cold glitter in Caesar's eyes and chose a quick death rather than the crucifixion that he saw he could not otherwise escape. He swallowed the olive whole, not touching it with his teeth, and in a moment he had dropped the dish and was writhing in convulsions. On the floor of the hall there was sudden pandemonium, and then silence, as the guests pushed back their couches and stood to see better what was happening. Cleopatra stared at Ptolemy. She made no comment. Ptolemy's face remained behind the napkin.

Slaves rushed to clean up the spilled food, and in that moment's confusion Pothoinos sought to end his own life swiftly. He stooped to snatch a poisoned olive. But Calvinus made a handspring to the dais—pounced on him, and hurled him backward toward the screen at the rear, where Ahenobarbus held him until two of the sentries had tied his hands behind his back. A sentry stunned the other Syrian, who was trying to slip away unnoticed.

Caesar had not risen from his couch. In the abrupt and utter stillness that had fallen on the assembly his calm voice was heard addressing Calvinus:

"I think I promised you that at the proper time you should apply your remedy to that man. You will find an executioner waiting out there on the balcony."

"One slave seems dead," said Calvinus. "Shall I have this other crucified?"

"No. Let Pothoinos have him. He may need him."

The sentries hustled their victims out toward the balcony, where the singing-girls clustered in terrified groups. Calvinus followed to superintend, and somebody drew the curtains. Caesar ordered the banquet to continue.

"So you knew?" said Cleopatra.

"Yes," said Caesar. He, too, was staring now at Ptolemy. "I knew."

Before the music could begin again, there came through the balcony curtains the sickening thwack of a heavy sword descending on a human neck. It was repeated. Ptolemy winced twice.

"Also," said Caesar, watching him, "I had warning of armed men whom Pothoinos had concealed in readiness to complete his treachery."

A centurion, who had entered through the main door, smiled grimly, halted below the dais and saluted Caesar.

"Eight hundred and ten prisoners," he reported. "They were hidden in the space between this ceiling and the roof, all armed with swords and daggers. Are they to be slain?"

"No. Keep them." Caesar was still staring hard at Ptolemy. "It appears I shall not lack interesting captives for my triumph when I enter Rome!"

Cleopatra had begun whispering to an attendant, but Caesar's eyes, that seemed to hypnotize young Ptolemy, continued gazing at him. "Do you know

the custom?" he continued. "After they have been paraded through the streets, their leaders are decapitated. The remainder are disposed of more spectacularly."

The entertainment and the music had resumed, but utterly unnoticed, although a woman on the stage had her head in the mouth of a hippopotamus, and a man, without using his hands, was climbing a ladder whose rungs consisted of sharpened sword-blades with their edges upturned. All eyes were on Caesar and on Ptolemy, who stared at him, biting his lip.

"May I suggest to you," said Caesar, "that now that you have lost that eunuch who misled you into unwise courses, you should be guided in future by your elder sister and by me?"

Ptolemy stood up at last and every one below the dais rose immediately. Music ceased, again. The boy glared at Cleopatra. His lips moved, but he said nothing audible. Gathering his robes around him, summoning his attendants with a gesture, he turned his back and left the dais by the door behind the screen.

"It seems we have offended him," said Caesar. "But it would be a pity to spoil the banquet on that account. Where is Apollodorus? Tell him to pass among the guests and reassure them. Bid them all be seated and let them go on with the entertainment. Somebody should take that young man's place—ah, here comes Calvinus."

Promoted to the royal table, Calvinus was rather self-conscious and uncomfortably aware of hostile glances from below the dais. None of Pothinos' fellow ministers had dared to follow Ptolemy from the banquet-hall, but none concealed his horror that a Roman tribune should occupy Ptolemy's couch.

"I should have been here sooner," he said, "but I stayed to give instructions." Cleopatra interrupted: "Calvinus, I sent attendants to the balcony. Did you let them purge away the bloodstains?"

"Orcus! Yes, they brought a brazier and spilled hot charcoal on the place. The corpses have been ordered thrown to crocodiles. But why?"

She shuddered. "Freshly spilled blood attracts evil elementals; the blood of a eunuch is worse than any. Fire is the only remedy. That is why they burn the temple sacrifices. There are very few, even among the priests, who can keep devils away from freshly spilled blood."

"How about a battle-field?" asked Calvinus. "Not that there were many eunuchs, at Pharsalia, for instance. But eh, Caesar? You and I must have gathered a legion or two of elementals in our day! And how about our arenas in Rome? There is bloodshed for you."

"I am not fond of witnessing such spectacles," said Caesar. "And I have noticed that the neighborhood of any sort of shambles is disturbing to the finer processes of thought. That is why, after a battle, I am sometimes given to extremes of magnanimity. I set myself in opposition to the thoughts of vengeance and cruelty that seem to assert themselves more violently on such occasions and in such places."

"Yes;" said Calvinus, "and you forgive the wrong man usually! But you killed the right one this time! Let us drink to the death of all eunuchs in high places!"

Queen Cleopatra

Life is too short to be wasted arguing with such unfortunates. Their minds are twisted so that they are good for nothing but intrigue. And Ptolemy—"

Caesar frowned him into silence.

"Ptolemy must yield now, at last," said Cleopatra.

To which Caesar made no comment.

CHAPTER XXIV

**"My soul is a woman's—yours a man's; and
tear is not my business."**

Now because there is a law of opposites it must appear that there are two ways of arriving at a given goal. The one is violent, the other not; and each way has a multitude of by-paths that may lead in inertia, but none of which connects the way of bloodshed with the way of peace. For they are separate, although their courses appear parallel; but that is only an appearance. One way leads toward the true goal, peace and patience begetting patience and peace, albeit often after many perils narrowly avoided. But he who travels by that other way sees nothing but a false goal that recedes as he advances, every act of violence inevitably giving impulse to another of its kind.
FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

AND now, as so frequently happened when Caesar had done playing cat-and-mouse, he concentrated all his carelessness on one miscalculated effort, bringing on himself disaster that would irretrievably have ruined any ordinary man.

What stirred him most was Cleopatra's grief over the ruined library. She railed against her ancestors for having been too parsimonious to fire-proof books that they had gathered from the ends of earth; but mostly she blamed herself for having, as she put it, thought of herself too much, that night, and of her charge too little. She appeared to believe that her self-surrender into Caesar's arms had given rein to elemental forces that she might have stemmed back otherwise by spiritual watchfulness. Caesar proposed to use alchemy of his own, and swiftly to change that self-reproachful mood by making her the acknowledged as well as the anointed Queen of Egypt.

But there were other influences, too: his men were alarmed by the delay in bringing up reinforcements and by the increasing activity of the Egyptian army under Ganymedes, who had mustered a number of ships to replace the destroyed fleet and was now threatening to block the harbor entrance. Ganymedes held the Pharos; he might perhaps prevent the arrival of reinforcements; he might even sever communication with Tarentum or Brundisium and Rome.

The Alexandrian nobility had left the banquet thoroughly aroused, whereas Caesar had thought to reduce their truculence. By executing Potheinos without a gesture of recognition of the Alexandrian courts of justice (which might have been forgiven in the circumstances) and, far more, by seating Calvinus in Ptolemy's place when Ptolemy withdrew in mingled rage and fear, he had subjected them, they felt, to gross indignity, and they returned to their homes an hour or two after midnight feeling far more outraged, and less helpless than Caesar realized. Cleopatra warned him, but succeeded only in arousing his combative will.

He underestimated the effect of his lictors and his insolence on the mercurial Alexandrian temperament. The nobility had not forgotten his effrontery in

Queen Cleopatra

taking on himself the privilege of dismissing them, on the occasion of their waiting on him in the throne-room. They resented this later insolence more keenly than if he had held them up for money at the sword's point. He had a perfect right to demand enormous sums of money, which they did not intend to pay if they could help it, but which they could pay if they must. Meanwhile they proposed to retaliate for his outrage to their dignity with the sort of fervor that a nest of hornets offers the intruder.

Characteristically, Caesar ignored both Cleopatra's warnings and the judgment of his own men, letting scorn for lesser intellects than his deceive him into thinking himself invincible in any situation. Even when his spies reported Ganymedes stirring indignation with reports that Ptolemy was being poisoned in revenge for Potheinos' attempt, he took no steps to counteract the rumor. He was too proud—too sore of himself.

But the story, that Ptolemy was being poisoned, was the actual impulse, nevertheless, that sent Caesar headlong into disaster. He could very easily have paraded Ptolemy, alive and well, in full view of Alexandria, but he did not, so the rumor gained ground and the Alexandrians proposed to themselves to return that compliment with interest. The water supply of the Lochias royal area was brought through conduits passing beneath the city; they opened the conduits, dumped in wagon-loads of sewage, and threw Caesar's garrison into panic—afraid to drink and casting hysterical eyes toward the open sea and home.

Cleopatra told where good sweet water could be had by digging for it in the filled-up wells that Alexander's men had used three centuries ago. And Caesar did set men to dig; but he also invited her to choose a good position on the roof from which to observe how he conducted military operations.

"For I will show you," he said, "how disciplined men under an intelligent commander behave against ten or twenty times their number of fugitive slaves and criminals."

There was a tart inflection in his voice—a half-note higher than the normal: a trace of the bully: a hint of the cruelty that, by a law of nature, was inherent in his insatiable vanity. He resented her daring to suggest to him that other means than violence, and other strategy than the offensive were available. Her genius was opposite to his; as jealous as a chemical reagent, he proposed to show her that the plans she was already making for the government of Egypt were dependent on himself and hopeless of success without his all-conquering force behind them.

The Parieum, an enormous temple in a proportionately extensive area surrounded by a wall, stood on rising ground between the Lochias and the stadium, in which Ganymedes had encamped the greater number of his troops. To seize the Paneum would mean to overlook most of the main streets of the city and to split the Alexandrians in two by commanding the main thoroughfare north and south, as well as controlling the course of the water conduits.

So Caesar ordered Calvinus to march instantly against the Paneum and take possession of it. He was so sure of the outcome that he saw no need to lead

the troops in person but amused himself by pointing out to Cleopatra from the palace roof how Roman troops were handled, unit by unit, each unit acting independently and yet uniting into one force readily responsive to its leader's brain. That roof pavilion whence they looked on rather resembled the consular box in the Roman arena.

But there very soon ceased to be the same sense of security for the onlooker. Terrific street fighting began the moment Calvinus' small advance-guard strode with locked shields into the wide main thoroughfare. Roofs, windows, balconies revealed themselves as ambuscades from which the citizens and the troops of Ganymedes, sent a storm of missiles. Barricades were thrown across the street so swiftly as to prove long preparation, and the barricades were manned by archers who knew their business. Calvinus' advance-guard died to a man advancing against an overwhelming arrow-fire from a prepared position—surprised, outnumbered and outflanked from the balconies and roofs. Promptly Calvinus swung right and left to storm the houses on either side of the street. By seizing the roofs he might reverse the situation and make the cross-street barricades untenable. But the Alexandrians set fire to some of the houses and the resistance was desperate and skilfully controlled—until suddenly an unexpected swarm of Ganymedes' men came surging from east and west down side-streets, taking the Romans in flank and rear and cutting them off from the Lochias.

Caesar took the business in hand then. Vanity evaporated, burned off by the white heat of his military genius, that seldom showed itself until the vanity had first produced a tangle out of which no ordinary mental energy could find a way. He left Cleopatra to her own resources and to the company of her women, placed himself at the head of the men whom Calvinus had left in reserve within the Lochias, and—sudden as an arrow volley out of ambush—burst up-street to save his army from destruction.

He drove a wedge between the Egyptian ranks. He set fire to the houses that they held. He threw barricades of his own across the ends of side-streets and restored the line of communication, fighting his way to Calvinus and bidding him continue the advance; for he saw that unless he should win at least a Pyrrhic victory the Alexandrians would reckon themselves conquerors and, taking courage, would pursue the initiative, that he did not dare to let pass for a single moment to the other side.

His presence in their midst, as always, instantly restored the legionaries' morale. Their advance up-street became an irresistible, intelligent, alert and interlocking avalanche of violence, supplying from within itself the ever-ready units to replace its dead and wounded, as the outer units bore the shock of contact. And as ever, Caesar bore the charmed life that is one of the chief attributes of military genius. There was no fear in him. The exultant rush of magnetism—the enormous vigor of his concentrated will protected him, though his purple cloak made him a brilliant target and his recklessness led him wherever the danger was worst and the fighting most severe. Magnetic in its essence, his energy aroused and magnetized the energy of others. Calvinus became a war-god. Rank and file, thrilling with valor, responded and the veriest peasant from the smallest tax-exhausted, loan-

Queen Cleopatra

encumbered farm became a Roman, breathing Rome's fire and fury.

The goal was utterly impossible to reach, but Caesar hurled his men toward it until Ganymedes, losing confidence, began to assume defensive tactics and withdrew his men behind a barrier of wreckage flanked by the flames of burning buildings. Caesar could afford then to withdraw within the Lochias.

Victory it was not; but defeat it was not; for he had lost no standards, he could gather up his dead and wounded, and he had done more damage than the Alexandrians could view without consternation. He had lost less than a hundred men. He had slain not fewer than a thousand and he had wrecked a sixteenth of the richest city in the world. The Alexandrians were likely to take thought a dozen times before they gathered enough courage to attempt to drive him from the Lochias.

His retreat was as swift as his foray had been, he riding with the rear-guard to observe that all the wounded were recovered and that the enemy made no effort at pursuit. And he was met at the Lochias gate by Cleopatra with the news that water was already flowing in the wells the slaves were digging.

That was a meeting that, if Cleopatra had lacked genius, might easily have led to a dividing of the ways. She had advised diplomacy. He had preferred impetuosity—and failed. He had excused impetuosity on the ground of needing to control the water conduits; he had not succeeded, and she had succeeded in producing water, in ample quantities from a source that the enemy could not possibly pollute. Furthermore, it always grieved him—after the event—that loyal men must lay their lives down to enforce his will; his intellect was under the control of his emotions then, which is a dangerous condition.

In the white heat of that moment, if Cleopatra had been tactless, she would probably have condemned herself into the ranks of the women whom Caesar had deceived—another Dido left by her Aeneas to regret her own self-confidence and generosity.

But it needed a more subtle tangling of the skeins of destiny than that to overtax her ingenuity. The incident had served as warning to her that the slightest opposition was a challenge that Caesar could not resist accepting. She must yield to him and, yielding, overcome his egotism.

So she made her women bring out palace dainties for the men and comforts for the wounded, ordering Sosistrates, the royal court physician, to place himself and his staff of assistants at the service of the Roman surgeons, whose rough-and-ready crudities were aggravated by the lack of suitable supplies or trained help. But to Caesar she said very little until, by saying so little and avoiding the very mention of the military outcome, she obliged him first to broach the subject.

He had seen his men attended to, and suitably addressed them; he had gone the rounds of the battlements, inspecting guards and the extemporized defenses; he had bathed and donned clean raiment; he had consulted with his officers and drafted plans for strengthening the weaker sections of the wall; he had, in fact, done everything he could think of to delay seeing her alone, when he went in search of her at last and found her with Olympus and Apollodorus and about a score of secretaries, busily studying documents relating

to the government of Egypt, that had been brought in boxes from Potheinos' office. As he entered she was questioning a secretary about the method of storing tithe-corn and the system employed for converting the corn into money. "What do you think of it, Caesar?" she asked. But before he answered he enjoyed Apollodorus' obvious discomfort—self-conscious because he had not been in the ranks of the fighting men. Caesar himself had forbidden it regarding Apollodorus as already popular enough.

"I think," he said then, "it is a little early to be discussing the revenue of a country not yet conquered."

There was a challenge in his tone of voice. He was inviting her to criticize him for the morning's failure. But she declined the challenge with a sweetly reasonable answer, and a gay reliance on his good faith:

"I am leaving to you whatever conquering is needed." That did not quite satisfy him. He wanted absolute surrender of her faith in unseen subtleties, in the presence of Olympus, who, it seemed to him, had reappeared to renew her reliance on mysterious hierarchies, the very possibility of whose existence challenged his arrogant will. He wanted a confession that without him and his army her ideals were imaginary nothings incapable of taking shape.

"You are making ready to rule Egypt," he said, "as if ideas alone could do it.

What is an idea? What value has it without force to turn it into something?"

"An idea," she said, "is nearer to you than your own self-nearer to you than your life is. Men can be slain, but not ideas. They enwrap a man's soul—give it character and quality and color. My soul is a woman's—yours a man's; and war is not my business."

Apollodorus withdrew and Olympus followed him, aware that he was irritating Caesar, who watched him go with satisfaction.

"Where has that man been?" he demanded.

Cleopatra hesitated, doubtful for the first time whether frankness with this man of intellect and iron and passion was the wisest course. But her hesitation only stirred his suspicion.

"Potheinos," he hinted tartly, "was merely another meddler."

So she told him the truth: "Olympus has been saving certain books that were not lost when the north wing of the library was burned."

"What has he done with them?"

"Hidden them."

"What books were they?"

"Some that Alexander wished to burn, and even thought he had burned. Also the Hermetic writings."

"I would like to see them," he said, looking at her with the cold grim glitter in his eyes that always shone there when he had a victory to win.

For the first time then she lied to him, well knowing it would be easy to show him books that he could take to Rome if he wished and ever afterward believe to be the genuine keys of the mysteries. Or he could burn them, as so many conquerors had burned books that contained philosophy destructive of their own. It would not matter. Olympus had saved the real ones.

"You may have them, Caesar. They are hidden from the mob, and from the grave-robbers and the people who sell curiosities. Perhaps they would be

Queen Cleopatra

safer, after all, in Rome than in Alexandria."

That offer totally disarmed him and he melted into a gentler mood, a little ashamed of having shown his temper. He had grown intimate enough with her to know that the mysterious sources of her esoteric faith were more sacred to her even than the Sibylline books were to the Roman priesthood. It appeared to him that he had conquered her, if she was willing to submit those secret books to him, so he dismissed the secretaries and began to make love—marvel-ously—being ever magnanimous in the hour of victory, if irritable in defeat.

He tried to coax her to reveal new aspects of herself, but she had learned her lesson. Cleopatra knew that henceforth she and he were lovers, possibly, but only allies as long as Caesar felt that he could gain by the alliance and that she had secrets for him to coax from her. So the secrets went into an inner sanctuary of her soul, that neither he nor any man could open.

"I would be afraid to tell you, Caesar, anything that might upset the balance of your own ideas. For an idea, as I said, is nearer to you than your body; far more sacred to you than your hands and feet, which you might lose and still be shining with a bright idea. My lightning might scorch you, as your iron lightning scorches your opponents."

"Try me. I am proof against all except love's rays," he retorted, "and those warm pleasantly. I have not noticed that they burn."

"They are fiercer," she answered, "than the flames that burned the fleet the other night. If I should love you as I could, I might destroy you."

"Try me," he insisted.

"Caesar, can you contemplate the loss of treasure or of glory? Yes. You have no fear of losing them, because you know you could win them again. They are an object—something not a part of you. But I tell you, if you should meet with a philosophy that transcends yours, so that you knew your own must yield to it, you would be panic-stricken. You would torture, accuse, kill, and stoop to the most degrading casuistry to justify it. Why? Because your idea is nearer to you and more sacred than the breath you breathe, and they are very few who suffer, without panic, proof that their own ideas lack foundation. It is that panic—that frenzy of 'I am right and you are wrong'—that leads to all the wars and cruelties that make this wondrous world a place of torment."

"Well, we will have those secret books brought forth into the light," said Caesar, "and then see what panic we can stir in the hearts of Ganymedes' men!" She stirred his curiosity, but he could see no bottom to her reasoning, nor any danger lurking for him on the threshold of her mysteries. A warning was a challenge; he accepted it. That minute he made up his mind to discover whither her philosophy would lead him. He would give her full rein, subject always to his own predominating will.

They are few indeed, and fortunate, so circumstanced that when whatever course they take is certain to produce calamity to some one, they themselves can afford to do nothing and leave evil to devour itself. And they are many, and unwise, who in the like predicament adopt the means of utmost violence, identifying fear and selfishness with wisdom, which belongs in an opposite triad. Their true trinity is fear and selfishness and folly. There are some, however, who intuitively choose the least among many evils; such ones are beginners with their feet set fairly in the way of wisdom. But the surest evidence of wisdom, that has entered in and occupied a soul until it governs will and intellect, is SILENCE. If the foolish fear not silence, but embrace it, even they shall find the doors of wisdom open to them.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

BUT IF Caesar had decided to give Cleopatra full rein, partly from curiosity and partly because her unworldly wisdom delighted his aesthetic sense without weakening his reliance on his own grim answers to the riddles of destiny, that was nothing to the looseness of the rein she granted him. Her one mad moment—of delirium of yielding to him—over, she set steadily and consistently to work to strengthen her position, wasting none of her strength whatever on endeavors to restrain his will.

Already she had secret knowledge that the gift of gifts which Caesar could bestow on her was hers. It now remained for her to use her wisdom so that Caesar should preserve her from the wave of Roman conquest and leave her free to lay the foundations of a new old-Egypt.

In those days Cleopatra had not lost her way amid the ebb and flow of counter-currents. The infernal forces had not even disturbed her faith in the omnipotence of Wisdom, and she felt herself in touch with Wisdom's spiritual stream—sometimes as if she swam in it. She was aware of youth and strength, and of ideals that should crack Rome's iron foundations if their roots could once creep in and grow unnoticed for a while. She was no more afraid of Caesar than of the nature forces that destroy the dead stalk and prepare the way for new seed.

"Let him plow and break the dry clods. I am the husbandman. I follow after; and I have a son now, who shall follow me."

She had never a moment's doubt of the sex of the child she had conceived. The Isis lore, including as it did a mystery of emanation from the Mother of the Universe, and her own high priesthood, that was never more to her than a solemn privilege and obligation, filled her thought with universal themes, until she felt herself a vehicle for light and life, upwelling from within to usher in the dawn of a new era.

Caesar was a strong protector given to her by the gods, to stand, on the gross objective plane, between her and the tide of violence that she felt was more

Queen Cleopatra

than two-thirds spent. It should begin to recede before long. It should be her task to resist it subtly, from behind the shield of Caesar's faith in blood and iron, until the day should come when her son should stand in Caesar's shoes—or sit on Caesar's throne, it might be—and pursue receding violence with meditative, calm, albeit strong philosophy of the kind that had once made Egypt's kings as gods on earth and Egypt's monuments a record of the dignity of spirit to which nations may aspire.

They were bright thoughts and they were far more interesting to Caesar than the sordid politics of Rome that he enjoyed forgetting and deliberately thrust out of his mind. And though Olympus warned her, she had already caught, in some degree, the taint of Caesar's recklessness. She ceased from urging on him diplomatic courses. She encouraged him to use his own natural talent. "You have your part to play, and I mine. The Nile bursts many a dike before the flood recedes and lets the laborer on the land."

His autocratic views and scorn of small-scale politics inspired her in return to grandiose visions of a world at peace and active only in the arts and sciences. Her high spirits and enthusiasm stirred his love of action, which at his age and after all his strenuous campaigning, had begun to fade a little. He proceeded again to show her how Alexander of Macedon had not been sole possessor of the gift of solving puzzles with the sword.

Tros thrashed his way into the harbor under straining oars against a head wind, bringing news that reinforcements were at anchor off the coast, unable to approach until the wind should change.

"The Thirty-seventh Legion at full strength—two-thirds of the men seasick. But they have with them food, munitions, siege engines and stores—a dozen ships full. Over the desert from Syria comes an army led by Mithridates of Pergamum, Antipater of Jerusalem, and Iamblichus, son of Sempicaramus of Hemesa—fifteen thousand men."

Caesar manned his entire fleet with its Rhodian sailors and, leaving all his officers and men behind to guard the Lochias, put out to sea to find and bring in the Thirty-seventh Legion before the Egyptian fleet realized what he intended or had time to weigh anchor to prevent him. Foolishly supposing then that he had deserted Cleopatra and was in full flight, the Egyptians moved their ships so as to block the harbor mouth behind him; and, imagining they had Tros safely in their clutches, they were in no particular haste to sail in and precipitate that issue. Time, and the need for repositioning his ship, they thought, would force Tros to surrender.

Meanwhile Caesar's notorious good fortune followed him to sea. Within an hour of his sighting the belated reinforcements the wind changed and blew from the northeast. Taking command, he redistributed the troops so that every ship had its complement of fighting men and set sail for Alexandria in a full gale that brought him boiling down on the Egyptians. Bewildered by his unexpected return, and by the weather that made it difficult to manage their ships in the harbor entrance, they fled after the first exchange of arrow fire and lost a few ships trying to make their way around the Pharos to the other harbor. Caesar sailed in triumphantly and anchored once again at the royal

wharf below the palace windows, after leaving enough of his new troops on Pharos Island to seize and hold its eastern end, thus at last securing the only outlet to the open sea.

And now he proposed to break the Alexandrians' spirit before the arrival of Mithridates and reinforcements. He did not propose to be too much beholden to dangerous friends. So the following day he put to sea again and, sailing around Pharos, invaded the Harbor of Happy Return, where the Egyptian fleet was anchored, and sunk or burned of their vessels twice as many as his own fleet numbered. It was an easy victory, well calculated to excite his own men and to destroy the Alexandrians' self-confidence.

But he misjudged them. They were paradoxical, if nothing else. Their city was designed and built to be protected by a navy, and they possessed more ships than any nation known on earth; nevertheless, their army—a comparatively useless and entirely unreliable aggregation of fugitive slaves and criminals—was of far more military importance in their eyes than their profitable shipping, that might have made them masters of the known world if intelligently handled. The army made more noise; it looked more splendid; furthermore, it terrorized themselves and was entirely competent to handle such minor wars with more or less uncivilized peoples as now and then had to be waged on the southern and western frontiers. So while the army remained, undefeated the Alexandrians still thought themselves the masters of the situation. They were indignant at the destruction of the ships, because it affected their purses, but they were not otherwise much impressed.

And the wine of Cleopatra's mystic charm had gone to Caesar's head. His very abstinence from drinking wine, which he had hardly tasted in the last half-dozen years (perhaps as a consequence of youth's experience of its effects on him) had had the result of making him incautious of other forms of drunkenness. He felt an impulse, saw his goal, and went at it like any drunken stripling with his first command.

He landed on the western end of Pharos and carried its forts by storm, thus effecting a junction with the men whom he had previously landed at the eastern end. He attempted then to return to the city by marching along the Heptastadium—a fifty-foot-wide causeway. If he had accomplished it, it would have given him the practical command of the harbors on either side of it and would have enabled him to attack the Alexandrians from whichever point he pleased, along the whole length of the waterfront. He would have attributed success to genius and inspiration.

But the city end of the Heptastadium was held in force by Ganymedes' men, who advanced at once along the causeway to oppose him, and there were forts on Pharos, at his rear, that he had considered it safe to leave untaken for the moment, although there was a strong force of Egyptians holding them. Resplendent in his purple cloak—a marked figure—he led the advance along the Heptastadium in person, his men pouring along after him from Pharos and another thousand men approaching in ships from the eastward side to take part in the triumphal procession—when suddenly the Egyptians on Pharos left their forts and made a spirited attack against his rear. Simultaneously Ganymedes' men opened a terrific arrow fire from behind a redoubt that they threw

Queen Cleopatra

up hurriedly across his path. Caesar was caught on the narrow causeway between two forces, either of which outnumbered his, and there was consternation all along the royal section of the water-front, where the Roman reserves and the palace officials were watching.

Slaves ran to warn Cleopatra that Caesar was already slain—made prisoner—wounded; there were as many versions as informers. None could find her. She was on Tros' ship, and Tros was crowded away from the mole by Caesar's smaller vessels that were swarming in to rescue him and his already desperately beaten men, who were fighting back to back, with neither room to use their weapons nor a yard of ground to give, and being pushed off into the water to drown in their heavy armor.

Urged by a centurion, Caesar pulled his cloak off to make him a less noticeable target. He was carrying no weapon. In his right hand was a roll of plans of the Pharos fortifications. He struck at the men who tried to throw him into a small boat that had dared the Egyptian arrow fire and was nosing the causeway; then, recognizing the impossibility of even making his voice heard in the din, he leaped into the boat, holding his cloak in one hand and the roll of parchments in the other. Instantly the men who had stood nearest to him followed, and in a second the boat was swamped and overturned.

The men drowned. Caesar, who wore no armor, swam for his life, holding his cloak in his teeth to save it from being made a trophy by the enemy, keeping the roll of parchments high out of the water in his right hand (for they contained the working drawings of the mechanism of the Pharos lighthouse as well as the plans of the forts) ducking his bald head to avoid the javelins and arrows, volleyed at him by the Egyptians, who pranced on the mole and yelled at the top of their lungs in their excitement, everybody advising everybody else what to do and neglecting the opportunity to complete their victory; so that most of the Roman soldiers had time to jump into the boats, and the boats, thrusting themselves alongside the causeway, protected Caesar from the hail of missiles.

He lost his cloak, but he could swim superbly and he reached Tros' ship so little the worse for the adventure that he was able to climb on board unaided. And from the poop of Tros' ship he directed the retreat-across the harbor to the palace, leaving about four hundred casualties behind him, slain or drowned.

The defeat was ignominious. It brought him to his senses. He became again the coldly zealous, calculating master of strategy. Hating above all things to appear ridiculous, the knowledge that his purple cloak was being paraded, through the streets of Alexandria, draped on a man of straw to represent himself, aroused in him that spirit of revenge that he knew how to disguise so well beneath a cloak of specious pretenses.

In that mood he was cruel, calm, resourceful, acidly polite and icily unwilling to confer with any one before he made his cat-pounce in the quarter least expected.

Cleopatra, meaning to soothe his injured pride by giving him good news to think about, reported the tales that had reached her of Arsinoe's attempts to

have herself proclaimed as queen, and of the repeated failure she had met. "Ganymedes himself is weary of Arsinoe. The populace will have none of her. He knows his only hope is to rescue Ptolemy from your clutches and to proclaim him king. But how can Ptolemy escape? And there is no Pothinos now to teach him underhanded statecraft."

"I will teach him—and you also, what is statesmanship," said Caesar. "Learn this: that a bird in the hand is sometimes worth more if set free to disturb the others."

He sent for Ptolemy, who greeted Cleopatra almost graciously, having realized at last the strength of her influence with Caesar. And he began by behaving toward Caesar rather skilfully for a boy of his years, as having heard of the sharp reverse on the Heptastadium but being not so foolish as to suppose it had seriously weakened Caesar's strength. It seemed to him a favorable opportunity to make a bid for friendship.

- Caesar, drumming on the table with his fingers, listened to all that the boy had to say before beginning to question him. Then:

"You are aware, of course," he asked, "that Ganymedes is now calling himself your general?"

"He is my general," said Ptolemy, boasting himself blindly into Caesar's net.

"But as long-as he commands my army he must do what I tell him; and if I tell him to make peace with you, he will come and confer with you at once regarding terms."

"Well, your army under Ganymedes is a crowd of sweepings of the earth and renegades," said Caesar, "and they should be prevented from doing further damage to the city."

"I will send for Ganymedes and he will come and discuss terms."

"On the contrary," said Caesar, "you will go to Ganymedes."

The boy wilted. All his boastfulness left him; educated in treachery by Pothinos and Theodotus, he was shrewd enough to recognize the treachery of Caesar's ultimatum. Well he knew that Ganymedes wholly lacked the loyalty that had made Pothinos tolerable in spite of his eunuch spirit; well he realized that Arsinoe was Cleopatra without the breadth of mind- and magnanimity. She and Ganymedes, as allies, were a poor exchange for Caesar's personal protection and the comforts of the Lochias. And well he knew that neither Ganymedes nor Arsinoe would dream of making peace, with himself in their hands as a dynastic symbol around which to rally Alexandria. He understood that Caesar knew no peace was possible on those terms.

"You are seeking to enhance your own dignity," he objected, with a moment's flash of spirit. "You would rather tell the world you had a Ptolemy for enemy than let them say you made war on a Ganymedes and a girl!"

But if there was a dangerous course on earth or an unprofitable one, it was to tell the truth to Caesar to his face regarding his own underlying motives.

"Your interpretation of my thought," said Caesar, "will not alter my decision. Go then and produce the peace, of which you confidently said just now you hold the key in your own hand."

The last vestige of the boy's pride left him and he pleaded with Cleopatra.

But Caesar interrupted: "If she should consent to your remaining in the pal-

Queen Cleopatra

ace, I would not permit it."

"You are turning me out because you wish to see the end of me," Ptolemy exploded. "You have taken that she-bastard to be your paramour, and now you crave my crown to wear on your own head!"

"On the contrary," Caesar answered. "As executor of your father's will I am affording you the opportunity to make good your boasts; and I will welcome you when you return with peace in one hand and affection for your sister-in the other."

Ptolemy wept, and even offered to acknowledge Cleopatra's claims as equal with his own. But Caesar was determined to be rid of him. If he should need to save appearances by technical adherence to the terms of Ptolemy Auletes' will, there was a younger brother, a mere infant, whom he had not troubled himself yet to see, but who he knew was in the palace somewhere, in charge of nurses, and so half-witted and incurably diseased as to be extremely unlikely to be in the way for long.

He sent for Calvinus and ordered him to provide a cohort to accompany the prince and his servants as far as the Lochias gate. "Afford the prince every facility to take his personal belongings with him, including his dancing-girls," he commanded. "But as the gate must be barred and thoroughly protected before sunset, make haste!"

Ptolemy, in tears, was almost hustled from the room, snapping his fingers to summon evil spirits to bedevil Cleopatra, who had not opened her lips once during the interview.

CHAPTER XXVI "You have made your own choice. You must take the consequences."

It is sometimes wise to simulate a fear of what one fears not, to avoid an issue that one does fear. For a dangerous opponent always thrusts at the apparent point of least resistance.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS

LIKE MOST supremely self-reliant men, Caesar was wholly off guard to such influences as escaped his cynical analysis, and he was unaware how subtly Cleopatra's spiritual alchemy was working on his thought. It was new wine, in an aging bottle, causing a refermentation of his own ideas and arousing in him all his latent possibilities for good and evil, as well as exciting his energy.

He became impatient of anything that stood between him and the consummation of his new ambitions, for he could see a world dominion waiting to be won, where formerly he had only thought in terms of Rome and Roman politics. It seemed to him he could understand at last how Alexander, at scarcely more than half his own age, had sighed for new worlds to conquer. In that mood, the thought of being obstructed or delayed by such a boy as Ptolemy or such a general as Ganymedes was not to be borne.

But his phase of recklessness was over. There were to be no repetitions of the silly exploit on the Heptastadium. He waited until Mithridates' army had reached the border and had stormed Pelusium before he resumed the offensive. Even then he waited until Ptolemy, in a desperate, final flare of royal spirit, put himself at the head of more than half the troops in Alexandria, and, leaving Ganymedes with the remainder to continue the siege of the Lochias, marched to repel the invaders, who were advancing on Memphis and extremely likely to reward themselves by looting that prosperous city.

Instantly then Caesar acted. He left only a small garrison to guard the Lochias, crowded his fleet with the rest of his men and sailed out of the harbor—eastward, as though making for Pelusium, to throw the enemy off guard. But under cover of the darkness, with a wind that, in accordance with his usual fortune, favored his design, he turned about and disembarked his whole force shortly before dawn on a stretch of deserted sand a few miles to the westward of Alexandria, where the enemy least expected him.

His ships then faced about to deal with the Egyptian fleet that had followed him up; but no naval engagement took place, because the wind failed, and because Cleopatra persuaded Tros to put to sea in the rear of the Egyptians. Tros did nothing except maneuver in the offing, but his suspicious movements kept the Egyptians worried until they turned and rowed home.

Caesar skirted Alexandria and marched on Memphis, arriving in time to prevent Mithridates from reaching the city and looting it. Taking supreme command at once of the united army he turned northward and advanced to meet the Egyptians under Ptolemy.

Queen Cleopatra

Ptolemy showed unexpected generalship, fortifying a strong position with the Nile on one flank, a marsh on the other and a wide canal in front, where he awaited Caesar's onslaught. At the Egyptian army's rear there was a high mound from which Ptolemy watched the greater part of the two days' battle, gradually losing confidence as Caesar, keeping a tremendous pressure on the front to hold the Egyptian army, sent an officer named Carfulenus around the marsh, far out of range, to execute a turning movement, that eventually cut off the Egyptian's retreat and threw them into panic.

Carfulenus fought his way into the Egyptian camp at the head of his men. Spying Ptolemy, he shouted to him to surrender. But Ptolemy, anticipating no mercy whatever at Caesar's hands, took flight and jumped into a boat that lay moored to the bank of the Nile. His flight became the signal for a rout and hundreds followed him, crowding into the boat in such confusion that they overturned it, and it sank, forcing the boy down into the Nile mud in his heavy golden armor.

Caesar did not wait to find out whether the boy was actually drowned or not. He sent ahead to announce the news of victory to Cleopatra, and followed the messengers so swiftly with his cavalry that the Alexandrians had hardly time to gather and decide what course to take; but since there was only one course possible they wasted very little time arriving at it.

Dressing themselves in mourning garments, they sent messengers and deputations to him begging for forgiveness. He was met at the gate by city fathers, bearing on litters the small marble, waxen, ivory and wooden statues of the gods, that were kept for the festival processions and whose surrender symbolized the city's unconditional submission to the conqueror's will.

They were a melancholy spectacle, those statues of the city gods, shorn of their trappings of jewels and flowers and colored lamps, without a priest or anchorite to lend them sanctity, and some of them even upset in the haste to reach the gate in time; but there was an element of humor even there, because the Jews, foreseeing opportunity, identified themselves with the surrender. Caesar knew as well as any one with what scorn they loathed the graven images, behind which they had to mass themselves notwithstanding; and it suited his sardonic humor, when he made a speech to them and promised them full civic rights, to check their exhilaration by assuring them that some of their gods should be left for them to worship, even though the majority would have to go to Rome as trophies.

"You can make yourselves new ones," he said, "and you may have my image also for your temple." Then he rode on, smiling grimly but pretending not to notice their embarrassment, aware that their eagerness for the promised political rights would not exactly offset the insult but would make them able to endure it. He did not propose to let the Jews imagine they were henceforth without need to feel their way cautiously. He hoped they would understand the meaning of the hint.

Toward the Alexandrians themselves his attitude was chilly and aloof. As he rode slowly up the street of Canopus he made no acknowledgment of their salutations, even declining the offer of a wreath of roses that was made to him

by a deputation of the wives of merchants. It was clear that he demanded more than lip- and knee-homage before he would pardon them; and there was haste used—there was violence exerted to provide a living scapegoat for his wrath before he should reach the palace and learn Cleopatra's views on vengeance. (For their estimate of Cleopatra until that hour had been mainly made from the discreditable stories promulgated by Pothinos and Achilles, Ganymedes and the wits whose stock-in-trade was slander.)

So an even more depressing spectacle than that array of statues of the gods was presently presented. Litters approached, without slaves in attendance except those who bore the poles; and they had halters on their necks. The crowd around the litters was a second-rate assembly of aspiring "outs"—of courtiers and politicians who could hope for no advancement unless some one's fall from high estate should result in a free-for-all scramble,—flatterers—moutherers of loyalty—treacherous, meddling, lickspittle liars, of the sort that can be counted on to pad the ranks of court conspiracies—betraying their arrant worthlessness by the smugness of their righteous faces and the simulated purposefulness of their hurrying stride. Caesar knew that breed; he had employed them and left them a thousand times to curse his cold ingratitude.

The curtains of the litters had been torn off, that the world might see the shame of those who sat within. Arsinoe was in the foremost litter, pretty much disheveled from the haste with which they had dragged her out from hiding, and in tears because her erstwhile friends had left her to the mercy of such vermin in human shapes. She dried her eyes as she drew near Caesar. Ganymedes was in the second litter, bleeding from a blow over the eye that somebody had dealt him with a slipper-heel. They had tied his hands and put a halter around his neck, and they used the halter roughly to drag him forth from the litter when the procession halted in mid-street, blocking Caesar's way. Arsinoe leaped out before a hand could touch her and stood alone, exactly in front of Caesar's charger, her eyes flashing the more splendidly because the tears had wetted them. Some erstwhile courtiers approached to stand on either side of her as custodians, but Caesar motioned them aside. "You prefer this to being Queen of Cyprus?" Caesar asked her. "You have made your own choice. You must take the consequences."

"Slay me now!" she answered, proudly, giving him no glimpse of fear—of him, or death, or anything whatever.

He took no notice of Ganymedes. A centurion rode up and, throwing away the halter with a gesture of fine contempt for the swine who had hung it around his neck ordered him into the Roman ranks, where mounted legionaries closed around him. Caesar, sternly gazing at Arsinoe, beckoned her litter forward, nodded to her to climb in, ordered his own men to surround her, and resumed the triumphal march, ignoring, as if he were not even conscious of their existence, the ignoble well-dressed vermin who had brought into his hands the only two remaining personages who by any chance whatever could have prolonged the war or could have embarrassed him with new intrigues if left at liberty.

**CHAPTER XXVII "Tell me the secret of Caesar's strangih, for hs
is stronger than 1."**

What superiority may we attain to without stirring enmity in others? Has it not been written on the face of nature? Wisdom counsels us to seem inferior, in secret gathering our spiritual strength, since enmity is aimed at virtue, seeking to reduce us to a common level with the human herd; whereas we should rise to an equal level with the gods. FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

CLEOPATRA received news of Caesar's movements almost hourly, although Apollodorus had absented himself without the formality of taking leave and most of her usual informants were in a state of alternating panic and hysteria. Caesar's own dispatches were brief and supplied no details; but Tros had friends among the Jews, and it was the business of the Jews to know everything, as exactly as possible, for business reasons. Tros was prompt with his information, and Cleopatra's ficklest friends began to try to reinstate themselves in favor by sending their slaves with congratulations on the heels of every rumor; those who had been less half hearted actually came in person with the latest news. When Arsinoe became Caesar's prisoner Cleopatra was informed of it almost before it had happened, because the ringleaders of
180

that betrayal hurried to the palace to get credit for it, letting their catspaws perform the public act of cowardice.

So Cleopatra was prepared. The last touches, of banners and gaily arrayed crowds of servants, were being attended-to by the assistant chamberlains, and all the palace musicians had been massed to greet the returning conqueror with stirring sounds of drums and sistra, lutes, flutes, harps and the booming horns whose throats were like the throats of hippopotami at war. There was nothing to do but wait, in the room at the head of the stairs of gold and malachite, whence she would step forth presently to win a world or lose it. Vain at all times, Caesar in the hour of victory might be insatiable—might make it clear to her and everybody else that she was now a subject princess, not a royal ally. Charmian was useless—all a-flutter of expectation and alarm, as loyal and selfless as a good slave, but as worried about details as if a wrong fold of a chiton probably would change the destiny of Egypt. And Olympus was indefinite as usual when Cleopatra wanted finite prophecy.

"You have cast the horoscope of this hour?" she demanded.

"Yes," he answered. "It is an evil hour for the fish that has swallowed the hook. A most propitious hour for the successful fisherman. It is an hour in which water runs downhill and wise women let wisdom lead them. It is an hour when fools sow folly and reap want; when calmness is the mirror of ideas; when—"

"It is an hour when I will endure no insolence," she interrupted. "Caesar is flushed with victory and he feels his strength. Sail I dare to betray my weakness?"

"Weakness betrays itself," he answered. "It is only strength that can be covered up."

"Is the secret, that only you and I know, weakness or strength?" she asked him.

"Neither," he answered. "Strength can not be rendered weak, nor weakness strong; for you are strong if you have strength, and if you have it not, weakness shall weaken itself with every struggle."

"Tell me the secret of Caesar's strength, for he is stronger than I."

Olympus smiled. - It seemed he doubted it. "His is the secret of any man's strength, or any woman's. He loves."

"You mean he loves me? That is something that I knew a month ago. Love may have strengthened Caesar, but it weakened me. What shall I do, Olympus? What shall I say to him?"

"He loves," replied Olympus, "as the fowler loves the bird he snares or as the hunter loves the lion—as the outlaw loves the victims whom he robs. I tell you: they who love not are so ignorant and unobservant that the fowls escape them, or the lions slay them, or the watchmen catch and crucify them; and success of any sort is unobtainable by any but a lover. Is it not apparent to you that unless a man should love his enemy he could not understand him and defeat him? Without love, even scorn and hate are nothing. Though he love to his own undoing, Caesar is a lover almost without limit."

"Does he love only Caesar?" she asked, studying Olympus' eyes; for she intended that Olympus should read, if he could, the courage that underlay her own perplexity. She wanted him to tell her naked truth in the assurance that she would face her destiny whatever the answer might be.

"He does not know what love is," said Olympus. "It appears to him as interest; by that name he would recognize it. Interest him, and until he sees a more absorbing interest, although he weary of the outer woman he will seek the inner with an even greater determination. Cease to interest him and though you were a very Circe, he would become Odysseus, and the stronger the bonds with which you tried to hold him, the more craftily he would break away. And if the bonds were too tight, woe betide you!"

"Now you talk like the true Olympus," she said, smiling. "You spoke to me nothing but words at first."

Then Caesar came, amid a blare of music and the clatter of hoofs of cavalry, dismounting from a splendid horse amid a shouting throng, who knelt, and rose, and knelt again; receiving garlands from young Greek girls with blasphemous praises on their ruby lips and in their dark eyes yielding adoration; entering the palace as its master, alone, between ranks of kneeling servants whose foreheads pressed the marble floor—to the foot of that marvelous malachite stair that had golden handrails like long serpents held by laughing nymphs of Parian marble.

There he paused. For at the stairhead Cleopatra stood. The Romans of his staff and the Arabian commanders of his cavalry, grouped on the threshold,

Queen Cleopatra

watched with speculating eyes. The Romans knew their Caesar in the hour of victory. The Arab chieftains never had beheld such splendor, nor had seen a woman meet men with such calm assurance and gentle dignity. It could not be, they knew, that any unveiled woman, without a eunuch near her, and no barrier between her and a host of men, could stand thus and retain her modesty. A wanton she must be. The white-robed women of the presence grouped behind her, with their bare feet, stained with henna, showing through the straps of jeweled sandals, surely were the light o' loves that desert chieftains dream of when the night wind blows across the hot sands of Arabia and black tents are the pits of torment. Wantons— but they wondered.

Caesar knelt. What chivalry, or what artistic genius of gallantry had hold of him none knew—not he, nor Cleopatra. But his officers, observing, whispered to one another she had used the siren's art and snared the calvus moechus, who never until that day had knelt to man or woman.

Neither she nor Caesar spoke. He stretched his arms toward her, too aware of dignity to mock that moment with a vestige of extravagance. His gesture was a Roman Emperor's offering a kingdom he had conquered to the Queen whose heritage it was: and with it homage, as the conqueror, to her whom he acknowledged worthy of the gift. But it was Caesar's gift, not destiny's. And gracious though his homage was, it was that of the Pontifex Maximus who might remove an image, even of a great god, from a temple in pursuance of his own whim.

Cleopatra, infinitely more aware than Caesar of unseen powers influencing the ebb and flow of the affairs of men, advanced down the malachite stairs to meet him with the rhythm and calm of moonrise, matching even Caesar's genius for splendid drama. Better than even Caesar did, she knew the simple and unconquerable force of timeliness—the fitting of words and deeds to moments.

They embraced on the landing midway of the stair, and she was seen to whisper to him. They ascended, he with an arm around her, and the women at the stairhead recognized on Caesar's face a gentler vanity: on hers a new, less nervous confidence. In the hall below, the watching Romans whispered she had asked for Arsinoe's head for a birthday gift, and that Caesar had assented. Whisper became rumor. Rumor became news. Within the hour it was all over Alexandria that Arsinoe had been slain.

In the same room where she had first met Caesar, Cleopatra let Charmian overhear the secret that she had not hesitated to tell to Olympus. Unaccountably, she had dreaded having to reveal to Charmian, from whom she kept no secrets as a rule, that unkeepable one that she was already destined to be the mother of Caesar's child; and, still more unaccountably, she had not guessed what the effect would be on Charmian, of whom, like the Goddess Diana, it was impossible to think as otherwise than virginal. She had supposed that Charmian would shrink from her; or if not that, at least would grieve, although Charmian had known from the first of the intimacy with Caesar, and had never appeared critical.

However, only two words leaped to Charmian's lips as she stood gazing into

his eyes—unuttered, but so close to utterance that Caesar could not fail to understand her.

"Caesar's wife!" he said and nodded, not unkindly. "Charmian, until a Roman's wife has borne him three sons she has but a slender claim on wifehood. She may be lawfully set aside by the mere formality of writing her a letter." It was then that Cleopatra more astonished Charmian, and Caesar, too, than at any time, by anything that she had said or done.

"I am no man's wife, nor will be," she announced. "I am nothing that can be taken and set aside. I am blessed by the gods, who need no law of human making to provide my son a royal destiny. Who is there higher in Egypt than I am, and to whose law shall I yield myself? Who shall make laws for Caesar? And shall I acknowledge the laws of Rome that Caesar trampled on because they were stupid and had brought Rome to a state of anarchy—even as the laws men made in Egypt had brought Egypt to the very verge of ruin?" That was beyond Charmian's skill to answer, though she knitted her brow and would have liked to disagree. Her happiness was wrapped in Cleopatra's destiny, and nothing could shake her loyalty, but she could sense the danger of ignoring the laws of men, more easily than she could follow Cleopatra's reasoning.

But Caesar leaped into the opening with the alertness with which he usually pounced on opportunity. He neither knew nor cared whether Cleopatra was voicing genuine convictions and her inmost feelings. He recognized her tact and, in a certain sort, her genius. She flattered him in the way that he liked to be flattered, offering him full rein and an opening for escape from what might turn into a grim responsibility. There was a Roman law, that always had been jealously enforced, forbidding a patrician's marriage with a foreigner. There were laws he had disregarded, and others he meant to repeal, but knowing the Roman patrician pride he was alert to the danger of repudiating that one. Cleopatra's spirit, too, excited him; she practically challenged him to stand with her aloof above the human law, as equals. He could readily concede that, since he was in no possible military danger from her. Egypt as his personal reserve, apart from Rome, would be a source of strength. Dimly, too, he had begun to glimpse the meaning of her other-worldly views, and he reverted to his earlier, friendly judgment of Olympus, whom he suspected of having given her shrewd political advice under the cloak of vague philosophy.

For if there was anything in what Cleopatra and Olympus maintained about man's essential divinity, then he, Caesar, had been justified in overriding the laws of men. That was a subtly comforting reflection, even to a man of Caesar's arrogant temper. Far more clearly than Charmian did, he saw the danger of the theory but danger thrilled him. The point was, that he saw the possibility of making that alleged divinity a concrete force in politics. Alexander had succeeded. Why not he? There might, after all, be something in that myth of his own descent from Aeneas and Venus. And he thought, with a moment's grim smile, of that other story about Aeneas and Dido.

He did not understand that Aristotle's teachings, not enough diluted with discretion, had made Alexander mad. He did know that the world consists, in the main, of people who will believe anything provided some one in authority

Queen Cleopatra

asserts it often enough and points to what appear to be results. As for himself, he had no legitimate son, and, his only daughter being dead, the thought of founding a new dynasty was worth considering. The sex of the child might make a prodigious difference to his ultimate plans. There was no Roman law against the adoption of a child, whatever his mother's race or origin.

"Rest assured of this," he said, "you are Queen of Egypt. Your Ptolemaic dynasty was the outcome of Alexander's unfinished work, which I intend to rebegin, rebuild and finish."

"I will name our son Caesarion," said Cleopatra. "He shall rule what Caesar has made ready."

There was a change in Caesar by the time he left the room to attend to the needs of his men, never neglected when his normally dynamic mood was uppermost. Even his stride had altered as he pondered that idea of man's divinity, confusing fact with essence; overlooking, too, that the divinity is universal. The divinity, for instance, of Apollodorus, on his way in, was neither apparent nor pleasant to contemplate, to Caesar on his way out.

Sullen, savage-looking, dull-eyed—indignation emphasized by the immaculate condition of his clothes—Apollodorus saluted with such lack of courtesy that Caesar paused to stare at him.

"Your haste outweighs your memory of manners!" he remarked.

Apollodorus met the stare unflinching and with a curling lip that showed less strength than self-disgust inviting recognition—a sub-subde vanity.

"Manners," he retorted, "are for those who care for other men's opinion or the future. Having neither trouble on my mind, I nevertheless saluted you from habit. I withdraw the compliment."

"I never crucified a man for rudeness," Caesar answered, "but I have seen men whose rudeness led them into greater indiscretions, for which there was only one remedy. Your fortune is better than you appear to think if I judge correctly from your attitude. You find me in a forgiving mood. What is the offense you have committed against me, that you so suddenly turn against me?"

Apollodorus smiled in spite of himself at that shrewd summary of man's disloyalty to man.

"I have done what you never did," he replied. "I attempted for one moment to live nobly. Lo, the aftermath! If there is anything you think you can do to restore my respect for anything, myself and you included, I defy you to make the attempt."

"I have been defied by even lesser individuals than you," said Caesar, "and have not always thought it necessary to my dignity to take up the challenge."

Tros came, striding along like an Argive warrior in quest of Trojan armies, amber eyes aglow with passionate, impatient purpose.

"Here is a man," said Caesar, "who has shown me very persistent and resourceful enmity. However, you will observe it is beneath his dignity to be discourteous."

Tros' salutation was an oak tree's to the wind. Sturdy, rooted deep in valorously held convictions, he acknowledged Caesar's eminence and gave him

credit for being master of the Roman world, but not of Tros of Samothrace. Bend he must, and even break he might, but neither he himself nor Caesar nor the gods should ever doubt his oaken courage.

"Caesar," he said, when his salute had been returned, "I have come to require fulfilment of the bargain between us, having done my part."

Apollodorus could not resist that opening for a shaft of acrid humor: "Caesar, I suppose you think, is fairer than the gods you advised me recently to trust? Not long ago, Tros, in a moments' despicable folly, I made a three-cornered bargain with all the gods and one unhappy woman. She kept her part of it. I and the gods are equal renegades. Your gods mock me, and I mock myself for having mocked my common sense by trusting anything but evil. Evil is the only certainty—evil, death and broken faith, my own included!"

Tros knew the cause of Apollodorus' trouble. He received the outburst in silence. Caesar, affecting resentment, adroitly used it as a shift for denying Tros the settlement he sought:

"Broken faith," he said, "is usually charged by men who seek reward and honor for themselves before the hour when destiny awards the laurels. I will speak with you later, Tros, when I can read the meaning of events more clearly. As for you"—he frowned at Apollodorus as if pained and disappointed in him—"if you should compel yourself to think less of fame and profit, and more of duty, you would more readily win my sympathy for you in your affliction, whatever it is."

The world's arch-plunderer and arch-priest at the shrine of fame strode on to receive the plaudits of his men—to promise them money and tax-free holdings—in a district from which other people should be dispossessed.

Apollodorus, making a grimace to Tros, led the way into Cleopatra's presence.

But Olympus had entered through another door and was in conversation with her. Tros and Apollodorus had to wait, and Charmian, who was -entertaining half a dozen wives of the aristocracy who had come to try to make their husbands' peace, broke away—eager to talk to men to whom she could speak her mind unreservedly. She wanted news of Lolliane, knowing Apollodorus had been absent many days in quest of it from the lips of Antipater's men.

"Dead! Herod slew her," said Apollodorus, "boasting through his foul teeth that she loved him for a night or two and then slew herself when he threatened to send her back to me. He sent that message by the mouth of his father, Antipater, who was at pains that I should fully understand that he was lying. Thus do your glorious gods reward me! They ignore the risk I ran—the sacrifices I have made—my services. And they let Herod grin. I will open a wider gap for him to grin through presently!"

His words were so unlike Apollodorus' normal understatement of his own emotional reactions that Charmian hardly hid her recognition of the breakdown—hardly tried to hide it. All she said was:

"May I be as brave as Lolliane. May I never need to be as brave!"

For which Tros bowed to her, then turned and faced Apollodorus.

"Caesar slew my father and my wife," he said, "and yet I slay not Caesar, though I have had a score of opportunities. Add vengeance to outrage, and

Queen Cleopatra

shall wisdom be the total?"

"I have done with compunctions," ApoHodorus answered. "I am here to take my leave of Egypt, for I will go and sky Herod or die."

"I, too," said Tros, "am here to ask dismissal, and I need it for a higher purpose than to go slaying rats in Galilee. But I will confess myself a poor prophet if the leave is forthcoming. It is the gods who give leave or withhold it. Caesars and Cleopatras serve for the gods as pieces in the game."

"It seems to me that all this godly argument is human cowardice," Apollo-dorus sneered.

"You have not gone very deep into the mysteries," Tros answered, "or you would know that cowardice is deafness to the secret counsel of a man's own soul. It is spiritual deafness worse than any animal's; it submits him to passion and whim, and leaves him a prey to whatever devil cares to hunt him for his pelt. Sharks—seaweed—anything is nobler than a man who has lost spiritual hearing. For what did Loliiane die? To save her mistress. Is the work done? Had you a hand in it? Then finish the task! For, I tell you: one by one we come before the gods, though we live and die in legions. Rot me all this coward talk of vengeance! It is what Apollo-dorus does, and not what Herod did, that matters to Apollo-dorus, and to the gods who are in search of equals to include among themselves."

Then Charmian drew Tros aside, he none too willing; he mistrusted women's confidences.

"Tros," she said, "Cleopatra will weigh your words, though she might reject mine or another's without giving thought to them."

"Let us hope so," Tros answered. "I am here to ask for my dismissal, which Caesar will never grant me unless she persuades him."

"Tros, already she is with child!"

Tros answered as if the news were neither interesting nor important:

"Then she needs Olympus and a midwife. Why me?"

"Tros, Olympus only prates philosophy. He does not tell her what, or what not, to do. He is not like you; he talks about the universe and eternity when what we need is now's advice—the moment's wisdom."

"It appears to me he has that wisdom. I have won battles at sea by prating to myself philosophy and thinking of the universe. And I have brought my ship through storms by thinking of eternity."

"Tros, speak with her! Tell her again what Caesar is and how unwise it is to trust him. Beg her to ask Caesar to divorce his Roman wife before the child is born."

"So that he may divorce your Cleopatra also when the time comes? Trust him! Trust him to be Caesar! Do you expect him to become a masculine Cleopatra merely because he has got her with child?"

"She declares she will never become a Roman's legal wife, but that is because a woman with child is not in her proper senses. Tros, tell her about Dido. Tell her—"

"I will tell her, if you like, about me," he answered. "I was free of all seas."

Yet I put into Alexandria and into Caesar's net. Now I must beg Caesar's leave to come and go. Shall I advise your Queen to yoke herself to Caesar any faster than he has her now?"

"What will the world call her?"

"Will she marry the world?" he retorted. "I have yet to see any one gain in reputation by asking the world's authority to flout the world's opinion. She may have vision. Can you see through her eyes?"

"But Caesar may leave her unprotected!"

"Let us hope so. He left Britain unprotected, after we convinced him twice that he was invading the home of hornets."

"But there is no throne that can defy Rome nowadays."

"There might be. I think Egyptians might be taught. Give me even what is left of the Egyptian fleet, a month or two to discipline the crews, and I doubt—I gravely doubt whether Caesar could conquer any sea-girt land without my leave."

But neither politics or statecraft nor the strategy of high-seas fleets was any affair of Charmian. She was wholly, heart and soul, for Cleopatra, shocked by the news of Lolli-ane's death and utterly mistrustful of Caesar's motives. She began to believe that even Tros was unreliable.

"Then speak to her about Arsinoe," she urged. "Caesar intends that she shall judge Arsinoe, and I think Caesar is testing her. It is one of his tricks. What shall she do, Tros? Shall she order her sister beheaded? Then the world will say that Cleopatra is Caesar's catspaw and merely another Ptolemy. Shall she pardon her? You know Arsinoe? I know her! She will never rest until she has slain Cleopatra by one means or another. She is as vindictive as a viper. What shall Cleopatra do?"

Tros hesitated. "She shall advise me," he said after a moment. "If she knows the answer to that riddle, she is well worth serving a while longer."

Cleopatra sent Olympus to bring Gharman, Tros and Apollodorus to her seat near the window; and then Caesar came, with Calvinus and four other Roman officers. Caesar sat beside Cleopatra. The Romans stood, one of them wondering at Tros' muscles, another curiously studying Apollodorus, whose gloomy, half-beaten look belied his brilliant reputation.

"Speak, Calvinus," said Caesar.

Calvinus forthwith arraigned Arsinoe and Ganymedes, begging Cleopatra not to see them in the judgment hall but to order their immediate execution, waxing vehement because Cleopatra seemed to be paying slight attention to him. But one of the Roman officers was trying to flirt with Charmian, spreading himself like a cock-pigeon, and Charmian's face was much more amusing than Calvinus' court-martial arguments.

"Treason against the state," insisted Calvinus, "has ever been regarded by all honorable men and women as meriting sentence of death."

Cleopatra glanced at Caesar slyly from under dark eyelashes, and Tros' eyes glared a watchful challenge, but Caesar appeared unself-conscious, and Calvinus continued:

"It is a pity they were not both slain by the mob that made them prisoners and brought them to Caesar."

Queen Cleopatra

"Well," said Cleopatra, "that was Caesar's opportunity, not mine. And since he chose to be magnanimous, I can do no better than to follow his example. Let Arsinoe be confined to her palace until she begs my pardon and gives evidence of purpose to amend her ways. We will marry her to some one. Let Ganymedes be kept with the other prisoners who are to be sent to Rome for Caesar's triumph."

"Are you wise?" asked, Caesar, studying her face, and Calvinus began to urge him:

"Caesar, I beg you to take this matter in your own hands! Wisdom—remember Potheinos, and my advice to you, that if you had followed sooner—"

"The essentials of wisdom utterly elude analysis!" said Cleopatra, laughing at Olympus. "They are like Olympus' smile: there is no knowing what mysteries it hides!—Caesar!" She turned to him and her voice changed. "In the allegory Isis is a woman bringing forth a child. The dragon pursues the woman to devour the child. The woman flees. I flee from the thought of vengeance, which is like quicksand, in which serpents dwell."

"Are not serpents said to symbolize the wisdom?" Caesar asked her.

"Not when they dwell in quicksands!"

Tragic vanity of grief obliged Apollodorus then to call attention to himself: "Allegories," he remarked, "are riddles concocted by priests for our confusion. But I have one that even Olympus may unravel rightly: there is a lying dragon near a lake in Galilee, who slew a woman before she had any chance to bear a child. I ask leave to go and slit that slimy dragon's throat."

"You speak of whom?" asked Caesar, staring at him.

"Of Herod, Antipater's son."

Cleopatra was on the verge of speech, for that was her first news of Lolliane's death. But Caesar saw the blaze of indignation in her eyes and spoke first, glaring at Apollodorus:

"Do you dare to set your personal vendettas above Egypt's welfare and my alliances? Calvinus, see you to it that Apollodorus stays in Alexandria. Accommodate him with some witnesses. A Roman body-guard, until he recovers his senses, will save him having to restrain himself."

Apollodorus backed away, throwing a cloak over his face. Calvinus sent a Roman officer to follow him. For a while Cleopatra was silent, studying Caesar's face and mastering her own emotion; for already she had learned that statesmanship permits no private griefs to interfere with policy.

"Apollodorus," she remarked, when she had herself under control, "was an optimist because he had never known misfortune of the kind that stings. He is wavering now between relief that Lolliane is not to cling to him all his days, and vanity that urges vengeance. He will never be the same Apollodorus. But I knew he was too vain to last—just as I know Herod is too venomous to harm more than a few individuals. He will use up his venom too quickly."

"What is it you want, Tros?" demanded Caesar.

Tros met his gaze. There was an interchange of mutual recognition of the gulf unbridgeable between them.

"Orders from the Queen," Tros answered. "It is clear I have a destiny that anchors me to Egypt. I will not cut cables; destiny shall run its course. But I am Cleopatra's admiral, not Caesar's."

Caesar smiled, agreeably but with a tinge of tartness. Cleopatra tucked her feet up on the couch and lay back, studying Tros as if she saw in him an answer to a thousand riddles that Olympus had left unsolved.

"Tros," she said, "I would give you a wife if I thought you could be tamed to live with one. You might even conquer Arsinoe, only I fear that she would stab you first or poison you. Shall I give you a palace? It would make you more fretful than a caged lion. Money? Later, you may have as much of it as you can use; but I know, you cannot be bought with money. What then shall I give you?"

"A promise," Tros answered. "Remember that promise you made me on the day I first came. Remember it, and keep it."

Cleopatra nodded three times. Neither of them looked at Caesar, who was already attending to some tablets that a secretary brought him.

CHAPTER XXVIII "We will never see the old Apollodorus back."

Great men set examples which the lesser imitate. And there are many lesser ones far wiser than the merely great whose greatness causes other men to err; for wisdom has no more to do with size, or noise, or violence, or fame, or riches, than dimension has to do with quality. They may exist together and they need not. Second only to ability to lead men rightly is ability to choose which leader, out of many, it is wise to follow.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

SWIFTLY Alexandria revived under the hand of Cleopatra, upheld by Caesar. Even more swiftly Caesar modified his views, and Cleopatra hers, she knowing it was useless to attempt to dam the mental energy, of which his physical endowments were a faint, however marvelous, reflection. But he could be guided, and diverted, like the Nile flood. So she yielded all she could yield, and was firm without his knowing it—most firm, in fact, when she appeared most yielding. And she flattered his confidence in Rome's and Caesar's destiny, encouraging his craving to surpass the exploits of Alexander of Macedon, raising, meanwhile, artfully constructed dikes, in the form of reasons why he should not turn aside to overflow her Land of Khem with those medianically perfect Roman legions, so tolerant of gods, such deadly adversaries of ideas.

Like Caesar, she could forefeel the beginning of a new great era. She had only her intuition and ideals with which to resist Rome's overflow. She set herself, guilefully and ceaselessly, to color Caesar's thought with as much of her own philosophy as he could understand. And while that, like a chemical reacting on a chemical, wrought madness in him, she herself—attempting to absorb into herself in turn some elements of his materialistically masterful philosophy—became corrupted. Never wavering from her own high purpose, nevertheless, she lost at intervals her vision, that was in any event in danger from the lees and fumes of Ptolemaic tendencies, which she inherited, of which she was aware, and which she fought against, with varying success, her whole life long.

Born and educated in the most licentious and corrupt court in the world, with murderers for forebears, the marvel was that she descended no more than she did, at times, into the darker Ptolemaic layers of her nature. Youth and dawning motherhood combined with consciousness of genius to keep her thought uplifted. Caesar's love of splendor and his insatiate craving for power, along with his contemptuous appraisal of the value of the world's opinions and of the danger of disregarding them, corrupted her. His love of power was as contagious as most vices. It amused him to make her, at twenty, an absolute autocrat, and to see her gathering into her hands, day after day more firmly, the control of the most splendid city and the richest country in the known world.

To make her popular he reduced Rome's demands for money to the minimum that he needed for the payment of his troops, and he let it be known that it was at her request he did it. The sum of ten million denarii, which he demanded on behalf of Roman creditors was not only moderate but an actually generous concession—a demand comparatively easy for the Alexandrians to meet, in spite of the fact that so much of their city had been wrecked in the fighting. They praised her. They began to talk of offering him the crown of Egypt as her consort—an amusing suggestion typical of Alexandria's conceit that, nevertheless, set Caesar thinking about crowns and thrones—and Rome—and Alexander's empire.

Yet another concession he made to the Alexandrians. His tribune, Calvinus, was not particularly tactful and had been personally offensive to the nobility since that incident of his replacing Ptolemy at the banquet table; so he promoted Calvinus, to get rid of him, sending him to command the troops in Pontus, replacing him with another freedman, Rufinus by name, who was as wholly Caesar's man as Calvinus had been, but who almost worshiped Cleopatra and was in sympathy with the Alexandrians' own admiration for their city.

Rufinus and Tros grew friendly. Tros, of his own initiative, but with Cleopatra's generous encouragement and Caesar's cold assent, began to rebuild the Egyptian fleet with the aid of Rhodian shipwrights. The foreign corn trade was a royal monopoly demanding an enormous fleet of ships which Rufinus foresaw would be at Rome's disposal if required, but which Tros intended should be an eventual obstacle to Rome's imperial progress; so that the two, from motives diametrically opposite, worked hand-in-hand. Caesar saw money—the all-necessary money for his own imperial projects, which a reviving corn trade would pour into Cleopatra's treasury. And she was as generous with her money as he could be extravagant with other people's. It would only need a year or two of peace and normal revenue to make her fabulously rich—another Croesus; Caesar much preferred to have those funds to draw from personally than to see them pouring into the Roman treasury, where the Senate might have too much to say. With private money he could buy the votes of the individual senators—a cynicism he had never balked at. The importation of Euxine and Lebanon timber in enormous quantities, the laying of keels and the planning of ships and docks kept Tros too busy to observe what else was going on, though Cleopatra might have listened to him had he neglected his own problems to consider hers. Tros' mind was on ships, and on a ship canal that should reopen the ancient fairway to the East. Apollodorus was useless, glooming over his own lost self-esteem and training teams of Arab horses in the stadium, under watchful Roman eyes, enjoying melancholy even while he risked his life a dozen times a day, attempting to break to the racing chariot ungovernable stallions that were a gift to Cleopatra from Semsicaramus of Hemesa, whose cavalry, lent to Caesar, were mounted on desert mares, but who sent that most priceless gift that was in his power to bestow when he learned by messenger how Cleopatra's star was rising. Cleopatra was left entirely under Caesar's influence and subject to the flattery

Queen Cleopatra

of Alexandrian counselors appointed, at Caesar's whim, to form her ministry. And there were Romans constantly arriving now, with messages for Caesar and requests that he should take up the dictatorship in Rome; for the Senate had elected him, in his absence, absolute dictator for the ensuing year. Mark Antony as his lieutenant was not winning wholesale approval; he and Caesar had been outright enemies on more than one occasion and he was even rumored in some quarters to be listening to overtures from Pompey's still rebellious supporters. Those Roman emissaries, treated non-committally by Caesar, did their utmost to ingratiate themselves with Cleopatra, flattering her in order to discover, if they could, the secret of her influence over the man whom all Rome feared, however much some hated him. They returned to Rome with their imaginations fevered by her magnificent entertainment and by the skill, with which she parried, in their own tongue, their bluntly inquisitive questions. All of them accepted handsome gifts, which whetted appetites for more; and all of them carried home incredible tales of how Caesar was being treated as a god by the Egyptians.

For Cleopatra made the most of that convenient convention. Always, and not only in the olden days, when a prince's parentage was doubtful the religious legend was invoked of gods in human form begetting offspring from a princess to refresh the spiritual lineage. Such doctrine was accepted literally by the Egyptian populace, to whom their ruler was, if not, divine in person, then at least the shadow of divinity on earth. All miracles were credible to them. And even by a number of the educated Alexandrians that theory of divine royalty was accepted almost literally, because of the general human tendency to keep religion in one layer of the mind and in the other layers incredulity, irreverence and common sense. Those Alexandrians who mocked religion as the rankest superstition (and they were many) nevertheless well understood the political advantage of credulity in other people and, consequently, were the last to dream of publicly exploding a myth that could be made to serve convenient dynastic purposes. Intelligence suggested silence, when an argument might lead to rivalry and civil war.

And Cleopatra, being one of those rare women who had been admitted to the inner mysteries, well knew the underlying truth. It was none of her doing that more than nine-tenths of the world was as incapable of understanding esoteric allegories as the animals are blind to mathematics. The essential divinity of every man and every woman—of all the universe and every atom it contained was axiomatic to her. From her view-point, there was no advantage in denying her divinity or Caesar's and descending to the level of the herd, merely because the herd misunderstood a truth, her understanding of which placed her as high above them as they were higher than the beasts of burden. Anarchy might follow a repudiation of divine right, just as it would follow any effort to explain their own divinity to people not yet capable of comprehending it. They would mistake their lusts for spiritual privilege and Alexandria—all Egypt—would be turned into a shambles.

But she did think Caesar might be made to understand, and she attempted it. One difficulty was that Caesar had made himself ineligible for the mysteries

by sexual indulgence in his youth, and even in his middle age, when most men are credited with having bridled their grosser passions. There were minor mysteries, and outer fringes of the great ones that might have admitted him into their lowest ranks if his indulgence had not been so notorious; but, as far as the inner sanctuaries were concerned, where the inner secrets were revealed and, after terrible initiation, men were convinced, by proof, of their immortality, Caesar was as utterly excluded as a dog was from a mausoleum. He might harry, as he did in Gaul, and had meant to do in Britain, the reputed hierophants. He might burn them alive—flog, rack, crucify. But the lips of those who had attained initiation were as sealed as if death had silenced them. No death that Caesar could impose could be as terrible as that awaiting any one who profaned the least of the mystery secrets by revealing it to uninitiated individuals; for whether that death was merely figurative, in the form of ostracism, or physical, as sometimes happened when public opinion was too thoroughly aroused, it included the self-recognition as a traitor to his own soul, that the hardest must flinch from, and that those possessed of character enough to be accepted in the inner shrine would infinitely rather die than face. The world was full of tales of what went on within the mysteries, but those were told by men who had had to imagine; and men whose unbridled lusts exclude them from occult ceremonies are unlikely to imagine decency, or anything approximating truth.

However, it was possible to hint and to arouse a speculative interest in Caesar that might lead to a dawning consciousness of truths, so near to the mystery teachings as to serve the same high purpose. Socrates had reached a comprehension of the truths unaided. It was impossible for Cleopatra, an initiate, to speak or act without in some way, indefinably perhaps, but noticeably indicating her familiarity with cosmic secrets; an initiate could usually recognize another without interchange of challenge and answer or secret handclasp. She could hardly help guiding Caesar's mental processes.

And there was one strong virtue that Caesar possessed, which made it possible to reach and stir his higher intuition: he had never meddled with the black arts. Sorcery and high ideals are as mutually exclusive as light and darkness. Sorcery was so abhorrent to him that he had, in Gaul particularly, wrecked and scattered purely ethical associations because he had been falsely informed that their secret practices were witchcraft or something worse.

But Cleopatra had another difficulty to overcome, and it was almost as insuperable as the silence she must keep. She was now with child. Difficult and rare although it was for any woman to obtain initiation, there was one rule even more inviolable: during pregnancy, and until she had weaned her child, she was forbidden access to the mysteries for reasons which every initiated woman understood so clearly that she would never have dreamed of attempting to avoid the rule. She was excluded for her own protection.

Foreseen when the veil was lifted to admit her as a virgin princess, the difficulty had been partly solved for Cleopatra by providing her with contact in the person of Olympus, so that even when the normal processes of nature shut her from the sanctuaries where her inspiration, growing dim, might be relit, Olympus could supply enough reflected spiritual light to rearouse her courage

Queen Cleopatra

which is an essential requirement on the upward planes of thought. High thinking taxes courage to its limit.

Ever since the school established by Pythagoras had come to grief through trespassing in the realm of politics the hiero-phants of the inner mysteries had set their faces rigidly against a repetition of that error. Cleopatra, as the Queen of Egypt, had her own task to accomplish, on a plane on which no hierophant would interfere. Their aim was to preserve the spiritual knowledge and to reenlighten all the world, not only Egypt; nations and boundaries meant less than nothing to them. Her duty was to make their task less difficult by resisting the wave of mercenary frenzy that was threatening to engulf the world. The only help that she might look for was the strengthening of her vision by inpouring of sublime rays of intelligence; that, and the encouraging admission of her right to wear the crown and scepter of the Upper and the Lower Nile.

However, even on the surface and in the realm of politics, such help was of enormous value. The Egyptian priests were not notorious for purity; their contact with the ignorance of masses, who accepted literally allegories meant to indicate unspoken secrets of the cosmos, had imbued great numbers of them with contempt—an attitude exclusive of that inner light in which a spiritual purpose thrives. But one and all, from the high priests of the temples downward to the lowest ranks of newly frocked confessors, they were in awe of the sacred mysteries—particularly of the Mystery of Philae; and they knew that Cleopatra was approved by Philae—crowned and blessed by Philae's emissaries. So they used their influence in Cleopatra's cause.

And Caesar very soon became aware of the enormous power of the priests—a power that was inevitably sterilized by civil war, but that grew stronger with every day of stabilized government. The practise of confession made the priests recipients of all the secrets of the city. Alexandrian love of festivals and glorious processions gave the priesthood opportunity to hypnotize the populace with solemn gaiety and ritualistic glamour. Rome's priesthood was the aristocracy itself, which had advantages for the aristocracy but split society in twain; whereas Egypt's priests were a third estate depending for its revenues and power on the throne, which it supported and from which, in turn, it derived authority.

That priesthood, which he could not, in his own mind, separate from the entirely independent, overbrooding spiritual hierarchy, interested Caesar. He began to study it. When Cleopatra, wearing the royal robes of Isis and borne on an open golden litter so that all Alexandria might see her exercising the divine right, went to the Serapium in splendid procession to identify herself with unseen powers that had brought peace, Caesar, watching from a window, saw the crowds lay foreheads in the dust and saw the high priest on the temple steps receive her, amid blaring music, as if Time were welcoming a young year, to reward it with his blessing and to send it forth enriched by an ensuing season.

Rome had no such ceremony—nor such a temple, where the divers deities all blended into one, and all were represented without lessening the dignity of

any. Rome had no such glamour to confer on her dictator as those priests provided for their Queen. Caesar perceived the value, on the merely mundane surface, which was all he cared about, of recognition as the representative on earth of unseen gods.

Plainly, the ignorant herd not only liked, but needed, deities that it could hear and see.

Historical events were periodically carved and painted on the temple walls, symbolically, to suggest the everclose association between gods and men. In temple after temple they began to picture Cleopatra holding intimate communion with Amon—recognizable as Caesar, who raised no objection. He preferred the ithyphallic significance of that to his better-known title of *advus moechus*, that he had had to endure for many years with none too easily assumed indifference. His dignity was very precious to him. Deification seemed perhaps the best way to remove old stigmas.

Natural austerity increased. He grew paternally benevolent to Cleopatra, chilly and aloof toward the Alexandrians, more and more distantly proud in his dealings with Rome, whose constantly returning messengers reported him as fast in Cleopatra's toils. He gave ridiculous excuses to them for his absence: as that the wind was adverse, or that the military situation needed his direct attention on the spot. Nor did he trouble himself to write dispatches. The truth was that his ideas were undergoing transmutation and he wanted time to think; and a theory of the Egyptian priests, that epilepsy was a state of consciousness in which the mortal held communication with the unseen powers, encouraged him to study what the nature of those unseen powers possibly might be. His attacks of epilepsy had begun to recur more frequently, and he dreaded them; whatever argument might serve to minimize that dread was welcome.

Meanwhile, the dungeons of Alexandria were emptied at his command to supply victims for the Roman games, and his agents were set to work procuring wild animals to be sent to Rome by shiploads, some to await his own arrival, others to be used at once in the arenas as the great dictator's gift, to keep the populace in a state of fevered expectation. Though he ignored the Senate, and not even Cicero could persuade him to answer indignant correspondence, he was careful to make the Roman mob remember him, and in addition to the lions and elephants, the hippopotami, giraffes, enormous apes, the crocodiles and savage bulls, he began to send shiploads of weapons as trophies to use in his triumph.

It was on those ships that Cleopatra sent her emissaries to reside in Rome and keep her privately informed of whatever political changes might be taking place behind the scenes. With Caesar's knowledge, and without it, she sent missionaries to revive the Romans' interest in Isis, knowing that what nearly every Roman craved was knowledge of an after-life, which his own religion barely hinted at. She knew that much of the Romans' ruthlessness was due to ignorance of any reason why they should not plunder and enslave the world; if after-life was no more than a fingering around neglected tombs, then it was logical to make the most of this life at the cost of other people. She proposed to change the Roman consciousness. Familiar herself, as all the educated

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What she overlooked was that the advent of a new idea usually raises public restlessness to fever heat, until the passion now and then boils off in bloodshed. Sending quietist philosophy to Rome was rather like pouring oil on a furnace in dribblets. And she did not foresee that the Romans would prefer the long-notorious Egyptian sorcery to any pure philosophy that she could send them, though Olympus warned her. She became increasingly impatient when Olympus hinted that there might be deadly danger in her plans.'

Meanwhile, Caesar's troops insisted on their customary privilege of holding gladiatorial games, and an arena was constructed on the outskirts of the city, where a few score pairs of felons were compelled to slay each other, or were torn by lions. It was a shabby spectacle, the victims being untrained, and the Alexandrians resented it all the more in that Caesar absented himself. They would have liked him to observe their furious contempt for such uncivilized amusement. Stones began to be thrown at Roman soldiers in the streets, and all the pacifying work of weeks might have been undone, had not Cleopatra

Queen Cleopatra

thought of rescuing Apollo-dorus from the depths of his depression. She sent for him. She commanded him. When he had left her presence she announced: "We will never see the old Apollodorus back, but he will be as amusing and unde-pendable as ever."

**CHAPTER XXIX "Who hath regarded a horse, and the soul of
the song that resides in him?"**

*The essence of a true philosophy is ease. It may, it usually does, take effort to acquire it, and yet effortlessness is its nature, since it recognizes WHAT IS rather than what might be. This is why the true philosopher has dignity without demanding it, but he who struggles to obtain dignity appears ridiculous, and he who fears its loss is like a madman nailing shadows to a wall.
FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.*

FESTIVALS were the breath of the life of Alexandria. The climate lent itself to merry-making, and the beauty of the marble city was the inspiration. Caesar, who loved splendor and movement and life, seriously pondered the idea of making Alexandria his capital. It could be easily defended. It was close to the sources of enormous wealth and limitless supplies of corn. It would serve well as a startling-point for conquest of the East. The climate of Rome was dreary in comparison, and deadly with malaria; he foresaw that it might take generations to transform that brick-built, squalid, ancient city on the Tiber into the splendid empire-plexus of his dreams.

With his customary mastery of detail, he devoted intricate attention to the parks, the zoological gardens, the open-air public dining-places where the holiday-keeping crowd was liberally fed with good food and indifferent wine from the royal cellars. Wishing to see Alexandria at its gayest, he requested Cleopatra to decree a sort of saturnalia to celebrate the resumption of the city's normal life, and most of the ideas that he incorporated afterward into his method of corrupting and controlling Rome were suggested to his inquiring mind during those extravagant weeks while he and Cleopatra watched the festivals together.

He made extravagant contributions, in his own name but with Alexandrian money, to all the important temples with a request that the money be spent on celebrating peace and the dawn of prosperity; so that day after day the principal streets became, as it were, rivers of flowing crowds, all gaily dressed, all laughing, singing—led in religious procession by sacred black bulls and by the companies of priests surrounding their aged hierophant veiled in heliotrope and robed in priceless splendor—before they threw off all restraint and solemn thought to live life madly for the moment.

But the gaiety, the reveling and drunkenness, the dancing in the streets and torch-lit boating on Lake Mareotis were preliminary—merely the producers of the proper mood from which, to rise to that crowning arch-delight of Alexandria—the chariot races. Tickets for the stadium were free, but they were numbered and the thirty thousand seats were allotted in strict proportion to residents of the several city wards; several days before the races upper seats were changing ownership at prices more than the equivalent of one year's income of some of the purchasers, and the price of a box would have bought two racing chariots, their horses, grooms and experienced charioteers. There

Queen Cleopatra

was tremendous excitement because the Jews, already exercising privileges granted them by Caesar, were allotted a percentage of the seats; but most of the Jews compromised by selling out at stupendous prices, thus avoiding a riot, and in the end only Esias and five friends occupied the one box that had been allotted to them as a mark of distinction, next to the seats reserved beside the royal box for distinguished strangers, in which. Tros sat so near to Cleopatra that he could talk to her across the gilded rail and could feel the flutter of the peacock-feather fans.

Caesar was in the royal box, wearing his purple cloak and golden chaplet, grimly disregarding the indecent songs the Alexandrian humorists sang about him (they were the most impudent lampoonists in the world, and to have whipped them would have stirred the city's indignation even more than granting civic liberties to Jews had done.) There was a parade of Roman legionaries to begin with that gave no offense worth mentioning because it came as a glamorous climax to the marvelous and wholly unexpected, good-tempered and yet rigidly enforced efficiency with which the public had been herded by Caesar's veterans, every man and woman to the proper seat. Even Esias and his friends were not hooted; and for a while Caesar and Cleopatra were accorded generous ovations, that were repeated and repeated until pandemonium broke loose at last with the appearance of the first competitors. There were six events for professional charioteers, all slaves or freedmen, commencing with a race for two-horse teams, and men comparatively unknown, each succeeding race presenting better- and yet better-known men and horses; so that the excitement grew and gathered until the climax when, in the seven race, the amateurs of Alexandria competed in person with famous four-horse teams on which they had spent fortunes, and on which they and the public wagered such incredible amounts that bankruptcy and even personal slavery were not uncommonly the outcome. Many an Alexandrian had never visited his distant Nile-bank, revenue-producing cornland, or his mines, until enormous losses on the race-course compelled him to rebuild a fortune in retirement.

From the moment when the golden trumpets blew the fanfare and the first four chariots, with their drivers dressed in red, white, green and yellow opened the proceedings with a trial canter once around the stadium, there was a rising wave of passionate suspense that burst in a storm of exultation when the starter gave the signal and the race began.

There were rules, but no mercy for the man whose skill could not protect him from the fouling of an adversary. Whoever pinned a rival against the barrier and crushed him, or who stole the inside course at a turn and made his gain good by bumping the rival team and leaving charioteer and horses wrecked and struggling in a broken heap, received the plaudits of the crowd and no official would have dared to disqualify such a skilful victor. There was betting as to how many contestants in each race would bite the dirt, and only once, that whole day, did the wagerers on zero win the odds.

The frenzy became inhuman. There were fights among the spectators, for no reason except that excitement had to find relief; the Roman legionaries were

kept busy with their spear-butts prodding rose-wreathed Alexandrians who were pulling hair and punching noses simply because they had betted on different teams and could not watch the outcome without venting their hysteria on one another.

In between the races the arena swarmed with acrobats and clowns who helped to relieve the emotional strain and to occupy the long intervals provided for the professional gamblers who paid highly for their privilege. That was the recognized opportunity for new troupes of performers to advertise themselves for employment by the nobility at their profligate evening entertainments, and the competition to amuse was consequently brilliant and bitter, but the gales of laughter seldom came until the trumpets sounded to clear the course and a cohort of cavalry, armed with whips, pursued them tumbling over one another out of the arena with the clowns making the most of the chance to appear ridiculous.

The only quiet spectators in the stadium, outside the royal box, were the officers of Caesar's Arab cavalry who occupied the seats of honor in a line with Tros. They sat like graven images, contemptuous alike of charioteers and horses, of the noisy Alexandrians and of everything except the women, whose unveiled beauty set their eyes aglow and whose vivacious gestures made them wary of movement lest they should betray their own lawless lust. They had desert manners, those Arab chieftains, and a bone-dry estimate of the essentials, that made them respectful of Caesar and intolerantly disrespectful of the city people's judgment of a horse. Tros and Caesar were the only two men in all that multitude who gained their admiration, by restraining whatever excitement and almost entirely disguising whatever interest they might feel. Tros now and then leaned across the gilded rail to talk to Cleopatra about his friend, Caswallon, the King, who, according to Tros, preferred unbroken horses and a roadless countryside. His memories of Britain had grown glamorous during the years since he had helped Caswallon to defeat the Roman legions led by Caesar.

Caesar's secretaries brought baskets full of books, which he studied with knitted brows and one leg crossed over the other. He ignored the racing, now and then reading aloud to Cleopatra passages that he considered note-worthy and enjoying her brilliant comments; for she was as familiar as he was with the works of the philosophers and he had not yet found one subject on which she could not converse with him with original intelligence.

Caesar, preferring not to risk defeat, was not competing in the seventh race, in which it was usual for the court to be represented and for which almost any prominent Alexandrian would have been delighted to enter his own best team and charioteer in Caesar's name. However, it was known—and known particularly to the Arabs, who accepted it as a tactful and auspicious compliment—that Cleopatra had entered those four priceless stallions that had been sent her by Sampsicaramus. The horses, being unknown to the Alexandrians, found very little favor in the betting, but it had been rumored for days, from end to end of Alexandria, that Apollodorus was to take the reins. It was considered likely that Apollodorus? almost endless run of luck had spent itself. The fortune-tellers, shrewdly studying the law of averages, were unanimous

Queen Cleopatra

about it. And it was also known that Apollodorus' three most noted rivals had leaped at the chance to replace him in the popular esteem.

Two of them, Phidias and Cleisthenes, had been political supporters of Prince Ptolemy. Included in Caesar's general amnesty they had, nevertheless, been mulcted mercilessly by the officials whose duty it was to collect the money payable to Rome; so they had wagered heavily to recoup themselves, and they were bidding, too, for popularity to save them from political extinction. Both young, they had all the attributes that mobs approve in aristocracies, including good looks, arrogance and courage. Politically they were jealous of Apollodorus; personally they hated him, having felt his sarcasm; and they knew that in spite of his favor at court he was under a present cloud of melancholy that was likely to obscure his spirit and his almost superhuman skill. Furthermore, they were aware that his team was only partly trained; so that each regarded the other as the real opponent and they had thought it safe to lay long odds against Apollodorus' chance, as well as wise to agree on convenient means of making the race a duel between themselves. The third competitor, named Gelo, nearly forty years of age, had been one of Arsinoe's chief adherents and had taken part in her betrayal into Caesar's hands. He, too, was

in the race for popularity, which he direly needed. But he hated Apollodorus with a virulence more bitter than that of the other two contestants. They were, after all, young noblemen as capable of like as dislike. Gelo was a no man's friend who thought that popularity depended solely on success and that success entailed somebody's ruin. An approach that he had once made to Apollodorus, with a view to buying his social and political friendship had been rejected with light-hearted indifference that stung and drove him into Arsinoe's party, only to find himself again mistrusted and unpopular. He justified "the mistrust by being among the first to seek credit for her surrender into Caesar's hands; and now he proposed at last to win the plaudits of the crowd as well as Caesar's gratitude by humbling in the dust the brilliant horseman who had worn the victor's golden laurel wreath too long.

Gelo had observed that Caesar disliked men in his environment who distracted attention from his own preminence. The safest way, it seemed to him, to establish claims on Caesar was to render unasked but important services and then to be unobtrusive but expectant of recognition. He had noticed, and he had heard it said, that Caesar now and then showed irritation at the ease with which Apollodorus made himself the center of attraction; he proposed to earn Caesar's gratitude and simultaneously to make a strong impression on the public by contriving the handsome favorite's defeat.

The more spectacular and ignominious that defeat the better; and as for the personal risk, it was no more than proportionate to the boundless social and political opportunities that were contingent on success.

It had not been difficult for Gelo to produce in the public mind anticipation of some calamity to Apollodorus. He had revived, and his agents had busily spread, the half-forgotten rumor that Apollodorus had been Cleopatra's lover until Caesar replaced him in her affections. All the world knew what the fate

of a discarded lover ought to be; the fellow should have killed himself to prevent one calamity from following another. To drive the Queen's own horses in a desperate effort to restore himself into her favor was too great a temptation to offer the inscrutable dealers of evil luck. Caesar had probably hired some one to weaken the chariot axle or to tamper with the horses' food. The odds against Apollodorus, who hitherto had almost always been an odds-on favorite, were at ten to one. There was even money being laid on Phidias and Cleisthenes, and Gelo scarcely figured in the betting.

The odds against Apollodorus went to twenty to one the moment the teams came through the entrance gate beneath the royal box. Apollodorus had drawn the outside station and should have come last, but he shot under the archway out of turn, avoiding Phidias by a miracle, and wheeling to the left—the wrong way of the course—unable to control the four flame-colored stallions that fought the bits and one another and appeared to revert to savagery at the sight of the arena and its thirty thousand yelling occupants. The gate attendants, who should have tried to seize the horses' heads and turn them, jumped clear in a panic to avoid heels and wheels. Apollodorus had to let the war-trained, chariot-shy stallions take him almost half around the course before he turned them at last and began to follow the other three chariots that, in accordance with long established custom, were parading prior to the race. The odds went now to a hundred to one against him. ; Twice his stallions crashed into the barrier set down the midst of the stadium to divide the course and once they nearly jumped the six-foot wooden wall into the crowded lower seats; they would have jumped it, had they all been of the same mind, but they were fighting one another at the same time that they rebelled against the guidance of reins .; and whip.

Caesar rolled up a parchment manuscript and watched ' them. There was something in that fight between a reckless man and four yoked passions incarnated in the "wind-bred" desert stallions that appealed to his sense of domination. He smiled and spoke to Cleopatra; and because his smile was naturally sardonic when seen in profile vanishing in deep lines at the corners of his mouth, there were many who remarked that he was sneering at her favorite. She nodded back confidently, but that was to be expected; nobody had ever seen her look less than confident in public.

Caesar was seen to send a secretary to the box in which the Jews were seated. It was noticed that Esias left the box in a great hurry and did not return until the race was about to start, when he nodded to Caesar, who raised his left hand in acknowledgment. There were many who, right deduced from that that Caesar had placed a substantial bet, but only some professional gamblers knew he had wagered almost enough on Apollodorus to ruin the losers, if, by accident or some amazing stroke of luck, Apollodorus should snatch the victory. Caesar was not a man who believed much in the soothsayers or who overlooked the long odds when recklessness and courage coupled with experience were at war with frenzied strength against over-confident opponents. He had won one or two such victories himself. What he had said to Cleopatra was:

"That young man hopes to die in the arena where he won his laurels. Death

Queen Cleopatra

comes not so obediently. Observe my Arab officers."

It was easy to observe them without their knowing it. Their eyes were on those four rebellious stallions and not a motion escaped them, not a symptom of condition or a detail of the way in which Apollodorus got them gradually under his control without reducing one fraction of their fiery resentment of restraint. They were sweating, snorting, kicking at the hated chariot, but they had hardly yet begun to feel their strength, and they were discovering that the fragile racing shell was something that it was easier to flee from than to shake loose. An Arab began to question Tros as to where and with whom bets could be placed and presently he vanished after making a collection of his companions' money. The other Arabs—twenty of them—began to chant their tribal rhapsody that had in it the breath of deserts and the passionate mystery of unknown causes:

"Allah! Who knoweth the horse and the spirit of strength
that resides in him! Allah! His eyes are as embers that "glow in the jewels of
Sheba!

Allah! The breath of his nostrils: it burns as the blaring
of trumpets! Allah! The thunder of hoofs as a dawn rises over the desert!

"Who hath regarded a horse, and the soul of the song that
resides in him? Spirit of wandering wind, and the pride of the Djinn that
resides in him! Lo, how he wandereth forth, and the heat and the drought
are his homeland! Lo, how he paweth the earth, how he raiseth his head to
the challenge!"

The race was four times around the arena, starting and finishing in front of the royal box. A quarter of an hour was used up getting the contestants into line, the teams of Phidias and Cleisthenes not causing much trouble, but Apollodorus' stallions becoming increasingly violent as a result of Gelo's deliberate efforts to obstruct and irritate them. There were a dozen false starts, the voice of the throng, like an explosion, each time maddening the horses into greater frenzy.

Cleopatra leaned over the front of her box and tried to throw a rose down to Apollodorus as the teams wheeled and passed her in the thirteenth attempt to cross the starting line together. It struck the off-side stallion on the ear; he shook his head, screamed an insulted challenge to his yoke-mates and all four, seizing the bits in their teeth, went headlong up the course exactly as the starter gave the signal.

That saved Apollodorus. Gelo, meaning to make short work of him, with one eye on the starter, wrenched at the reins to hurl his own team sideways into Apollodorus' four—too late! Apollodorus shot past, neck and neck with Phidias and Cleisthenes, careering headlong for the turn, and holding his own in spite of being on the outside and having a greater distance to traverse.

The proper course for Gelo to have taken then would have been to follow, saving his team for a spurt, and watching for opportunity to cut in on the inside whenever the terrific speed should force the contestants wide of the turns at the barrier's ends. By that means he might have stolen the lead after a round or two. But instead he lashed his horses and pursued at utmost speed,

endeavoring to crowd in from the rear and force Apollodorus to the outer wall.

At the far turn, on the first lap, Apollodorus executed a maneuver that in one instant restored the crowd's enthusiasm for him. He contrived to check his stallions for a second; then he loosed them and sent them like a bolt out of a catapult into, the gap that opened between Phidias and Cleisthenes. There was not an inch to spare and both men tried to crush him between them, losing enough speed by that to send Apollodorus shooting to the front. By the time he had reached the home turn he had gained a chariot's length and had the inside berth.

And now the stadium became the heart of thunder, as the spectators realized that they were witnessing another such race as had made Apollodorus famous. Men ceased to behave like human beings. The Arabs clasped one another's hands and swung together in motions meant to stimulate the magic that resides in horses' hearts and legs. Women tore their clothing and beat their breasts. The Roman legionaries lost all interest in keeping order; they, too, cried to the gods to favor this or that one and gesticulated with dice-throwing gestures, leaning across the shoulders of whoever happened to be nearest. Men in the front rows stood, and men behind them smote them down on to their seats. There were shrieks from women pressed against the arena wall. And through and through the din came sharp staccato volleys from the bull-lunged professional gamblers, as the odds against Apollodorus shortened by fifty percent, explosions and he became the odds-on favorite.

Apollodorus' team, in front now, with nothing in sight to overtake, reverted to rebellion and swung wide; Phidias and Cleisthenes opened up to let Gelo through both yelling to him as he passed them; Gelo, lashing furiously, drove in on Apollodorus' left hand but did not pass him; he crowded him outward and farther outward as the Arab stallions gave ground nervously, until Cleisthenes and Phidias had room to challenge once more on the inside and all four raced abreast for the turn at the far end.

There was no holding that pace, and there was no room for Apollodorus to pursue his former tactics. Gelo nursed him, trying to crowd him to the outer wall. But the superior speed of the four bay stallions told and he headed Gelo, forcing him to give way to the left; it was possible to crowd in on a reckless driver who held a lead by even half a head, if he could only make his horses swerve in toward the challenger instead of edging away. Apollodorus gained again on Phidias and Cleisthenes, with Gelo hanging on his flank to worry him, and Phidias and Cleisthenes drew rein a little, being minded not to spend their horses' strength too early in the game. At the turn by the royal box all four were in a crowd together, with Apollodorus on the outside.

Once more Phidias and Cleisthenes let Gelo pass them, as if they were willing to let Gelo make the pace, which was no unusual proceeding. An experienced eye could tell by now that Gelo's horses were outclassed; it was a race between Apollodorus and the other two. But they took the turn wide, permitting Apollodorus to repeat his diagonal spurt that placed him again on the inside, neck and neck with them, and Gelo leading. There was something a bit too obvious about the way they let him steal that great advantage; his unruly team

Queen Cleopatra

was at its best with something ahead to overtake and thundering hoofs on the right hand by way of added inspiration. Din died. Everybody saw there was a foul about to take place, as all three chariots gave chase to Gelo, whips fanning, gaining on him—and Apollodorus, his heart in the race at last, utterly forgetting melancholy and the will to die, discerned the trap too late! His rivals had him hemmed in, extended and blocked beyond all possibility of reining clear of a collision.

But by only he knew what compelling magic of the reins Apollodorus checked his frenzied team enough, three-chariot-lengths before they reached the turn, to upset calculations. Phidias, nearest to him on the right, and watching him, with his team in hand, checked also, hemming him in, but Cleisthenes on the outside, not aware that Apollodorus was awake to the danger, fanned his four bays and shot ahead, thus overtaking Gelo, who had slowed a trifle; and Gelo thought that Cleisthenes was Apollodorus.

One thing that Gelo did not lack was courage. Pulling his horses' heads together to break the rhythm of their gallop and throw them into confusion he suddenly leaned his weight on the off rein. The team tried to answer to it, tripped one another and fell, at the turn, in the path of Cleisthenes, who met the fate intended for Apollodorus and charged headlong into the wreck.

A writhing mass of chariots, men and horses was thus spread directly in Apollodorus' path. Phidias, being on the outside, pulled clear, but allowed no room for Apollodorus to avoid the obstacle. The roar of thirty thousand voices rose to a shriek, for it was evident that Phidias was to finish the race alone. Apollodorus was done for—gone the way of many an erstwhile favorite.

But Apollodorus possibly remembered his desire to die then. Or perhaps his instinct to take all chances and never to admit defeat until defeat was proved and irrevocable governed his brain and nerve and overrode all lesser emotions. He cracked on speed. He shouted to his stallions. He braced himself and, seeming to gather magnetism from the tumult in the air, drove headlong at the writhing mass of shattered chariots and kicking horses. Those four stallions of his were trained in war. The agonized excitement of the onlookers awakened in them all the sudden fire and spirit that an Arab chieftain values. They were unanimous at last; they understood the endeavor demanded of them—the impossible that they must overcome. They leaped the wreckage, dragging their chariot through behind them. The shock and the jerk—the exultant frenzy and the tumult from the madly moving sea of faces all around them—the exertion of their utmost, wildest, wanton-est determination loosed their battle ardor. The collision, as the chariot wheels struck wreckage, threw them slightly sidewise and they saw Phidias' team on the outside racing belly to the earth to make good the advantage. They snorted—challenged—charged it, only swerving to the left in answer to the reins in time to shoulder the team, instead of crashing headlong into it to fight with teeth and hoofs as they intended. The shock threw Phidias' near-side horse; the other three went down on top of him, and Phidias was catapulted, with a broken neck, against the wall of the arena.

The attendants hurried out from doors in the arena wall to pull the men free, kill the injured horses and drag away the wreckage. There was no obstruction left by the time Apollodorus had made the circuit of the arena. He finished the race alone amid a tumult such as even Alexandria had never witnessed, and Cleopatra herself descended from the royal box, to stand on the rose-embowered platform that was wheeled out from the entrance gate and crown him with the golden chaplet that many Alexandrians would have preferred to a kingdom.

Then the crowd broke all restraint and poured into the arena, mobbing him, dancing around him, flattering him with sacrilegious names and tearing off scraps of his tunic as souvenirs, until they all but stripped him naked. Caesar and Cleopatra were forgotten. All Alexandria was in love again with its former idol, and even Tros went down into the arena to help to rescue him from the mob's embraces and to tell him he was almost as good as Caswallon, the King.

Only Cleopatra, Caesar and the Arab chieftains did not lose their heads over Apollodorus. The Arabs sang their rhapsody about the horses, holding hands and swinging to and fro to emphasize the rhythm:

"Who hath regarded the horse? Allah! He treadeth them under him—
Desert and valley and hill; mountain and plain are his kingdom.

Who is a lord of the horse? Lo, he is more than a conqueror!

Money and women and love, all these are his for the asking!"

They descended to collect their money and to look for love among the women who were clamoring around Apollodorus. Caesar, watching the crowd while the attendants stood ready to escort him and Cleopatra to her litter that was waiting, borne on the shoulders of twenty-four slaves, wore such a sardonic, thin-lipped smile that for the moment Cleopatra thought Apollodorus was in danger from him.

"He has forgotten Lolliane now," she said, "and he will be as useful as ever, because he has manners and is not afraid of people. But he will never be dangerous. He is made of vanity extremely well starched, and I always know how to damp the starch or stiffen it when needed."

"I was thinking of the crowd," said Caesar. "Whether or not there are gods and an after-life, and whether or not there are gods on earth in the shapes of mortal men, it is apparent that the populace needs something of the sort. It might be policy—it might be closer to the truth than I suspect, to recognize the need and to accept the deification. Otherwise it might be necessary always to be surpassing the exploits of charioteers and similar people, who - think that acrobatics are a sign of virtue."

CHAPTER XXX "Caesar—were you afraid to cross the Rubicon"

Whoever is so awake to the phenomena of the material world as to reason chiefly from the basis of the things he sees, is correspondingly asleep to the realities of intuition and the spiritual universe, and his waking is worse than his sleep. The slave of instinct, he is as an owl in daylight, when the inner voices speak; or as a dove in darkness, when the spirit challenges; and as the spider that has spun her web so is he, competent among the dungheap flies: but when the weather changes, lo! what shall become of him?

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

BUT there came an end of celebration for the city, because mortal men must swing like pendulums between the prize and paying for it between math and aftermath. On sunlit marble steps the hierophants, with faces veiled in mystery of heliotrope, intoned a blessing from inscrutable divinities whose symbols were the sun and moon and stars. Then Alexandria went back to work, to earn the taxes and consider the executions at the city gate. For it was not within Caesar's idea of what was good, either for his own troops or for Alexandria, that disaffected and abominable men should totally escape example. What he needed was stabilization and money; a tonic was called for to insure both. But it was only decent to defer the punishments until the holiday was over; and they were only unimportant people, with no influence worth mentioning, who were now to serve the public weal and Caesar's purposes by being tortured. Alexandrians disliked crucifixions, as a vulgar and indecent eyesore, necessary to keep slaves in order, but revolting to the passer-by; which was Caesar's considered reason for selecting that method of advertising how extremely un-revengeful he had been and how fortunate they were who had enjoyed his tolerance. In all, not more than fourteen score unfortunates were flogged on backs and stomachs and nailed alive to upright balks of timber near the Gate of Canopus, where potentially much more dangerous people on their way to enjoy an evening in the Groves of Eleusis might regard them and remember prudence. The legend tied to each one's breast was to the effect that he had brought upon himself the discipline of Rome by rebelling against the Queen whom Rome had recognized. The executions were attended to by Caesar's men; he did not witness them in person, but he left no room for doubt in anybody's mind that it was Rome, and above all Caesar who imposed peace and would henceforth punish its infringement. Cleopatra, who received the public credit for the moderation used in meting out penalties, began now seriously to consider Caesar's awakening restlessness and to divert it. His devotion to herself was apparently absolute, but she was too sensible to suppose that there were no more unexplored compartments of his ambitious mind, or that his contentment with the Alexandrian climate and the luxuries of the Lochias would keep him eternally dancing

attendance on her.

She saw, and she pointed out to Caesar, that there was nothing to prevent him from defying Rome, as in fact he had done more than once already. The loyalty of the Roman legions was as personal to himself as were the money he had wrung from Gaul and the estates that he had bought with it.

"By returning to Rome," she told him, "you will make no new friends. Rather you will stir old enmities. Would it not be wiser to let Rome decay, while you summon your loyal friends around you, reward them here in Alexandria, and make yourself so strong by that means that no senate on earth can challenge your authority?"

He seriously thought of it, although he smiled incredulously to conceal the treason. He knew the bitter jealousy and pride of Rome. He knew how Cicero, and others, would resist every move he might make in his plan to make himself a crowned king—the first king of the royal house of Caesar—and perhaps—he was not sure of that yet, but perhaps—with Cleopatra for his consort and their son the anointed heir. He could divorce his wife Calpurnia without difficulty, and by persuading some other man to marry her he might even negotiate a strong political alliance. But he secretly dreaded the gibes of the Romans; personal abuse and the sneers of such important men as Cicero and Cato stung him much more than he was ever willing to admit. He dreaded that ordeal, although he knew how to silence Cato presently, for Cato was in arms against him. Above all, and in spite of his hold on the mind of the Roman mob, he doubted whether even he was great enough to defy with impunity that law against marrying foreigners which was almost as much a part of Rome's religion as were the ancient sacrificial rites.

It was into that rift in his reflections that Cleopatra thrust her subtlest arguments:

"Here, Caesar, you are already accepted as a god. Men recognize you, knowing that it proves their own spiritual discernment to accord you that distinction. Why make your headquarters in Rome, where men are too grossly superstitious to accept an idea that is new to them?"

He did not admit to Cleopatra that his craving for a throne was stronger than any other problem in his thought, but she divined it; and again she caused her ministers to urge him to accept the throne of Egypt in co-dominion with herself. She upheld their arguments:

"Caesar, you will then be linked irrevocably with the oldest reigning dynasty. After that the Romans either must accept you as their king or else repudiate you and take the consequences. Were you afraid to cross the Rubicon? Do you believe you could not conquer Rome a second time—now—with all the wealth of Egypt at your command?"

He was conscious of a tremendous change in her since she had made known to him that she was to be the mother of his child. She had matured, as it were, in a moment. Always intellectually brilliant and charming, and possessed of that natural authority that comes of inner wisdom, she had now assumed executive authority that she derived from him, and that touched his vanity, making him think he had weaned her away from the mysterious unseen influences—as indeed, to an extent, he had done; as the mother of his child she

Queen Cleopatra

was mentally under his influence, and it was not in her nature to be less than loyal to the man to whom she had yielded herself. She was much more exacting of herself in that respect than Caesar would have dreamed of asking her to be, he having cynical Roman notions about chastity, which she only shared to the extent of contempt for its legal aspects. She loved Caesar far more loyally than he was capable of loving her; she understood that there was something lacking yet before Caesar could see eye to eye with her. She must continue his education. She began to talk to him about the Nile-bank cities and the wonders of ancient Egypt that she hoped to revive; of the priest-kings who had made that civilization possible; and of empires, of which nobody knew anything, in the far south, whence the endless boat- and camel-loads of ivory were brought, and whence the Nile flowed from sources that no man had ever guessed.

Reviving ancient splendors was not Caesar's passion; he preferred, like any other Roman, to plunder the old in order to erect the new, claiming that that was nature's method. So Cleopatra tried another angle of assault: she spoke to him of the route to India—of Tros' passion to build a ship-canal—and of the advantage of invading India by sea without having first to defeat the hitherto unconquerable Parthians. With India conquered or reduced to vassalage, the Parthians might later on be taken in front and rear.

Interested, curious and fascinated, Caesar weighed that argument carefully. To conquer Parthia and to avenge the defeat of Crassus would do more than anything else that was imaginable to win the heart of every Roman and make his own power absolute. He thought the route to India by sea was worth considering. At his age a direct assault against the Parthians, in an inhospitable climate, hundreds of miles from his base and with Rome still weak from the effects of civil war, was not an undertaking to be entered on without considering alternatives. He craved the glory of the conquest of Parthia, but he did not enjoy the prospect of the, hardships.

And he was convinced that Cleopatra was telling him the truth about one, at least, of her motives for urging the Nile expedition. She had theories on child-birth similar to those that had found favor with the ancient Greeks in the height of their achievement. Determined to bring forth a child who should combine her genius and Caesar's, but with added attributes of spiritual strength and understanding, she proposed to fill her mind with and to absorb into her very soul such influences as should govern a great prince's character. The child's education should begin now, before he was born; it was her duty to the world, that needed an ideal government, and to the gods, who had provided her with opportunity. She would open her heart devoutly, splendidly and gaily, to the spirit that had made ancient Egypt great and that should blossom forth anew under the guiding hand of her and Caesar's son.

That was an entertaining experiment that delighted Caesar. He remembered his own mother. He had observed that great mothers produce great men. He had no son whom it had been convenient to recognize. Brutus only acknowledged him as his father in emotional moments when he needed forgiveness for some high-thinking and low-dealing treachery or other, and was incapable

of greatness. He was mistrustful of his legally adopted nephew and heir, Octavian, an anemic youth, apparently incapable of popularity, a personal coward, and not particularly friendly to himself. So he was amused and interested, if not convinced by Cleopatra's notion. To bequeath his genius and hers to a successor was a form of immortality that he could understand: a form less boring and exacting than the routine of temple ritual and priestly interference that were reputed otherwise to be the doubtful pre-essentials to a life beyond the grave.

So he agreed to an expedition up the Nile; but with the thought in mind that Cleopatra's mysterious friends at Philae might be contemplating mischief he stipulated that a large body of Roman troops should accompany it, and orders were given to Tros to make ready no less than four hundred shallow-draft vessels capable of making the long journey and of being hauled over the cataracts if required. That needed time, and meanwhile Cleopatra occupied her energy in re-planning the ruined portion of the city, rebuilding the burned section of the library on the Bruchium, and in laying the foundations of a temple in honor of Caesar himself. Her energy was as contagious as her grasp of the financial and technical problems was quick and comprehensive. She had a passion for building—for making everything she touched more splendid than it had been; assuring Caesar that it was only amid magnificent surroundings that a people's greatness had a chance to demonstrate itself.

"Rome," he answered, smiling, "is like an old hag by the Tiber. But Rome bore me, and many another. There was Scipio, who overthrew the Carthaginians, when Carthage excelled Rome more than Alexandria does today. It seems to me that splendor is less a predisposing cause than an occasional consequence."

"It shall be the consequence of you and me," she answered.

She superintended personally the equipment of the thalamegos—the royal barge in which she and Caesar were to travel. It was a floating palace, containing colonnaded courts and banqueting salons—shrines dedicated to the gods—a winter garden, glorious with flowers—galleries for the musicians—fountains worked by a complicated system of pumps—apartments for herself and Caesar, and for her attendant ladies and for his staff officers, as sumptuous as any on the Lochias. In fact, it was a thing so little like a ship that Tros despised it. But it was manned by hundreds of oarsmen who were such experts that in spite of its size and unwieldiness it was able to lead the fleet and to look, with its silken sails and golden prow, like the glorious bark of Chons ascending the Nile to bless the Land of Khem with new fertility. The spectacle, as the fleet left Alexandria and headed up the Nile-mouth, was like a glorious dream departing at the break of day.

All Caesar's ideas ripened on that wonder-journey. From the moment when they went ashore at Memphis, to visit the Sphinx and the three great Pyramids, his combative instinct—his intolerance of any intellect or power greater than his own—obliged him either to confess his insignificance or to accept his deification and then lift himself to measureless new levels of imagination. The signs of the grandeur of ancient Egypt dwarfed even his imperial visions. "I begin to see," he said, "that we limit ourselves and reduce ourselves to the

Queen Cleopatra

level of animals by neglecting to perceive that we are gods. Perhaps the difference between a god and a man is after all only one of self-recognition. Only the gods could have thought of these things. Only gods could have erected them."

By night, together, with a Roman guard, like specters, hovering at a respectful distance to protect them from marauding Arabs, they sat on a hillock of sand and viewed the bulk of Gizeh looming dark against a jeweled sky. It numbed even Caesar's senses. It reduced even him to speechless contemplation and to the recognition that his standards of deed and dignity had hitherto been no more than a candle to the moon. Hour after hour they sat together meditating, until finally the Roman in him burst the overbrooding awe and he would have ended the journey there, to set his men to opening the pyramid and dragging forth its secrets to the light.

But Cleopatra was its guardian—anointed for the purpose crowned with the double crown and subtler than any serpent—willing to sacrifice herself a thousand times, and to any ignominy, rather than fail the olden gods of Egypt. She told him how the priest-kings had erected Gizeh thirty thousand years ago to register the standards of all attainments and to be a guide-post to the Gates of Wisdom.

"You would find nothing in there, Caesar, and you would only have committed sacrilege. They used the Pyramid for their initiations. Kings were crowned in it. And it was sealed in Cheops' time because there were no more kings being born into the world who could face the ordeals, and see their own souls, and be wise beyond mortal limits. Cheops covered it with legends of his own achievement, as having built it, but that was only a blind to keep later generations, who would still revere their kings but who might have forgotten the mysteries, from breaking in and defiling the sanctuary. They say that Cheops was allowed to place his secret mark, inside somewhere, away up above the hall of initiation, so that he might have enduring credit for having sealed and protected the most sacred shine on earth. There are no statues in there—no symbols—no treasure—nothing but the empty chambers and the stone font, out of which after terrible ordeals the initiate stepped as one reborn into eternity and godliness. The legend is, Caesar, that the Land of Khem may sleep, but will reawake if the sea] of that shrine is unbroken. And then there will come again gods upon earth, who will know how to open the seal and to renew the mysteries, that are too dangerous and too intimate for modern men. Perhaps our Caesarion may do it!"

But Caesar saw plunder: "If that is the home of the mysteries," he said, "whoever opens it will possess the fountain of authority. Will the world not come and bow down? Is there any easier way to number ourselves among the gods? I know how reverent men are toward tradition, which is an excellent influence if rightly used. Who is more capable than you and I of doing justice to this grandeur? Are we not gods on earth? You have said so, and I confess I begin to believe it."

It was beyond him to guess to what lengths she would go to protect that fane from desecration. She tried on him first one argument and then another, until

she found the right one:

"Caesar, it would take a thousand men, and none know how many months, to force an entrance into Gizeh. How, shall they find the entrance? They must hack their way through hundreds of paces of solid rock."

But he thought that Roman engineers could undo anything that other men had sealed up.

"A few siege engines," he said. "Fire and water. Leverage. Determination—"

She risked revealing one mystery to protect another: "Caesar," she said, "it is taught, by them who know, that if the entrance should be forced before the proper time, then the spirit of Khem will no longer, sleep here but will go away for ever. It is like the mummies of ancient kings; if they are undisturbed, their souls will be reborn into Egypt, none knows when—not even they; but if their mummies are broken up and robbed, they will prefer to be born elsewhere and even the waters of the Nile may dry up if that time comes. If you destroy the Pyramid, or if you desecrate it, shall the spirit of the olden times return? It will be like a bird that finds its nest destroyed and wings elsewhere to look for peace."

"It might fly to Rome," he answered, smiling. "As for the ancient kings, I think they had their day on earth. If they are not so dead that they can not be touched by ambition, they may be glad of merciful release from these boundaries, that perhaps are a source to them of weariness."

So she told the ancient fable that had served since long before the day when Herodotus saw life and set down what men told him—the fable that had kept at least one Ptolemy from committing sacrilege:

"They buried Cheops in there, Caesar. Are you a plunderer of tombs? If you should disturb the quietness within, what hope have you that other men will not defile your grave when your times comes? Would you plunder the tomb of Alexander? If so, then do that first, and learn how that feels. It might not be too late then to stop before you descend too deep into your baser self. For I tell your whoever shall burst into Gizeh is doomed, and his nation is doomed, and Egypt with him. It is even worse for him than for the one who spoils the tomb of any olden king over whose portals the curse was set; such an one suffers alone, but he who opens Gizeh before the time—"

This was a new phase of her that Caesar studied thoughtfully—a phase in which fear was included. He was more impressed by that and by her earnestness than by any of her arguments, although she had touched his personal dignity when she spoke about robbers of tombs. Curses were imaginary shadows of superstition that he had ignored all his life with impunity, and he had often taken shrewd advantage of other peoples' dread of them. If Cleopatra dreaded the curse of Gizeh—she with her normal fearlessness and brilliant intellect—it began to be apparent to him that the same superstition must have a prodigious grip on the minds of less intelligent people. How should he make use of it? By smashing his way into the Pyramid to demonstrate his power and his immunity from the effects of curses?

He thought not, although he knew how it would have pleased his officers, who were robbers of alien tombs by predilection and only to be restrained by strict injunction and the threat of penalties. A hundred mummies of the an-

Queen Cleopatra

cient kings of Egypt would be a novel and impressive feature of his triumph when he entered Rome at last. But his thought, under Cleopatra's influence, was groping upward, just as hers, under his influence, was descending and losing its way. He sensed a less tangible but more real advantage to be gained by restraining the hand of sacrilege, and her last argument, that she offered as the moon rose bathing the great Pyramid in pale, effulgent light, did more to convince him than all the others, although he did not rightly understand her: "Caesar, the way to win Gizeh's secret is from within, not from without. Force—what did force ever accomplish? Can you win a woman's secret that way? But you can cause the woman to reveal herself, and you can make her eager to reveal herself, by loving her. It is so with mysteries. The love one feels for them is the key that opens them; and there are seven doors, one within the other."

He understood her to mean that if he should love her well enough she might betray to him seven entrances to Gizeh. He was willing to wait. He had, meanwhile, the added hold over her that she must submit herself, and her very will, to him without any reserves whatever, if she would keep him from breaking into all the mysteries of Egypt; and he felt that that threat, though unspoken, would suggest to her mind arguments that she would use to persuade the hierophants to open to him doors that otherwise he might see fit to force.

He had an epileptic fit, that dawn, on their return to the thalamegos. It was the first time that Cleopatra had seen him in that condition; hitherto his attendants had always contrived to keep a screen around him, and Olympus had applied restoratives that worked very swiftly. But thanks to Olympus' treatments he had been feeling so well of late that he had agreed to leave Olympus in Alexandria to watch over Cleopatra's interests, and the doctors they had brought had none of Olympus' almost superhuman skill. Cleopatra, ignorant of the danger she was running, but aware of the nearness of a man in epilepsy to the psychic forces on another plane of consciousness, sought with such spells as she knew to make him speak to her of what he saw—that he stared at with the pupils of his eyes distended—that he seemed to recognize as near and real and yet not comprehensible to people in normal consciousness. She knew that Heracles, a hero subsequently deified, and now known to the rabble as a great god, had been afflicted with the falling sickness, and that the Pythoness of Delphi, in common with many another oracular priestess, possessed somewhat similar means of reaching supersensual discernment. Failing to get him to speak, for his jaws were rigid and his attendants had had to set a pad between his teeth to keep him from self-inflicted injury, she tried to heighten his realization of whatever it was that he saw, so that he might remember it and bring it back with him to tell her afterward.

"You are a god!" she murmured in his ear. "Caesar, you are a god among gods. Your soul sees everything. Your soul knows everything. It will tell you everything. You are gathering strength and knowledge for return to earth, where you will remember it all. You will remember it for Cleopatra's sake, who awaits you, and who loves you, and who is your comrade in the world."

The horror of the symptoms made no impression on her, although several of her women fainted at the sight. She was far too sure that Caesar was in touch with other worlds to let mere physical symptoms take her mind off opportunity. Her whole will was concentrated on making Caesar, in that malleable condition, realize and remember his association with normally unseen influences; and, wiping the bloodstained froth from his lips, she watched his return to consciousness with ears strained to catch the first words he should utter. But when his lips moved at last it was only to send her away from him.—He was morbidly sensitive about anything that touched his physical condition or his dignity. His first gesture was to order every one away except the slave whose duty it was to attend to him; and although the epilepsy always left him feeling abnormally intellectually alert and energetic, it was two days before he was willing to be alone again with Cleopatra. Then he preferred not to speak of the incident, and was irritable when she tried to question him. "It is bad enough to be afflicted, without having to discuss it afterward." But she watched. Every word he let drop, every chance expression of his thought were turned over in her mind for indications of a change of consciousness in him. She was so eager for him to grow aware of his divinity that she deified him in her own mind and he became to her the god that she intended he should be to other people. She caused him to be acclaimed as a god on earth at every village they passed. At the temple of Luxor at Thebes she persuaded him to sit on a granite throne between the effigies of gods and kings to receive the 'worship of the populace. And, to prove to Caesar, that her respect for pyramids and tombs and temples was nothing personal, she caused a great obelisk to be removed from Luxor and floated to Alexandria down the Nile. It was an obelisk that had been erected by one of her own ancestors—a Ptolemy. There was nothing ultra-sacred about that. He might move all Egypt if he would leave the really ancient monuments alone. Meanwhile Caesar gathered information regarding the trade route that led from the Nile to Berenice and thence to India—and the routes that led to Meroe, and Nepata, and the mysterious kingdom of Ethiopia, pondering the possibility of invading India by sea and growing more and more determined to conquer the whole world the more Cleopatra's theories, whose real meaning he only dimly glimpsed at any time took hold of his imagination. Before they reached Aswan he had made up his mind about his eastward march of conquest. He would not go by way of Egypt. Egypt should be his private treasury—his own personal ally and source of wealth and splendor, which it would not be likely to remain for long if he should use the country as a highway between Rome and India, with Roman senators intruding themselves as committees of investigation. He could count, he was sure, on Cleopatra's loyalty. Why share it with a Roman Senate, that he despised, and that he felt sure would work day and night to steal away his power if given the least encouragement? Cleopatra soon discovered that new trend of thought, and with characteristic calm she accepted it, although it meant the reversal of all her own plans. It mattered very little how she kept Rome at bay. Tros, she said, should build the ship canal and have a great fleet manned and ready to control the sea route

Queen Cleopatra

and to establish communications after Caesar had marched through Parthia and conquered India from the north. She perceived it was not the slightest use to try to change his mind when he had come to a decision; but she was loyal to her Land of Khem. And she was constant in her efforts to resist the Ptolemaic fumes, inherited from drunken tyrants, that she knew were in her veins and ever clouding her brain to dim her consciousness of spirit brooding over her.

**CHAPTER XXXI "There is a gentleness that no amount of force
of any kind can penetrate or conquer."**

It is the horizontal view of life, which most men have, that brings them ever face to face with the insuperable, until they weary and lie looking upward with a worm's-eye view of things, or downward seeing only mud and death and misery. The way over an obstacle is upward. Men forget that birds fly, and that the thought has stronger wings than any eagle.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS,

THE thalamegos and its escorting fleet lay moored against the granite rocks below the lowest cataract, and in dazzling sunshine on the river-bank great companies of white-robed priests stood waiting to receive their Queen. Musicians made festival music, its melody dimmed by the blare and the boom of the ivory horns and the rhythmical thunda of drums. The tribes had turned out in their thousands; the sun streamed down on temple-columns, gay pavilions, bright awnings, and on crowded ebony-and-gold where leopard-skin cloaked chieftains and their warriors surged and swayed under nodding ostrich-feather plumes.

The priests of Philae had brought the image of the Goddess Isis from their temple, drawn by brightly decorated oxen on an awninged platform. There was no public honor too high to be paid to Cleopatra, nor any compliment too great for Caesar, since she chose to make him the recipient, But Caesar rather bridled at having only the second part to play. He had brought his charger with him up the Nile; he delayed proceedings by reviewing the desert Arabs, Nubians Ethiopians and the crowds from the far-away oases, lettini them see him mounted, in his purple cloak, riding alone among them, elegant and fearless. Nevertheless, although they wondered at him and at the weapons and armor and perfect drill of Roman troops paraded before them, it was to Cleopatra that they made obeisance.

Ptolemies before her day had been received at Philae with semi-divine honors, and more than one ruler of that royal house had left his record on the sacred island in the form of temple buildings, some of them unfinished; but never until Cleopatra's day had the priests of Philae let it be known, secretly, through the channels that men recognized as utterly authentic, that a Ptolemy, as Pharaoh, had their genuine approval. She was one with the queens whose statues smiled on Luxor. Former Ptolemies had dared to patronize the very hierophant himself (and it was understood to be no part of the traditional method of Philae to resist, or in any way whatever to challenge temporal authority). Cleopatra had accepted, not claimed recognition. And it was also known that never, until her day, had any Ptolemy received initiation: none had been admitted to the impenetrably guarded secrets. Philae—the inner Philae—did not interfere in politics; which was why the real Philae was a power in the land. Even the black men knew that the image—the healer of sickness—was at the most a landmark on the road to mysteries that might not

Queen Cleopatra

be discoverable without it—mysteries that any man might reach who had the will to purify himself.

But Cleopatra knew what she had not seen fit to explain to Caesar yet, and what it needed no priest to remind her. It was more rare than water in the desert for a woman to receive initiation; but, whether or not she had been initiated and whether or not she wore the double crown of Egypt and the sacred serpent on her brow, a pregnant woman was utterly excluded from the secret rites for the time being, and until many months after the child was born. Direct communion she might not have, within the sacred silence of the midnight watch, where—so men whispered—the initiates, under the guidance of their hierophant, left human limits and became, for a period of renewal and refreshment, conscious comrades of the gods.

But indirectly she had access; she was one of them. He who was a hierophant—a demigod behind the veil—resumed his priesthood when he stepped forth. As a priest he could receive her privately; and though he might not raise the veil, as /the expression was, they were, nevertheless, Co-members of one mystery and could not help but speak together in terms that had definite and clearly comprehended meaning, but that would have meant something totally different to an outsider, or even to one of a lower degree of initiation than that to which Cleopatra had been admitted.

Unknown to Caesar, Cleopatra had sent couriers to forewarn Philae of the favor she would ask. It was her subtlest move against the iron might of Rome, and like all true subtlety it was not treacherous; it offered Caesar opportunity. If he could tap the sources of her wisdom, she was willing. So while he showed his splendid horsemanship and flourished Rome's military brilliance before the Nubians, she could afford to wait, and smile, and learn in whispers from the priests that the favor she asked had been granted and that all was prepared. It would not be the fault of Philae if Caesar did not henceforth understand that above politics and war and statecraft there is a plane of thought from which wisdom may be drawn like dew from heaven: wisdom of a kind that halts the march of armies and loosens the reins of civilization. Caesar, she believed, could be a civilizer if the idea should dawn on him.

There were painted litters, borne on the shoulders of temple servants, to convey them to the wharf beyond the cataract. But Caesar preferred to ride. There was a gilded boat, shaped in the form of a sacred crocodile and rowed by temple priests, to take them to the island, slowly following the boat-borne image of the goddess, that had to be guarded, as they transferred it from land to water, from the clamoring lepers and cripples who sought to touch it and be healed, and from the healed who brought gifts, and from the women who wanted children. (For that image bore a world-wide reputation.)

On the island, steps descended to the water's edge. Scores of priests were ready there to lift the image from its boat; choristers led them in procession to the Court of the Birth of Horus, Isis' offspring, where there was incense burning at the threshold and they passed between granite columns, beneath a flower-hung archway, to a high throne in the cool gloom of a cloister, where a

sacrifice was offered at an altar and the priests intoned the Isis ritual. Within those precincts Caesar felt himself uncomfortably unimportant. Seated, in his purple cloak, on the double throne with Cleopatra beneath a canopy of painted and gilded palm-leaves, surrounded by a galaxy of priests who showed him every honor, nevertheless, he was acutely conscious of being only tolerated, not the center of attraction. He was careful to appear a trifle bored, it might be by the ceremony, and a little doubtful of the wisdom of conceding so much patience to a company of shaveling priests. It was for Cleopatra's sake that he endured the ceremony; he made that obvious to her and to everybody else.

But it presently appeared that it was he, not Cleopatra, for whom the utmost honor was reserved, and although he still retained his air of stern aloofness he had hard work to hide his satisfaction when two elderly and very richly robed priests, bowing before him, invited him to an interview, alone, with the Father-Hierophant.

"The Father-Hierophant should come to me," said Caesar; but Cleopatra whispered to him and he let it appear that he was willing to accept some trivial excuse, now that he had asserted his own precedence.

"Our Father-Hierophant- is very old," said a priest in a sauve restrained voice. Proud they might be; but they were discreet, those priests of Philae.

"What language have we in common that we can converse in?" Caesar demanded. He did not want an interpreter—particularly not Cleopatra, who, he felt confident, would color such a conversation to suit her own views. He was relieved to learn that the Father-Hierophant knew Greek. He turned to Cleopatra and remarked, with an apparently confiding courtesy that hid his secret satisfaction:

"I will give these priests clearly to understand that there shall be no two governments in Egypt."

She let him think she believed he could overawe the Father-Hierophant. He followed the two priests, striding alone majestically, a splendid figure, looking younger than his years, one hand holding a roll of papyrus behind him, and his head bowed slightly forward in deep thought. Two anchorites preceded them, each swinging a jeweled censer that sent up clouds of incense smoke—delicious, soothing, fragrant stuff from Yemen, that encouraged the thought to wander in realms of opulence and dignity and peace.

He expected a repetition of the devious passages through which he and Cleopatra had gone hand in hand that night in Alexandria when they visited the shrine of Isis. But though they passed a few priests standing like statues in niches between graven columns there was no challenge and reply, no mumery of secrecy. When they came to the end of a long corridor the censer-bearers turned aside, the priests drew back curtains of golden leather, there was a sound as of a voice that whispered very far away, one of the priests swung wide a single door, a foot thick, and Caesar passed alone into a room, aware that the door had closed, with an almost inaudible thud, behind him. For a moment he stood accustoming his eyes to dimness. There was only one window, near the roof, that let swimming Sunlight stream against a corner of one wall; it produced an effect of being under water, and the silence enhanced

Queen Cleopatra

that effect. Caesar stared about him. His eyes gradually grew used to the solemn dimness. He became aware of a very old man seated motionless on an ivory chair by a table made of rare wood, carved, and partly covered by a cloth that was woven with symbols in various colors. He stared at him, Neither spoke.

The old man's clothing was of some rare eastern stuff, so snow-white that it was puzzling how it blended with the darker hue of marble, and so ample that its folds were like carvings in stone. He had a white beard, long, and beautifully cared for, gray hair, very heavy iron-gray eyebrows, an aquiline nose and dark eyes. He looked as if he had been an athlete in his day, but his splendid old shoulders stooped considerably now and he supported his chin on one hand that rested on the chair-arm, as if that great head with its mane of gray were over-heavy for the wasted neck. He had a great gold ring on his right thumb and some sort of necklace underneath his beard, but no other jewelry, which made a marked contrast to Caesar's martial splendor. Caesar had emeralds on his belt and on his scabbard that were easily worth a whole year's temple revenues.

The two studied each other in silence for a long time. Not a sound came through the window or the thick walls, and the old man's breathing was inaudible; but Caesar could hear his own breath and the pulses singing in his ears, until the silence grew intolerable.

"I have heard," he said at last, "that you priests of Philae are the proudest prelates in the world. I wish to assure you that it is no concession to your pride, but to your old age that brings me here to visit you instead of requiring you to visit me."

"You are welcome, my son. Be seated."

The answering voice was clear and strong, although it sounded even older than the man looked. It was a voice that had fathomed the depths of experience. There was no fear in it, no haste, no curiosity.

There was only one chair, of ivory, like the other, close to the table. Caesar sat down, crossing his legs and tapping his knee with the roll of papyrus. Having reached the holds of the reins of Philae's far-reaching influence, he proposed to begin by establishing his own supremacy. But he found difficult to be firm where there was no resistance.

"You have no need to fear me, my son," said the ancient of days, "nor any need to try to make me fear you. For, as I have told you, you are welcome, and what I can do for you I will."

"It was at your request that I came here," Caesar answered.

The old man paused before he commented on that:

"If you had come otherwise, you would not have found me," he said at last, "though I am glad to be of service to you if I can. There is a gentleness that no amount of force of any kind can penetrate or conquer. Conquerors, my son, have thrown down the temples of Philae; other kings and conquerors have builded them again; time and the overflow of Nile—sun and wind, and human passions, and the sloth of priests have ruined Philae many times. And yet—you come to Philae seeking."

"Seeking what?" asked Caesar tartly, but his truculence was not so noticeable as it had been.

"That which you will not learn—not though I should do my best to teach it to you," the old man answered, smiling at him. Mockery was not there, but there was humor brooding in the depths of his eyes.

"Why then did you ask to see me?" Caesar retorted. He was increasingly less irritable—growing curious.

"Because, my son, though I can teach you very little, having no wisdom at all of my own that is applicable to your purposes, it may be that nevertheless I can remove from your mind some misconceptions, and thus save not yourself alone but hosts of others from unnecessary evil. For you are a man on whom the destiny of nations may depend for many a generation."

"Speak. I will listen to you," said Caesar.

The Father-Hierophant took no apparent notice of the condescension. He looked straight at Caesar and for a long time there was silence. Then at last: "These temples are old, but the foundations on which they stand are immemorially old. They have seen Egypt rise, descend again in the depths of ignorance, and reascend to heights of civilization, times out of number. But the sacred sciences for which men built are older. Before Egypt was, they were. When Egypt shall have ceased to be, they will be. Men have forgotten what was before Egypt was. They will forget Egypt in the time to come. But Nature, two of whose aspects are life and death, eternally alternating, will continue even though the earth should perish; and as there never has been, so there never will be time when truth is false or falsity is true, though all men should unite in one opinion to the contrary."

"Do you know the truth?" asked Caesar. "I am a high Priest myself, and I am familiar with many theories, but the truth, it seems to me, is still a subject of opinion." "Then it is not truth," said the Hierophant. "My son, all men and women are high priests, in that they hide the truth about themselves behind a veil of what they seem to as I have seen, appear to me always to have been, a struggle for supremacy."

"And you propose to put an end to that?" "I intend to establish a government that will make such practices impossible, at least in my lifetime."

"Did you ever hear of the man, my son, who proposed to abolish danger by preventing motion? His difficulty was that he did not begin by standing still. Men fled from him as he moved about to oblige them to obey. Does it occur to you that wisdom possibly may flee from you if you attempt to define its limits and to enforce their observance?"

Caesar began to feel irritated. "I will enforce," he said, "obedience to one central government, and I will permit no priesthood to interfere."

"That is Wise, my son. The universe obeys one law, and it is safe to be obedient. Neither priesthood nor yet armies can delay the sun on its appointed path or change the alternation of the seasons or the tides of life and death. But whose law will you obey? And whence will you derive the wisdom for this government?"

"You suggest," said Caesar with a trace of icy sarcasm, "that I might derive that wisdom from yourself and from a study of your teachings?"

Queen Cleopatra

"No, my son; for as I said, I have no wisdom applicable to your purpose. And as for the study of the teachings that I have spent my life-long learning: as I told you, they have body, soul and spirit; words, that is, in which it is possible to suggest them to an attentive mind—meaning, which may be perverted because opinion can be brought to bear on it—and the substance within the meaning, which is pure and incorruptible but not perceptible to many. I would not presume to try to teach you what I know, because I recognize—" He paused.

"That I am one of the many?" Caesar suggested with a trace in his voice of irony.

"—that you base your estimate of value on the judgment of the many, who will tell you, for instance, that fame is greatness. Whereas I would tell you it is more blinding to you and to others than the strongest sunlight and more confusing than the mirage of the desert; it prevents you from discerning that the essence of an idea is included in itself and lies within it, not without it. Whereas you see the rind of ideas, I look for the juice and the heart of the juice. You will build an empire, as men have built temples on Pilak."

* The Egyptian name of Philae.

231

be. Behind that veil they meditate in secret. You yourself however frankly you may seem to speak or to write about your inmost thought, have deeper thoughts, that you know are inexpressible, behind those that you spread before the world. For that which becomes expressed is no more than the outer rind of a fruit that has' already fallen from the tree Has thought not body and soul and spirit, even as a man has or a tree has, or a rock has? Is the body of a thought the truth about it any more than your body is the truth about you? Still less true are the clothes in which the thought in dressed, though they may be beautiful, or they may be coarse and ragged. They are a veil, behind which is the truth that is a truth about the shadow of the Truth."

"I have heard much talk at various times about with drawing or lifting that veil of which you speak," said Caesar "but though I have questioned, for instance, the Druids of Gaul, who make great claims to profundity, and though I have studied Plato and Pythagoras and such translations of the Hermetic writings as I could find, it has appeared to me that all the explanations they offer are merely words—or ganized sound without any inner meaning that a man may grasp. But a sword remains a sword. And if I wish to build a bridge, I build it. If I wish to conquer people I defeat their armies; they are conquered; there is nothing further they can do about it."

"And if you slay ten thousand men, what then?" asked the Hierophant.

"Then they are dead," said Caesar.

"And you have conquered them?"

"I have conquered their country. Those who remain must obey me, including their priests, who must cease to teach insubordination if I so order it."

"Truly, my son, it is possible to burn a forest and to turn the goats in lest the young shoots grow again. But finally ever the goats will starve. And what

then? Will you make a desert and say, 'This is Caesar's kingdom?' "

"I impose peace," Caesar answered. "Under my rule all reasonable men have liberty."

"That is a bold boast, my son. But you limit reason? You yourself define the liberty?"

"Somebody must do that," Caesar answered. "I have observed that men struggle among themselves until the ablest few prevail; and they again until the ablest of them all asserts himself. Then it is his opinion that governs all the others. There is otherwise anarchy. The history of the world as I have read it, and the perpetual conditions of such land

And you can destroy these temples easily, as men will destroy your empire easily when time has wrought a change in the affairs of men. But when the carcass of your empire shall have been dissolved, its soul shall die not so swiftly, and the dying soul shall enter into many associations, deceiving men less able than yourself to their own undoing. So you shall be identified with evil, and many men will praise you. Others, cursing you, nevertheless will imitate you. Being imitators, they will do worse and will call it better."

"Do you see no merit in my course?" asked Caesar.

"What is merit, my son? Generations will remember your name, who will never hear of mine, and who will think of Philae as a heap of ruins where priests once made sacrifices to forgotten gods."

"Then what is immortality?" asked Caesar. "If the soul dies, as you say, and gods pass out of memory, then is not that, whatever it is, that endures the longest, preferable?"

"Preferred by whom? By you or me? Caesar, time, too, comes to an end. If you could raise the soul of your ideas until the spirit entered into them, you would never ask me, what is immortality?"

"Nevertheless, I have asked and you have not answered," Caesar retorted.

"Are you one of those who prate about it without knowing what you mean?"

The old man eyed him thoughtfully a moment.

"Let me be sure," he said, "that I know what you mean, Caesar. Tell me what you yourself suppose that immortality might be."

"I have sometimes tried to imagine it as the opposite of death," said Caesar.

"But with what have you tried to imagine it? With your brain? That dies when you are dead. What you imagine with your brain is less than you are, even as the picture that an artist paints is less than he is, though the picture may suggest ideas that are infinitely greater than himself, and by his own picture that he paints a man may lift himself into the company 'of gods. You think of life and death as opposites, which they are indeed, but they are not that which we have spoken of as immortality, since immortality includes them both. You can identify yourself with that which you imagine until, like Narcissus, you perish in pursuit of mere phenomena. Are you sure you are not doing that?" Caesar smiled conceitedly. "I have never compared myself to Narcissus," he answered. "Who would you say is my Echo?" He began to think of many women, and particularly of Cleopatra. "Dido," he continued, "is reputed to have died for love of Aeneas, from whom I trace descent, but no woman hitherto, that I ever heard of, has died for love of me. It has been my experience

Queen Cleopatra

that women recover from these heart-burnings; so that I find that even love is mortal—more so, in fact, than hatred, which I have noticed frequently replaces love and persists with remarkable tenacity. Who would you suggest is Echo in this instance?"

"Echo is the Spirit brooding over you," said the Hiero-phrant. "For I tell you, all those ancient tales are allegories. Forsaken for the image in the pool of alternating life and death, the deathless Spirit becomes, to you, a mere sound in the void and a name that is entirely without meaning."

"Do not you priests also set up images," asked Caesar, "that persuade the common herd to worship them to the neglect of the spirit that you so much advocate to me? As I said, I am myself a high priest. It is I who order images placed or replaced in the temples of Rome. I have often performed the sacrifices, which I consider a good thing for the people, since it keeps their thought for a while from baser matters and makes government easier by persuading them that I, for instance, who perform the sacrifices, am a person having a higher authority. If they are too base to perceive my merit, nevertheless that mummery convinces them."

"Of your merit? Then you are not bound, in turn, to seek that merit in yourself, and to cultivate it, and to identify yourself with it? Are the images not sign-posts on the road of life? Are you not their interpreter? And when you come to a sign-post what is there to do?"

"One can pass to the right or the left," said Caesar. "It makes small difference. Both roads lead to death."

"But the post points upward!"

"I had never thought of that," said Caesar. He proceeded there and then to think of it, knitting his brows and musing, while the Hierophant sat still and watched him:

"It is from above and from behind you that the true light comes," said the Hierophant at last. "It is through you that the light shines on the images you see. And you will see them true or false according as you identify yourself with gods or devils."

"You mean that we ourselves must be as gods?" asked Caesar.

"We must be gods," said the Hierophant. "We must admit to ourselves that we are gods. But it is only one by one, and very gradually, with great effort and much humility, that we attain to a perception of the meaning of that. And there are many pitfalls, needing wisdom to avoid."

"Does your wisdom indicate to you a policy that you would recommend me to pursue in Egypt?" Caesar asked him. He stared hard. There was a cold light in his eyes.

"It indicates to me a pitfall," the old man answered calmly. "It is no affair of mine to govern Egypt."

"You are wise in that," said Caesar. "If your priesthood avoids politics I have no objection to it."

"My son," said the Hierophant, "Pythagoras came nearer than any other, in the world that you know, to establishing a doctrine that would have drawn the world upward toward the sources of wisdom. But his followers proposed to

purify effects by dealing with effects. They interfered with government. They went down among the wolves to teach wolves to be gentle. And the wolves devoured them. So the teachings of Pythagoras are now an empty echo, like the voice of which I spoke to you a while ago."

"Nevertheless, you have advised Queen Cleopatra frequently," said Caesar. "You or your agents never cease from giving her advice."

"As to what?" the Hierophant retorted. "As to the means of ever keeping in mind her divinity that is above her royalty, lest Wisdom leave her, as it did Narcissus! She is a woman—earthy of the earth in some ways, being born into a heritage that will give her strong soul terrible adventures on its upward path toward the Spirit. But it is the strongest souls that are called upon to face the greatest difficulties, Caesar. See you to it that you set in her path no greater snares than you have done already!"

"I have set her on the throne," said Caesar. "Do you recommend that I should leave her to her own devices?"

"I will give to you the advice that I will give to her also," said the Hierophant. "And I will change no word of it: that whether we are kings and queens, conquerors or conquered; whether we are priests or goatherds; whether we are poor or wealthy, whether the world acclaims us favorites, or whether it despises us; whether we die by violence, or in the peace of old age—one by one we come into the presence of the gods, whom we will never recognize as anything but empty echoes in the darkness, unless we remember in this life that we came forth from among the gods, and unless we take care to return to them with godliness in nowise dimmed. For like sees like. If you identify yourself with husks and the death that devours from without, how shall you see life and the spirit ever emanating from within?"

"Then you mean, we are gods? We are all of us gods?" Caesar asked him.

"When we know it," said the Hierophant. "But not otherwise. And as I told you: between statement and example there are many pitfalls and many a place where sign-posts seem to indicate more ways than one. Remember that the post points upward."

"Why the secrecy?" asked Caesar. "Why do you priests, who think you know so much, not stand out openly and tell men they are gods? I tell men they are Romans, and they behave as such."

"And is that not already bad enough?" the old man answered, smiling. "Tell them they are gods and they will be even worse than Romans! A blind man with a weapon in his hands is more dangerous than a blind beast; and a blind god is worse than either."

"They have called me a god here in Egypt," said Caesar. "They have set my image in temples."

"And does that deceive you?" asked the Hierophant. "Is that any more than an invitation to you to be godlike?"

"I am wondering," said Caesar, "what Rome will think of it."

"As to that, my son, I can enlighten you. Egypt has called you a god to get rid of you as a problem that needs to be faced. As a man they would be ashamed not to struggle against you, but as a god you are above them and beyond reach—to be endured but not disputed. But if you call yourself a god in

Queen Cleopatra

Rome, will the Romans not bid you prove it? And can you?"

"We will see," said Caesar, rising. He had made up his mind. Immortality was nonsense. A man was neither more nor less than what he claimed to be and could compel other men to confess him to be. A little propaganda, and a little violence—"I recognize your essential harmlessness," he said, "and I will take no steps to limit you in the practise of your religion. In fact, on the contrary, I will make a contribution to your temple, for I wish to be remembered as your benefactor. But keep in mind that I can be as stern as I am now forbearing toward you, and that I will brook no interference with affairs of state!" He rose. "I will accept your blessing," he said, standing with both hands behind him and his head bowed stiffly.

The old man rose and blessed him hardly audibly. Then: "Farewell, my son," he said and, standing, watched the man who had missed his opportunity because he could not recognize it go striding proudly from the room.

CHAPTER XXXII

"Death I have always thought to be the end of joy and sorrow."

When the source has dried, or when the stream has turned, no words can fill the river-bed again.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

CAESAR'S brain was in a state of fevered excitement when he left that interview. His eyes glittered, foretelling another burst of energy. He had assured himself that there was nothing in the claims of Philae to extraordinary wisdom: that his own was equal to it, if not greater; that he had what Philae never would have—the command of armies. Doubtless, as at Thebes, the priests had some magical secrets that served very well to bewilder the popular mind; but there were tricks in Rome, too, that he had seen played in the temples rather skilfully for the same cynical purpose—tricks of augury, for instance. Those of the Egyptians were more artistically managed, that was all. He was glad for the sake of dignity that the Hierophant had not performed a miracle or two. Personally, he had never seen a miracle, even of healing, that half convinced him; most of them he believed were mere coincidence, and the rest due to credulity and to those peculiar emotions in the presence of religious mystery that somehow seem to revivify the superstitious. The miracle of a military victory was not only more to the point but more enduring in results: also more difficult to perform, he did not doubt, and calling for fifty times the genius. "A religion," he remarked to Cleopatra, "that can cause the populace to deify its rulers is an excellent institution. They have a natural tendency to do that, and it may be based on an instinctive recognition of superiority, like that exhibited by animals, for instance, toward the leader of the herd. There is room in Rome for Temples to the Goddess Isis, and to the God Serapis. I will see to it that some are built."

He had suddenly made up his mind to return to Rome as soon as possible, and, as usual, not for one but for several reasons, although one predominated. A great part of the truth was that his health was better. Despite the epilepsy, the dread of which made him morbid when he thought of it, he was feeling stronger and more full of vital energy than at any time in the last ten years. He had a secret dread of dying in an epileptic fit, although he did not fear death in battle or in any honorable shape; and his yearning to surpass Alexander the Great, by making himself the master of the whole world before death in some form or other should put an end to his activities, obsessed him. It swept like a wave over him now. He wondered why he had wasted so much time.

"Death," he said to Cleopatra, "I have always thought to be the end of joy and sorrow. But a belief in immortality is an excellent tonic while life lasts, and a great inducement to ignorant men to behave themselves with decorum. My men, for instance, are beginning to make trouble of a sort they would not if I could convince them of what you said just now about our having an eternity

Queen Cleopatra

in which to improve our lot."

Though Caesar in his own way was in love with Cleopatra, most of his men were very far from that. The divine honors paid to her, her reputation for wisdom and her genius for pagentry in mystic settings frightened them. They connected her reputation for wisdom with the tales they had heard, and the sights they had seen, of Egyptian magic. The insolence of Alexandrian officials, who took the utmost advantage of Caesar's complaisance, irritated them, and they blamed Cleopatra for it, pointing to Caesar's infatuation for her as the predisposing cause. They had liked him better when he had had a different woman at each place he came to. They did not like to be cooped up on boats and herded up the Nile for use in peaceful spectacles that involved too frequent inspection of their polished armor and interminable standing in it in the hot sun, with no compensation in the shape of loot; Caesar had threatened death to any man caught helping himself to anything. They naturally gave Cleopatra the blame, both for the lack of loot and for the parades.

But they were also frightened by the mystery of the Egyptian nights, that they could see for themselves had cowed the Egyptian peasantry, and they did not wish to be reduced to that condition. It was a land of birds and beasts and reptiles that made them shudder. Sounds in the dark of hippopotami plunging and snorting filled them with awe, and tales that the Egyptian necromancers told them about souls of men inhabiting such foul brutes as the crocodiles worked on their superstition until they were ready to believe anything; even wilder tales about the far interior, southward and south again beyond the cataract, where it was rumored that Cleopatra had persuaded Caesar to lead them, had brought them almost to a state, of mutiny. They were resolved they would not march one pace beyond Philae, whether Caesar ordered it or not. Least of all would they consent to drag that fleet of ships over the cataract, though they had been told by some officious Alexandrian that the feat would be expected of them. And they had already felt the first hot breaths of summer wind, that made the armor raise blisters on their skin. They dreaded heat more than the cold of the Parthian mountains.

Another cause of discontent was the already plainly noticeable change in Caesar. He who had been a comrade-in-arms, stern but well disposed toward them and invariably ready to share hardships with his men, was growing intolerably autocratic and indifferent to the traditional claims of an army on its general's interest. He no longer reasoned with them or smiled with grim amusement when they sang outrageous songs about his exploits among women. He had even caused men to be punished recently for daring to refer to him as *calvus moechus*, as if that were not a term of endearment! Liking him far less as a god than as the man who had shared their moldy crusts and carrots on the Adriatic shore when everybody except Caesar half expected Pompey to be victorious, they noticed, and resented, that whereas he had formerly vaguely disliked divine honors, he now expected them and was annoyed when they were not paid.

An army, and particularly an army composed in the main of veterans, has a consciousness of its own as distinguished from that of its units. Character, as

far as any of its own members are concerned, becomes an open book to it and no general can escape the shrewd analysis of thousands of pairs of eyes. It was not exactly whispered through the ranks that Caesar was going mad, but the low-voiced conversation over the meager reed- and camel-dung campfires was heavy with hints. Men spoke of Marius, whose eyes in the dark were said to have frightened away the men who came to kill him. Marius had been Caesar's mentor, friend and teacher of the arts of war. There were strange lights in Caesar's eyes now and then.

Nevertheless, he surprised Cleopatra. She began to recognize in him the greatest actor in the world as well as its master-strategist. He said he would not dream of leaving Philae without laying the foundation stone of an addition to the temple that had been begun but never finished by one of Cleopatra's ancestors. He and she laid it with time-honored ceremonies, and Caesar was magnificently solemn. Afterward he actually made arrangements with the priests of Philae to send emissaries to Rome to commence spreading their religion as soon as possible.

"You will find," he told them, as if they did not know it, "that a beginning was made many years ago, but the mistake was made of dealing too much in miracles, with the result that only slaves and thoughtless men were interested. What I want you to do is to spread your doctrine of immortality and the deification of rulers among the electorate, who will be benefited by it and who will submit themselves more willingly in consequence to arbitrary government."

Then down the Nile and no time lost, with Caesar's new plans boiling in his brain and Cleopatra realizing that her own work must be rebegun; and she with a child to bring forth presently—a circumstance likely to engage her whole attention for a while, although she was young, strong, healthy, and the doctors assured her there would be no difficulties. She had no physical fear whatever; but dismay took hold of her as she reviewed the outcome of her political efforts—dismay and embarrassing doubt as to whether she had rightly interpreted that inner voice for which she always, or almost always, listened.

It was true that by making that journey to Philae with the great parade of Roman troops and Alexandrian officials she had reopened the principal trade routes and restored the revenues, which were certain now to come pouring into the treasury. If nobody else, Esias and his coreligionists, anxious to make good their newly acquired citizenship, would lend her, against the security of future taxes, any sums she might need. She knew how Caesar squandered money; her purse would give her a certain hold on him, but not much; he accepted money as he did a woman's favors, or as the poor accept doles, and if it were not forthcoming from one source he would extract it from another—borrow or steal or merely appropriate, it would not make much difference to Caesar.

True, too, for the time being Egypt was saved from being a Roman province, although not saved in the way she had intended, nor as securely. She had gained a temporary respite, that was all. There would be no invasion now of Roman armies, and no commission of Roman senators to impound the reve-

Queen Cleopatra

nues and pocket most of them, as Rabirius and his fellow rascals had done in her father's day. It would be she herself who would send Caesar chests of gold and fleets of corn; which, after all, would not make much difference to Caesar, who had received his percentage from Rabirius in former days without being in the least entitled to it, but without a shadow of compunction.

Caesar was going away. She had lost the first main of her gamble to make Alexandria the capital of the world. And worse: she had lost her fight to make Caesar view life as she viewed it, mystically, through a lense of Philaeian ideals. He had seized on the husk of her philosophy, but the spirit of it seemed to have escaped him utterly.

Dismayed, she did not let Caesar glimpse in her the shadow of dismay. She assured him he might leave her in Alexandria without a moment's anxiety about Egypt's welfare; a handful of Roman troops and Rufinus, with Tros to continue building up the fleet and establishing good discipline among the crews, and she could manage Egypt firmly, with a view to peace and abundant revenues. She did not even ask him to remain in Egypt until her child should be born, preferring to let that suggestion reach him by way of Charmian and the other women. Caesar would never have thought of it for himself; there were couriers coming up the Nile to meet him with news of armies gathering in Asia Minor, and he was half killing the crews in his haste to reach Alexandria and take up the reins of war again with reawakened vigor.

"We will see," he said to Cleopatra, "whether or not there is anything in this theory of our being gods on earth. If it is true that admission to ourselves that we are gods produces the realization of it, that may have been the secret of Alexander's victories, and you shall see some swift and very terrible events." But her courage and her self-evident affection for him bridled even his impatience. The day -before they reached Alexandria he assured her that he would stay until he knew whether it was a boy or a girl, even if Rome should perish meanwhile.

She cordially hoped that Rome might perish, but she did not tell him so. She hoped that the armies in Asia Minor would advance on Rome and wreck all Caesar's chances of establishing himself in Italy, thus forcing him after all to make Alexandria his capital and to reconquer Rome as the Pharaoh of Egypt. But she was not fool enough to expect that or to mention it. She offered him only encouragement and never let him see the nervous strain that she was under, tautened and-plucked though it was incessantly by Caesar's own vivid restlessness and by the daily widening gap between their differing points of view.

All Alexandria turned out to bid them welcome as the fleet sailed out from Nile-mouth and headed in the dawn toward the royal harbor. Wealth was the blood in Alexandria's veins; the trade route was now open—prosperity a foregone conclusion, with a world wasted by civil war—a greedy market for Egypt's corn, and Rome's credit sound enough although her treasury might be empty. Rome could always be depended on to replenish her stores of coin from somewhere!

All the harbor-front was decorated and the palace was a delirium of waving banners. It was a new and good excuse for festival and the Alexandrians made the most of it, spending a day and a night in revelry, illuminating all the city as soon as darkness fell and praising Cleopatra as the Daughter of the Queen of Heaven and the greatest of the Lagidae.

They sent committees to her, begging her to have Arsinoe beheaded, believing that as a Ptolemy she would crave her sister's death and that her only reason for having delayed the execution was uncertainty as to the effect on public opinion. But whatever her private feelings were (and she let no one know them) she saw that the greater advantage would be gained by showing clemency, while at the same time flattering Caesar and perhaps getting him to shoulder a responsibility that she dreaded. So she let the representative committees of all ranks of citizens assembled in the throne-room have the obloquy of having urged the execution and, turning to Caesar, asked him: "Can you not discipline the girl? Would it not be wise to let her grace your triumph, walking through the streets of Rome in chains?"

She knew that it was customary to behead important prisoners after they had followed the conquering general through the streets, and if Caesar chose to take that responsibility on himself—

However, Caesar saw the issue. "Surely," he answered. "She shall grace my triumph, and she shall be whipped if she does not walk with suitable demeanor. Afterward we will let her go, and see whether she has not learned to choose her counselors more wisely and to govern herself with more restraint. She was, I remember, appointed Queen of Cyprus. I have not rescinded that."

CHAPTER XXXIII "But you keep your word, Tros?"

Men believe that their own lot is harsh and that of their ruler easy. But they can not rein their own ungovernable passions. It is curious that they should seldom stop to think how much more difficult it is to rein the passions of a multitude, and that the only reward that a ruler finds worth reckoning is consciousness of high aim and of work well done.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

CAESAR spent the days before Caesarion was born in feverish preparations for departure and in instructing Rufinus how, and exactly within what limits, to uphold Cleopatra's authority with the few troops that he felt he could afford to leave in Alexandria. What he wanted, and expected, from Cleopatra mainly now was money, and with his usual shrewdness he left supreme authority in her hands, counting on her gratitude. He depended on the Alexandrians to give her credit for the mildness of his previous exactions and for the reopening of trade, which should make them amenable and enable her to get along without any considerable army to enforce her will.

News had come from Calvinus in Pontus to the effect that Pharanaces, the son of Mithridates the Great, was marshaling an overwhelming force against him. He knew that Calvinus lacked genius, although his loyalty was as unquestionable as his courage. It might be a matter of only days before a]] Asia would be up in arms, and there was no doubt there were Romans taking advantage of the dictator's long absence to encourage disaffection that should keep him out of Rome, perhaps for ever.

Nevertheless, scarce though shipping was after all the damage he had done to it, and with his own requirements for the movement of troops, and with the oversea trade in corn and onions increasing daily, he almost emptied the animal dealers' cages," the zoological gardens of Alexandria, and the dungeons, in order to crowd on to a dozen ships material for his coming triumph in Rome and for the games in the arenas. He sent Arsinoe with one shipload of prisoners without telling her what fate she might expect, consigning her to the care of Mark Antony, with instructions that she was to be kindly treated as long as she took no undue advantage of the kindness; but he added in his letter that she was to be kept in irons if she should show the slightest inclination to intrigue.

The child Caesarion was born at daybreak, in a tumult of doctors, midwives, casters of horoscopes, priests and society matrons. Even Cleopatra's determination that the child should come into the world in an atmosphere of quiet dignity, to the strains of religious music, could not overcome court precedents. In the last hour- she was overruled and even the muscians were hustled away to make room for the wives of ministers whose long established privilege it was to witness the birth of an heir to the throne.

All the anterooms were crammed to suffocation. There were relays of mes-

sengers posted across the city to announce the important news, and there were bets on the sex of the child that almost rivaled the wagering on the races. When it was known that a male heir was alive and yelling lustily all Alexandria kept holiday; free entertainment was provided even for the slaves, and the tables were set in the 'streets for the usual free cooked food and wine that so appealed to Caesar's sense of the guile of government. Even at the last minute, with a thousand other things to think of, he made notes on how that public banqueting was managed. The horoscopes were unanimous, as might have been expected; no astrologer cared to incur the odium or the danger of forecasting misfortune at such a time. The child, said the readers of destiny, was born under a combination of planetary conjunctions that could not fail to render him successful in every walk of life, but more particularly, so they said, in the subjection of other people to his overruling wisdom. A great king was born—a herald of prosperity and peace. The wind was favorable and his men were uncomfortably crowded on the anchored fleet, so Caesar made the auspicious omen the excuse for taking his departure that same afternoon. He said a day on which a fortunate young man was born must be a good day on which to start an expedition, and he excused himself for refusing to remain more than a few minutes at her bedside, by saying that Cleopatra must avoid excitement.

Their leave-taking was entirely typical of both of them: she brave, he courteous and humorously affectionate but full of his own dignity and the importance of his own affairs, She found strength enough to laugh at the Gaulish trousers and the broad-brimmed hat he wore against the rigors of the sea. In fact, her strength was next thing to miraculous and it was difficult to keep her quiet. She was careful to give Caesar no inkling of her own anxiety—above all careful not to let him think her in the least suspicious of his good faith.

But when he was gone at last, and the booming of drums and horns had ceased, announcing that the fleet was out of sight, she sent for Olympus, who had refused to have anything whatever to do with the delivery of the child on the excuse that Sosistrates was more experienced in such matters and that his own talent might be better employed in consulting the signs and portents. He had avoided Caesar, although Caesar had lavished rewards on him and had invited him to Rome. And when at last he reached Cleopatra's bedside he announced that he had cast no horoscope.

"Are you like Apollodorus? Has Caesar made you too rich? Are you spoiled by fortune?" she demanded.

"Surely it is not fortune that upsets Apollodorus," he answered, smiling.

"Caesar has dubbed him Driver of the Chariot of the Sun, so gay Apollodorus is himself again. As for me, I know that earthly good and evil are only prongs of the same fork with which Destiny goads us to master ourselves. Who can undo the past? Who can change the present? But the future—"

"Why then no horoscope?" she insisted, plucking at filmy sheets with restless fingers, impatient because she could not leave bed and seize the reins of Egypt. She read in Olympus' eyes a vague uneasiness, and as usual her courage demanded full information, no matter what its nature. "You did cast a

Queen Cleopatra

horoscope! You have lied to me, Olympus! It was evil-an evil destiny! Speak!"

"No," he said, "I cast none, since what is the use? The child's destiny depends on yours, and yours is in your own hands."

"Tell me mine then! You have read dark forebodings in mine! Is that not so?"

"Nothing new," said Olympus. "Always the strong swimmer at the meeting of the waters, but not always wise."

She glanced to see whether there were others in the room, but there was only Charmian. She gave both of them a glimpse then of her real feeling:

"No, never wise, Olympus! Is there any other woman in the world who would have given what I gave to Caesar, and who would have failed, as I have failed, to hold him? Am I so cheap a thing? He has gone the way Aeneas did But I will not play Dido!"

"You will lie still," he commanded, with the familial firmness of a privileged physician. "You have saved Egypt thus far, and you have saved yourself from being Caesar's property. He can not sell you to the highest bidder, as he might if you were a wife under the laws of Rome. You have a son, which was what you prayed for. All Egypt accepts your son as the heir to the double crown. Caesar may have his hands full henceforth with difficulties that his own ignorance and his own ambition make inevitable."

"Inevitable? He will overcome them all," she asserted confidently. "His destiny is as certain as the rising of tomorrow's sun. There is only one Caesar."

"He is one too many," Olympus answered. "You will see that Rome will find him one too many."

"He will twist Rome between his fingers," she insisted. "He will snap Rome like a scorpion before it stings him. He will ride Rome like a man on horseback—"

"Aye, until they find him'out. There is a strain of madness in all conquerors. Caesar knows he has brains and energy; he sees the weakness, the hypocrisy and dull stupidity of other men; he sees therein his opportunity, and he believes that he can mingle god and devil in one vain bag of human skin. But such men grow intolerable and their end comes swiftly."

"Olympus, you have lied!" she said again. "You have been casting horoscopes. Is Caesar to die suddenly?" He nodded. "Unless he turns his back on Rome." "Why Rome? Are his friends not strong there? If you should say he was in danger from the Parthians—"

"He is in no danger from them," said Olympus. "He is a conqueror by destiny. If he keeps on conquering he can continue until the sand in his glass has run. But in Rome he will try to play god and devil. What he understands he will neglect, and what he does not understand he will nevertheless try to practise; so that he will fall between two stools. His friends, who will admire his new-found godliness, will urge him to make use of evil for his own sake and for theirs; and his enemies, who cursed him for the evil he has wrought, will slay him because they hate his righteousness the more. Caesar is doomed unless he turns his back on Rome."

"I did my utmost to persuade him," Cleopatra murmured. "Olympus, am I to

blame for this danger you say he is in?" "Who else than Caesar is to blame for Caesar's fault?" he answered. "Look you to your own task." He told her to sleep, but she refused until Tros, Apollo-dorus and several of her ministers were summoned. Tros came and grinned at her baby as if it were some strange fish his men had caught:

"A male, you say? If you had added one more woman to the world, O Egypt, even Caesar might have felt discouraged! The blue-eyed rascal! Hey! Already he looks like Caesar! Was he born with teeth?"

He tried to put a finger in the infant's mouth until Char-mian scolded.

"There," he exclaimed, "a woman starts to interfere already! Little Caesar is his name, eh? He will have a reputation with women to live down, won't he? Let me see if he will bite my finger, for that is a good omen."

But Charmian suspected Tros' fingers of being poisonous with tar and whale-oil, or at any rate she said so. The experiment was called off.

"Tros," said Cleopatra, as he bowed over the bed, deliberately making his great amber eyes beam kindly on her, for he had no proper speech for such occasions and was far more ill-at-ease than he chose to let any one see, "Tros, are you true to me? May I depend on you to help me teach my son to be a true king, and to help me to preserve a throne for him?"

He stood upright again and looked at her a long time, stroking his beard, before he answered:

"Egypt, there is nothing less dependable than a man who has made rectitude his one main purpose. Day by day we throw old dunnage of ideas overboard. What appears worthy to-day, to-morrow may seem worthless in the light of new-won wisdom. How shall you trust me, who trust myself so little that I examine myself each night to know what folly I have done and what new course in consequence I ought to lay? And at dawn I lay it, though it cost me men's opinion and my own ease. Caesar is more to be trusted. Caesar cares for neither right nor wrong; he chooses his goal and makes for it. He keeps his word, too, for his pride's sake, unless pride betrays to him a proud excuse and points a glittering opportunity."

"But you keep your word, Tros?"

"Aye, I do my best as- a rule. But I pledge word not so readily. And having pledged, I am not so easily dissuaded, though a throne or two should tumble as the price of steadfastness. Pledges are bad anchors to ride to, Egypt, for they come not up, though a whole crew go to hauling. He who has no fondness for slipping cable may drown in the shelterless lee of an oath that holds his nose, it may be without scope enough."

She was too weak to argue, and she caught sight of Charmian signaling to Tros to back away and take his leave without ceremony. "Tros," she insisted, "is a promise kept in one life not a fair wind for the next? I have heard you say so." "Aye," he answered, "women can always remember a man's words to use against him. They do us the first injustice when they bring us forth into the world and bid us thank them for it; the next when they snare us in marriage and steal our manhood while they bid us fight their quarrels; and the last when they throw in our teeth our falseness to our own ideals that we laid aside for them." "Nevertheless," she said, "I will depend on you. I trust

Queen Cleopatra

you more than any man." "Woman," he answered, "what is it to me that you should trust me? I will answer. It means a rope around my neck, to haul me back from purposes I cherish!" "Cherish my child Caesarion," she answered. "Is that not a noble purpose—to raise a king who shall govern the whole world wisely?" "Nay," he answered. "Governing a world is Caesar's or some other upstart's business! I hold with Plato: we do better by thousands than by hundred thousands. Each man has enough to do to govern himself." "But somebody must rule. Who ruled your ship, Tros?"

Will you teach Caesarion to govern himself so that he may rule a world as you ruled that ship of yours?" "Ruled, you say? I have the ship yet!"

"No," she answered, "it is my ship—part of the fleet of Egypt. Tros, I will never let you go! You hear me? Never! Which will you then? Will you pledge your word to me anew? Or will you stay ashore, and live at ease, and grow fat, and watch another only half do what you might have done so splendidly? I will give you a day to think it over." "I have thought," he answered. "I was born to be ensnared by women. How shall a man escape his destiny? But you shall find in me a man of blunt speech, and on the day that you fail Egypt I will fail you!"

"I accept your word," she answered, nodding, and dismissed him, he backing away before Charmian, who was impatient to clear the room and neither afraid nor even courteous when duty urged her.

Blame is easy to lay and no man or no woman is perfect. Commonly the greatest fools and hypocrites are readiest to cast aspersion; and the wisest and most honorable are the slowest, ever qualifying accusation and withholding judgment, knowing that themselves in like predicament might blunder worse than the accused and might achieve less.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

WEEKS followed weeks without any direct word from Caesar—no letters, that is, although Cleopatra wrote once and enclosed the parchment in a golden tube, which she sealed with emeralds embedded deep in wax. Receiving no reply, she wasted no time bewailing Caesar's fickleness. "Caesar," she said, "is busy with a world's affairs. He pays me the subtle compliment of leaving me to manage Egypt without his guidance." And whether she believed that or was aware that Caesar, pursuing his usual opportunist tactics, was leaving her to sink or swim and intended to be governed, as to his future course in Egypt and toward her, wholly by results, she made the most of the freedom of action thus conferred. And there were no demands for money, which, although inexplicable, helped her more than any other circumstance to crystallize the goodwill of the Alexandrians.

Their resources rapidly increasing, instead of being drained by Caesar's squanderous appetite, they yielded readily to Cleopatra's constantly strengthening, grip on the reins of state, and her own wealth becoming enormous, now that the corn monopoly was functioning, she had ample funds with which to begin to bribe such Roman senators as she thought might be of use to her later on. She did not exactly flood Rome with her secret agents, but it was only a very short time before Cicero, for instance, began to complain in the Roman Senate that her spies were everywhere. She had digested and applied that part of Caesar's system thoroughly. Lonely again, but with her genius stirred and awakened by Caesar's; cynical in self-defense because of Caesar's cynical desertion of her; and by nature alert to the treachery of human motives, she worked day and night to secure her political position, so that Caesar would have to turn to her again as an ally rather than turn against her, as she fully understood him to be capable of doing.

Tact and personality were her weapons. She discovered in herself the gift of dazzling men, whether they were old or young, and of making women not so jealous as despairing of ever imitating her attractions. Her air of gaiety and courage blinded every one to the secret dread that haunted her of Rome's insatiable hunger for new territories to exploit; and those of her ministers" who shared that secret very soon perceived that she, and she alone, was likely to be able to resist Rome, not by force of arms but by devotion to her purpose and with an intelligence that no subtlety of statesmanship escaped. As alert as light, she detected treason before it materialized; as generous as summer weather, she rewarded friends as richly as she punished enemies. Caesar had

Queen Cleopatra

not been gone a month before her, ministers all realized that, though she drove them mercilessly, she was reckless of her own youth, health and comfort, valuing them only as a means of saving Egypt and her dynasty. As so often happens, energy enhanced her charm. It gave her confidence. She ripened.

And though Caesar did not write, there was incessant news of him. She was confident that while he kept on winning Victories there was not much danger of the Roman Senate daring to try to challenge his authority and interfere with her activities. So she wheedled and bribed and outwitted Rufinus and the Roman officers, whom Caesar had left to take care of his own interests as much as to protect her, little by little so winning their admiration that they almost forgot Caesar in their recognition of her statesmanship. She loaded them with honors, and she scrupulously asked for Rufinus' opinion in advance of every move she made, but it always ended in Rufinus withdrawing opposition and commending what she wanted. Meanwhile, Tros labored like Heracles at building ships, which Rufinus supposed were intended for Caesar's use, and Apollodorus as high chamberlain devised such palace entertainments as no city in the world had ever seen.

That was another trick that she had learned from Caesar. She kept men too excited and amused to guess what her real intentions were; and the occasional Romans who came spying on their own account for business opportunities or to pick up political crumbs returned to Rome with stories about her magnificence and wit, that spread and spread and were exaggerated until Rome wondered whether to fear her or to look to her for inspiration. The exaggerated rumors of her wealth and reckless use of it set half of the Roman senators shamelessly angling for bribes—a scandal that solidified the small minority that resented corruption but who had no leader now that Cato was in exile fulminating the old-fashioned virtues near the ruins of ancient Carthage.

It was from Balbus, Caesar's intimate in Rome and one of his most notorious agents of political corruption that she received the news of Caesar's victory at Zela, whence he sent to his friend Amantius for publication the announcement "Veni, vidi, cici" that endeared him more than ever to the mob and more than ever made his critics loathe him. That message was a symptom that she recognized.

Presently came news of Caesar's swiftly spent visit in Rome and his immediate descent on northern Africa where Cato, Scipio, Lucius Julius Caesar and other fugitive friends of Pompey had been busy preparing an army, with the assistance of Juba, the King of Numidia, to resist to the last breath the man whom they regarded as the bane of Rome—liar and traitor and arch-enemy of public decency. News of the battle of Thapsus was brought by fugitives, who told how Caesar, landing at Hadrumentum, had begun hostilities at once and, falling on Cato's army, had utterly routed it and butchered fifty thousand men; how Lucius Julius Caesar, Lucius Africanus and Faustus Sulla had been beheaded, and how Cato, Scipio and others had committed suicide to save themselves from the indignity of public execution. Then, swiftly on the heels of news of that tremendous victory, came word that Caesar had made Eunoe,

wife of the King of Mauretania, his mistress.

There were many who took care that Cleopatra should receive that information, among them Apollodorus, who had not forgiven her for her neglect, as he considered it, to avenge the death of Lolliane. But though she was watched, and even offered diffident condolences by those whose cautious malice stalked under a guise of scandalized concern, there was none except Charmian who was allowed to see beneath the veil of her indifference, and Charmian only dimly:

"Do you realize now, Charmian," she said, "why I was wise to leave Caesar free, not married to me? Would a form of words have kept him from Eunoe's arms? I have assumed no privilege of finding fault with infidelity that he can no more help than the wind can keep from blowing. Caesar has nothing left to offer any woman except infidelity. He had one moment, in my arms, when he glimpsed what love means. And I have his son Caesarion."

But Charmian was virgin chaste and bitter-minded in the matter of men's faithlessness:

"He has probably by this time told Eunoe," she said, "all the sweet nothings he' murmured to you; and he will have added to them all the somethings that you told him— Caesar's version of them! He' will have told her, for instance, how divine she is and what he thinks divinity may mean!"

But Caesar had taught Cleopatra cynicism, and before she ever met him she had learned the value of men's protests of devotion. Personally utterly incapable of swerving from a loyalty once pledged, she recognized all the more readily the rarity of that trait of character, and she was beginning to find it simple to outwit the men who would have liked to stand in Caesar's vacant place beside her. There were many Alexandrians who thought themselves in that race, and who became her none too scrupulous supporters because vanity interpreted her smiles and the gaze of her violet eyes as indications of her interest in themselves. That gaze was psychic; she could see through mask to motive. But she understood its surface value also and deliberately used it, letting her lightning dazzle as many fools as chose to try to match ambition against her genius.

Five kings and Herod of Galilee all sought her hand in marriage, recognizing (as Caesar himself had failed to do) one reason why she had refused to marry Caesar. She was free to dispose of herself anew whenever Caesar's shifting, opportunist tactics should compel her to seek strength elsewhere. She could be true to Caesar without tying herself hand and foot and at the mercy of his untruth—she intuitively recognizing her own freedom as perhaps the surest means of keeping Caesar faithful to her in degree. So she received ambassadors who tempted her with gifts.

Already married, Herod offered to divorce his wife and to negotiate alliances that should give Rome pause for many a year to come—an offer that she played with until Herod stood committed wheel-deep in the mire of his own intrigue and she had him at her mercy.

She had not forgiven Herod. She was farther still from forgetting Lolliane. But she did not consider Apollodorus' private vengeance a fair exchange for the life of a faithful friend and she intended to exact a price that should

Queen Cleopatra

wound Herod without ever giving the wound a chance to heal—that should punish him and keep him hoping for relief and, therefore, be useful to herself. So she abode her time and let Herod think she considered his bid for her hand a compliment. She thanked him for the information he sent her about Caesar's present lapse into infidelity and suitably embellished stories of his lurid past. She kept the letters, as a whip with which to coerce Herod in the time to come.

Tros, as he had promised that he would do, bluntly spoke his mind to her: "You are wasting time," he said, "and wasting wisdom on a crowd of fools, who will infect you with their folly."

"What would you have me do?" she asked him.

"Eastward! Turn eastward!" he answered. "Send ambassadors to India. Warn India of Caesar's plans to conquer all the world. Then make alliances with Parthia, India, Arabia. Send me! I will stir them until they unite with you in one wall of self-defense across the world!"

She sent an embassy to India, but not Tros. She invited Buddhist emissaries from Ceylon, and intimated that the port of Berenice on the Red Sea would afford convenience, supplies and full protection for eastern traders. Also she sent agents to Socotra, where for upward of two hundred years the Greeks had maintained a trading station, and she arranged for pilots and interpreters to accompany Egyptian merchantmen.

Because she was young and for ever apparently gay, most gloriously dressed and bent on having the most splendid court the world had ever known, it escaped men's observation that behind that mask of gaiety and scented luxury she was a thinker, with a lightning intuition that could read most hidden motives, and with a smile that concealed her knowledge.

Charmian knew more than any one. There were times when Charmian saw glimpses of the depths, of gloom and passion, to which the lees of the blood of the Ptolemies dragged her, in the moments, rare in those days, when she lost her self-possession. Charmian and Olympus were the only ones who guessed how secretly, in those hours, she was consumed by jealousy and could have killed herself for having failed to keep Caesar in Alexandria. Her method in the main was diametrically opposite to Caesar's. Whereas he drew all his power from the mob, adroitly stirring its enthusiasm and employing it to check the schemes of rivals, she manipulated courtiers and let them manage details of administration, confidently counting on their own self-interest to make them keep the crowd in hand. She offset one against another, whereas Caesar rather gloried in defying all the brains of Rome. And she had this advantage over Caesar: that she never feared to trust a good administrator, whereas Caesar chose second-rate men to surround him, being unable to tolerate the near neighborhood of men possessed of character and brains enough to become his rivals.

There was an enormous difference between those points of view. And Cleopatra well understood that if Caesar should make himself king of the world, there was only one queen whom he could set beside him. There were no Roman women eligible. There was no dynasty in the known world that could

compare with hers. She could afford to wait.

But she could not afford to let Caesar treat her in the meanwhile as one of his discarded mistresses. So long before the news came of his having left Africa for Rome she had begun negotiations with the Roman Senate leading to an invitation to herself to visit Rome. She had one overmastering reason. Caesar, she knew, would celebrate a triumph as the conqueror of Egypt, and if she herself were not there as a witness of the triumph all the world would say, and Rome would take for granted, that Egypt was now no longer independent; whereas if she herself were present as a royal guest she would be able to make it clear to every one, Caesar himself included, that Roman arms had defeated Egypt's enemies, not Egypt, and that Egypt, represented by herself, was a friend and ally, not a conquered enemy.

She knew very well that Cicero and many others would resent her presence and would do their utmost to prevent it. And she also knew that Caesar was entirely capable of overlooking her in order to avoid recriminations at a moment when he needed surface harmony. But there were not many men in the Senate whose votes were not purchaseable and her agents in Rome by that time had discovered which senators to approach with bribes and which to leave alone. Enormous sums of money changed hands. Caesar received a request from the Senate, couched in almost urgent terms, suggesting that the presence of the Queen of Egypt might be an event of great political importance.

Smiling, as he recognized how ably Cleopatra had adopted his own method of controlling Roman politics, Caesar wrote the invitation and dispatched it by the hand of a distinguished legate, ordering his villa on the Tiber bank to be refurnished and made ready to receive her.

**CHAPTER XXXV "Whoever sticks a head into Caesar's net is
Caesar's victim."**

We are prone to go forth and meet trouble, being proud of what we call our courage, which is more often rashness. And it needs a greater courage, of a higher sort, to stay still to receive and cherish wisdom, which is after all the only conqueror of difficulties.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

IT WAS now, on the receipt of Caesar's invitation, that the wisdom of Cleopatra's method revealed itself. She could accept and leave no dangerous enemies behind her. Roman officers would watch her Alexandrian officials, who would administer the country in her interest if only to prevent the Romans from obtaining too much foothold. Practically she had jockeyed Rufinus into the condition of an auditor, and his subordinates into that of a police over the bureaucracy, every one looking for commendation from her, satisfied with their pay and with the luxury of Alexandria, and depending on her to make a good report of them to Caesar.

The result was that even a low Nile caused less than ordinary hardship, because the administration was efficient and the Argus-eyed Rufinus anticipated and prevented misappropriation of the revenues. Actually, and in spite of the low Nile, there was more land under irrigation than there had been for a century and there was plenty of corn in the granaries for export.

The fleet, that had always been a danger hitherto, with a reputation for placing itself at the service of any intriguing malcontent, was wholly in Tros' hands, better manned, paid and fed than ever in its history, and much too busy freighting merchandise and corn to be interested in brewing mischief.

Diplomatically Cleopatra held in her own hands the destiny of every principality and kingdom, from Syria to the utmost limits of Arabia. She had only to reveal to Caesar their proposals for alliances against him to cause Caesar to dragoon them drastically. She was the one to whom they would have to look to speak that friendly word for them in Rome that should cause Caesar to leave them a measure of independence.

So her borders were safe. Her treasury was overflowing. She could take with her to Rome, where silver and gold were at a premium, enormous sums of money that might relieve Caesar's necessity as well as, if adroitly used, insure for herself that good-will of the Roman mob, notoriously fickle, used to being bought and flattered, contemptible, and yet as essential to herself as to Caesar. She could afford to go to Rome as one who brought gifts, not as a seeker of favors: as a valuable ally, rather than a source of potential danger to the Roman imperium. And it

was not in Cleopatra's nature to act less than splendidly when she had opportunity. The chance to dazzle Rome, to bewilder it, to show the Romans what real dignity and wealth and splendor were, challenged her audacity and made

her deaf to remonstrance.

Olympus was solemnly critical: "Pause," he advised, "and consider! Fish swim. Birds fly. Each to his own element. A jewel in its setting is a thing men crave, but fling it in the mud and what becomes of it? Where is its value? And how suddenly departed!"

Tros tried other methods of dissuasion. "Whoever sticks a head into Caesar's net is Caesar's victim," he assured her. "Caesar needs you more than ever again you will need him. Send him money and encourage him to fight the Parthians, who will give him an even bigger beating than the Britons did!" But her personal loyalty rebelled at the mere suggestion of contributing to Caesar's possible defeat by any enemy.

"I go to Rome," she insisted, "because Caesar is the friend, and Rome the enemy. I have heard you say that wars are won in the heart of an enemy's country. Is it not a war that I am waging? Is it less a war because I only risk myself and wage it without slaying men? Make ready, Tros, for I will sail to Ostia on your ship."

There was nothing for Tros to do but to obey her. As the fountainhead of discipline in the Egyptian fleet he could not permit himself to set an example of disobedience.

Charmian consulted with Olympus before voicing her own intuitive dread, seldom trusting her own judgment when she felt it opposed to Cleopatra's. Olympus hinted to her what he had not dared to say to Cleopatra lest she should accuse him of casting secret horoscopes and should insist on being shown them in full detail. He understood the danger of his lore—how people, guided by a forecast of events, are paralyzed by fatalism and refuse to use judgment or will. But he could depend on Charmian not to betray the source of her dark forebodings, and on Cleopatra not to suspect it since she knew that Charmian was very often jealous of him. So Charmian came primed into the dressing-room at night, and they two talked alone on the balcony under the stars, huddled in shawls on a couch with their feet tucked under them.

"What would happen," Charmian asked, "if Caesar should die or be murdered while you visit him in Rome? He has the falling sickness and a host of enemies. His wife will hardly love you. She would surely try to blame you for his death if he should die."

"They are more likely to kill me than Caesar," Cleopatra answered, "and I feel that my time has not yet come. I feel an urge in me to do things, not to hesitate and weigh and analyze."

"I smell death," said Charmian.

"You can smell the sea, too," Cleopatra answered. "You can see it there, under the moon, all cold and merciless. But need it drown us?"

She had plenty of encouragement to offset Tros, Olympus, Charmian and one or two others who dared to advise her against going. The librarian officials were as eager as herself to spread in Rome the culture that they counted on to change the face of history. There was no pride greater than theirs or less amenable to political arguments, which they regarded as beneath contempt.

"Flood Rome with learning and with art," they urged her. "Take with you philosophers, sculptors, painters, poets and historians. Bestow that priceless

Queen Cleopatra

gift on Rome and Rome will for ever after worship you as the source of her civilization!"

And the Jews insisted. They sent Esias to present their views, accompanied by scores of slaves all loaded down with gifts for Roman ladies whom Cleopatra might see fit to patronize.

"Trade," said Esias, "is as blood in the veins of nations. Take with you some of my people, and the trade of Egypt, I can promise you, will multiply like kine and camels in a fat year. Use your influence in Rome to give the Jews advantages, and the wealth of Alexandria shall become a proverb."

Probably Apollodorus did more to confirm her own determination "than all other influences combined. He hated Rome. He did not want to go to Rome, where members of the aristocracy did not compete in chariot races and his own peculiar personal advantages were more likely than not to arouse antagonism. Shrewd in his own way, and aware that Roman vice and virtue were as different from the Alexandrian as iron is from copper, he was daring enough to be insolent because he knew that Cleopatra liked him personally too well to take serious offense.

"The trouble with you, Royal Egypt," he assured her, "is that you are much too innocent. You think that because you are an altruist the world will recognize the fact and turn to altruism to oblige you. You are like a rose—by which I mean that you are not without thorns—and you remind me of a rose set in a pig-pen, trying to please the pigs by blooming marvelously. We have a rather reasonable breed of pigs in Egypt, and as long as you bloom we will lie in the sun and enjoy you. But the Romans will regard you as an insult to their sty and as an altogether tasty morsel, viewed as fodder. Your thorns which we are far too careful of our comfort to care to tamper with, will merely serve as a condiment to sharpen the Roman appetite. Stay in Egypt. Bloom where blossom is allowed to blow at its appointed time."

"You shall live in Rome," she said, "as my permanent legate unless you rise to this occasion and make our entry into Rome as splendid as the rising sun!" He took her at her word. Trps utterly refused to let his ship be made into a plaything, as he called it, so she had to be contented with the purple sails and gilded serpent at the bow that were his own idea of dignity. But the fleet, that was loaded with gifts and priests, librarians, astronomers, traders, slaves of every known nation and craftsmen of every known art, was a purple and golden dream—a mystery of opulence, in the van of which Tros' great warship plunged like a leviathan, the more majestic since the others were so gaily feminine.

Her brother—the child of Ptolemy Auletes' drunken old age and half-witted at best—was ailing, so she ran no risk of leaving him behind to die, with the inevitable consequence of rumors that she had caused him to be poisoned in her absence. She brought him to Rome with her, with well-known doctors in attendance and accompanied by individuals who might, if left behind with him, have started a conspiracy; men and women whose obvious interest it was to keep the boy alive as long as possible and on whom, in the event of his death, disgrace would fall if there were any hint of murder.

"Another symptom of her innocence. She would better have drowned him publicly like a kitten too many," Apollodorus remarked. "He will die soon. He is rickety, anemic, rotten with scrofula, and ought to die to save himself from misery. But the more precautions she takes, the more doctors she employs, the more surely the gossips will swear she killed him. She might as well have the satisfaction of deserving the credit. It would show her common sense. Caesar would do it without hesitating. So would I. But she lacks common sense. She has only genius. She is amusing but not practical."

But common sense was more than half her genius. She was far too wise to enter Rome by land, for instance, and steal any of Caesar's thunder by anticipating his coming triumph. She proposed to be indispensable to Caesar, not a nuisance to him. She had brought a fleet of corn-ships in her wake to enable him to feed the Roman mob at her cost and to his own advantage. It was at her request that Caesar did not come to Ostia to meet her; he could not have done it without all Rome's knowledge, and she even asked that the senatorial committee of reception should be no larger or more important than that usually accorded to a visiting potentate.

She combined, in fact, splendor with tactful self-suppression, choosing to travel by boat and by night up the Tiber, increasing her prestige by the atmosphere of secrecy that started countless rumors spreading without offering the slightest competition to Caesar's all-dominant fame—adding to it rather than detracting from it and affording Caesar opportunity to greet her in the privacy of his villa on the Tiber-side that he had placed at her disposal.

He had aged perceptibly since she had seen him last. Standing between torches, on the marble landing at the foot, of steps that led to terraced gardens surrounding the villa, he looked drawn and pale. More dignified than ever, he had lost a little of his former charm of manner, and his cordiality, though genuine, was strained, as if he no longer possessed the ability to throw off official cares and be personal and human. Everything was studied. He had posted himself to appear statuesque. With a gesture he included all Rome in his person as receiving her with honor. But the darkness and the night-roar of the city, the apparent loneliness of Tiber-bank (only apparent: there were troops within hail), the torches, and the water gurgling at the piles, the sheen of light on shields where, like a row of statues in the dark, his body-guard and "lictors watched him motionless, all emphasized the deathly whiteness of his figure and a feel of tragedy impending that made Cleopatra shudder. Tros; emerging from the barge behind her, nudged Apollodorus.

"Is this the bank of Tiber or of Styx?" he whispered.

But Caesar's spoken greeting was delivered with vigor and a little laughter, as if suddenly he realized how deeply he had loved and how empty his life had been since leaving Alexandria—a mere series of things and deeds, no spiritual fullness such as he experienced with her beneath a gentler sky. Holding out his arms toward her, for a moment he forgot everything except that he was glad to see her.

"This destiny," he said, "that flatters and then frenzies us, that joins and separates us, is a poor thing, Egypt! Let us challenge it and have our will of it! These eyes have not seen anything so welcome as yourself since they last

Queen Cleopatra

looked on the Lochias."

But she avoided his embrace until he had taken their child in his arms, she receiving it sleeping from the nurse and drawing aside the shawl that he might see by torchlight how the tiny thing resembled him.

"An omen!" he said. "He is a Caesar. He weeps not!"

But at the word the child awoke and vented riotous displeasure, yelling for his wet-nurse.

Other incidents occurred to spoil the concord of the night. Caesar, normally so graceful and sure on his feet, stumbled as he turned to mount the steps beside the litter he had provided for Cleopatra. He caught hold of the litter and saved himself, but not without cutting his knee on the edge of the stone. He made nothing of it, but his lictors and the men-at-arms grew solemn, one of them advising him to send an offering to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus.

"For the moment I forgot I am a god," he answered irritably.

It annoyed him that he had forgotten to greet Tros and Apollodoros. He turned on the steps and waited for them, speaking then less courteously than he probably intended, stroking his brow with his hand because his brain was crowded with a host of contradictory thoughts that blurred memory and prevented the dignified condescension he would normally have shown.

But he had regained sauvity, at least of manner, by the time he reached the villa, and by the time he had led Cleopatra into the vast reception hall and she had praised it, he was almost the Caesar of earlier days, considerate and gently courteous, his eyes regaining their old cold brilliance and his voice assured, amused, a trifle highly pitched but dignified.

They found a room together where the slaves had set food and wine, and only Charmian came in with them to play the servant and protect them from intrusion with her calm, discreet, all-watchful and unnoticeable hovering; and in the two hours while the house was being filled with mounds of luggage and the fretful eunuchs wondered who should find accommodation for them all, Caesar and Cleopatra found a basis for new mutual regard, the stronger since she made no challenge to his outworn physical emotions. Sensuously he was a dying flame that might be fanned up for a moment but would then cease. Intellectually he was weary but as vigorous as ever and as capable of new enthusiasm. They had been comrades as much as lovers; she resumed the comradeship, directing her assault against his one weak point, his loneliness, reminding him that she was the only woman he had ever trusted with his inmost thoughts, and how she had opened to him realms of imagination where no common minds could reach to criticize and carp and sting.

"Confess," she said, laughing, "that I showed you how and why you are immortal, and that you now seek to rival the gods! Isn't that why you neglected me?"

"I am told," he answered kindly, "that you have converted what you are pleased to call neglect into an opportunity. Are you not absolute in Egypt?"

"Absolute?" she asked. "With Caesar shining in the firmament and Caesar's son each day a full day nearer manhood? Twenty years and he will be older than I was when you and I met. I should be a poor pupil, or else Caesar a poor

instructor, if I, could not use those twenty years to some advantage. I am not ungrateful. You will find me a faithful friend and not inclined to strain the friendship."

He accepted the new status with relief that he betrayed by an immediate invitation to discuss his own plans and the future, and to link her own with his if she could find a way to do it.

"The Senate talks," he said, "of voting me the dictatorship for life. There is some talk, too, of making the office hereditary."

That was a plain enough hint. But she knew as well as he did where the danger ahead of them lay.

"Caesar's son," she answered shrewdly, "if a Roman, might inherit the dictatorship. The Romans are ready for that. They will bow to a Roman. But Caesar must be a king before the Romans will accept Caesarion."

"Romans are not Fond of the thought of being ruled by kings," he answered rather wearily. It appeared he had been giving thought to that of late.

"That is because they are ignorant. They can be taught; however."

"Try—just try to teach, for instance, Cicero I" he answered, smiling.

"Numa leges dedit!" she retorted. "Numa was a king, a high priest and a god. Can Cicero deny it? Are you not Numa's equal? And is Cicero? Make wise laws, and Cicero, who can only talk about them, will appear ridiculous. And is there not an ancient prophecy that Rome shall never conquer Parthia until the Romans fight under a Roman king?"

"I had forgotten that," said Caesar.

"You have too much to remember. Offer the crown to Cicero and bid him fight the Parthians!"

Caesar smiled. "I am afraid he might accept!" he said ironically. "He is one of those men who are friendly when in need of money but whose indignation leads them to take strange courses. However, that ancient prophecy is worth considering."

CHAPTER XXXVI "Who is the ruler of Rome?"

They who take thought may observe, and will be wise if they remember, that the celebration of a victory is on the one hand silly gloating over other men's misfortune, and on the other a false semblance of finality, beneath which treason among the victors bides its time.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

DAILY during weeks and months that followed it became more clear to every thoughtful man in Rome that Caesar was planning to make himself king. But as to how much Cleopatra had to do with it opinions differed. Some thought that she restrained his insolence, which cost him countless friendships to offset the popularity he won by extravagant bribes to the mob in the form of free food and entertainment. Others blamed the whole of his extravagance and demagogic strategy on her, knowing that he was drawing freely on her treasury and forgetting that he had never used any other than corrupt methods of controlling Roman politics, the only difference being that he now accepted gifts from her instead of borrowing from money-lenders and repaying them by letting them plunder helpless provinces.

Accusation was the breath of life to Rome. Without a scandal to discuss, the city life fell foul and flat, the very forum seemed a place of dreariness. The scandal of Cleopatra's residence in Caesar's villa, while the dictator himself lived in a smaller house within the city with his legal wife Calpurnia, provided a surging undercurrent to the excitement of his four-day triumph, the splendor of which exceeded anything the world had ever seen, but the effect of which was hardly what Caesar had anticipated.

On the first day he rode through the streets as the conqueror of Gaul, with Vercingetorix in chains and so many Gaulish prisoners and so much plunder that to the reeking yelling mob it almost seemed as if the whole of Gaul had been transported into Rome for their profit and amusement. Brave Vercingetorix, neglected in a dungeon for six miserable years, was hooted through the streets unpitied, few remembering the terms on which he had surrendered himself to Caesar in order to save his nation from further bloodshed. Tros tried to speak to him but the crowd and the soldiers prevented, until at last, as the procession neared the capital, - he saw them lead the unhappy chief away to the place of execution. Then he fought his way back to where Cleopatra looked on from a balcony. It was dark before he reached her.

Caesar was ascending the capital now by torchlight with forty elephants to right and left of his chariot, passing between serried ranks of veterans who hailed him as Caesar-victor—imperator. For a while the roar upswelling deafened Cleopatra's ears. It was Apollodorus, scornfully surveying Rome's artless histrionics and enthusiasm over plundered people's misery, who at last drew her attention.

"The Lord Tros is irritated," he remarked. "Soothe him before he dies of apo-

plexity, or we will have no admiral to take us home, when this orgy is over!" Tros wasted few words: "Caesar has murdered Vercingetorix," he growled. "Caesar, who they tell me wept at the news of Pompey's latter end, now breaks his word to a nobler enemy and butchers him to please the mob. I go from here. I will return to the fleet at Ostia. I beg your leave of absence." She assented, fearing Tros might speak his mind to Caesar otherwise, who was as capable of crucifying Tros as of heading Vercingetorix. His magnanimity was more fitful and less predictable than ever, now that he was tasting the fruit of victories instead of winning them.

The fruit was bitter. Very late that night as he and Cleopatra walked together in the gardens by the Tiber he complained to her of Rome's ingratitude:

"All that the world asks of its hero," he said, "is success—until success comes. Then they demand that he shall lay his neck under their feet and submit himself to their stupid opinions. It was suggested to me when I reached the capitol to-night that I might do well to remember Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus. They refer to his simplicity. They invite me to be a sort of peasant farmer and eat my dinner of raw turnips seated on a fence.

As if forsooth they themselves would do that. Hypocrites! And it appears that now Cato is dead there is a party devoted to praising him, as if that old humbug ever accomplished anything except to find fault with his betters. If I had celebrated a meager triumph for the sake of the economy they hint at, they would have accused me of being parsimonious and would denounce me for it to the mob."

Dangerous counsel she gave him. But she knew he needed comfort, not more criticism. He was weary from the day's excitement, dreading three more days of it. The reek of Rome renewed his jaundice, and the physical strain of being the hub of Rome's excitement from dawn until after dark had ill prepared him for the mental irritation of mean men's gibes adroitly veiled by flattery and offered with a thin-lipped smile. She, too, had her nerves to consider: on the morrow she must watch the Egyptian triumph—her own subjects being led in chains, and trophies representing Egypt being flaunted before a mob that recognized no fine distinctions.

She must reassure herself that Caesar, whatever the mob might think, distinctly in his own mind differentiated between Egypt and those Alexandrian rebels whom, according to her view of it, he had suppressed in justice to herself to raise her to an independent throne. He and she were alone again—utterly lonely amid tumult.

"You have brought Rome wealth," she answered. "Cities and men which have wealth in their keeping have no choice but to submit to the rule of him who permits or assists them to keep it. If I were in your shoes I would show my contempt for their jealousy, for you are greater than them all."

Because contempt provided the relief his nerves craved, he opened his mind to it as to a soothing drug. And because she had suggested it, and he realized, too, that she was nerving herself to witness the next day's gross indignity toward her throne and country, he felt a sudden wave of generosity and offered her in turn a modicum of comfort. He was grateful that she had never once tried to obstruct him or to fortify her own position at the cost of his. Even her

Queen Cleopatra

secret agents, all of whose activities were known to him, employed -the policy of praising and supporting him in order to forward her interests.

"I will confer full civic rights in Rome," he said, "on all those Alexandrian officials whom you have brought here with you—doctors, astronomers, priests, financiers and who not else. My senators will object; but it may help to make them realize their unimportance. They may also learn how ignorant they are; for I will employ the Alexandrian financiers to organize the treasury."

Then, seeing that was hardly personal to her he drew reckless and urged her to use more ostentation; but she shrewdly saw the danger and refused. As opportunist as him-self in some ways, she had rearranged her policy; she would maintain a quiet court and an extremely modest appearance in public but would lavish gifts and money wherever her busy agents, Serapion and Hammonios, advised her that that road to popularity was open. She had already sensed that the upper classes resented her influence over Caesar and that even the mob was jealous of her wealth and dignity.

However, she felt obliged to witness the Egyptian triumph. She must celebrate with Caesar—must appear to enjoy the sight of rebels being led in chains to execution. So the balcony from which she looked on was splendidly decorated—a blaze of flowers and of banners with inscriptions to the effect that Egypt was grateful to Caesar for having suppressed rebellion and restored peace. Hammonios and Serapion had persuaded several wives of prominent Romans to share her hospitality on the balcony; they were plied with costly presents and delicious things to eat; and they flirted with Apollodorus and several other handsome Alexandrian gallants.

But Cleopatra was not always in the best of tempers or in a mood to endure effrontery. She made no headway with the Roman women, whom she despised as lacking delicacy and civilized manners. They openly admired her jewels and her hands and feet, but were as sarcastic as they dared to be and made pointed references to Caesar's wife, Calpurnia, the effect of which on Cleopatra was to make her recklessly contemptuous:

"Do you Roman women like being bought and sold?" she asked them. "I am told you think marriage respectable though your husbands and parents trade you for a handful of votes or for a provincial appointment. You should come to Egypt, where a man who tried to do that would be ostracized."

A matron tried to show the Roman view-point: "Women are more socially free in Rome than anywhere. Our money and possessions are our own. If we are divorced we take those with us. We have to yield something in return for all the freedoms we enjoy."

"So you yield your self-respect?" suggested Cleopatra; and there was not much cordiality exhibited thenceforward. Conversation was mainly confined to questions by the Roman women, calculated to dismay and irritate, and to answers by Cleopatra that went straight between the joints of the armor of Roman self-esteem.

The triumphal procession of that day was the least warlike and the most picturesque, coming as something of an anticlimax after the celebration of the

conquest of Gaul. The principal attraction was the animals, some of them driven in herds and some confined in cages. There were effigies of Potheinos, Theodotus and Achilles; crowds of slaves all carrying sacks of corn; enormous floats conveying models of the Pyramid, the Sphynx, the Pharos lighthouse and a few of the Alexandrian temples. Effigies of the Egyptian gods were borne by priests; and there were a hundred Egyptian army chariots loaded with weapons, shields and helmets. The rest was a sort of streaming panorama illustrative of the population and its industries.

But the center of attraction was Arsinoe, half naked, prouder than Diana and appearing chaste, oblivious of all the interest that she aroused and seeming to accept her escort as a guard of honor. Caesar had seen fit to let her wear no jewelry. She had no insignia of royalty except that her arms were loosely held with golden chains, whereas the other prisoners, were manacled with iron. Her name, without title, was painted on signs that men carried before and behind her.

Taller than Cleopatra by an inch or two, she nevertheless looked like a queen in miniature and the crowd, that had hooted Vercingetorix the day before, took pity on her, venting displeasure instead on Ganymedes, who was dragged along behind her noisily lamenting the disgraceful fate that he knew awaited him. They had tried to make Ganymedes carry the sign on which was painted his name and the list of the crimes for which he was condemned to death, but he had refused although savagely beaten, and the man who bore it for him kept prodding him with the pole. Arsinoe took no notice of him and appeared indifferent to his suffering.

She betrayed no emotion at all until she arrived abreast of Cleopatra's balcony, enduring the hot stench and clamor of the mob, and the awkward cobblestones on which it was so difficult to walk with dignity, without glancing to right or left or seeming to care what happened to her. But as she passed the balcony she paused and, extending her chained hands, spat deliberately, so that the crowd laughed and for a while there was a jeering aimed at Cleopatra.

That night Caesar came very late to the villa by the Tiber. He had been outside the city in the camps where next day's captives were in custody and the confusion of preparation by torch and lamplight, the last minute changes and the sheer stupidity of tired officials had exasperated him to the verge of a nervous breakdown. Reports of criticism, too, had worried him. And he had heard among other things about Arsinoe's behavior and the mob's reaction to it.

"Do you wish her executed?" he asked curtly. "It can be done now. It is customary to behead important prisoners immediately after a triumph. It is now or never."

"No," said Cleopatra. "Let her go to Cyprus. She is Queen of Cyprus."

"Are you afraid to kill her?" Caesar asked. "No. I am too proud to harbor fear of her. That is all." Insomnia was wasting Caesar's health and there was no relief he found so comforting as midnight hours with Cleopatra. She would pace the gardens with him or lie on couches on the roof where they could watch the light and shadow and hear the vague roar of the excited,

Queen Cleopatra

half-slumbering city. All her conversation seemed to meet his mood; they never quarreled, never argued, always seemed to understand each other, and above all he enjoyed that courage of hers that never compromised with fear of other people and never advocated yielding to their opinions.

"Never forget you are Caesar," she urged him. "If you descend to the plane of thought of meaner men their numbers can overwhelm you. Stay above them, and they can neither reach you, understand you, nor do anything except obey your will."

He began to speak to her about his wife, Calpurnia, a subject carefully avoided" hitherto.

"She is Caesar's wife," he said, "and she proposes not to risk that position by annoying me in any way whatever. So she annoys me by her tame submissiveness, which is hardly a good reason for divorce."

They laughed together over that for a few moments, until Cleopatra seized her opportunity and forwarded her own design with deeper guile than Caesar guessed, although he puzzled over why she should appear to throw away the chance at which he had plainly hinted.

"Why divorce poor Calpurnia?" she asked. "Am I the alternative? Undeceive yourself! For it would ruin you and me to make me Caesar's wife. If Caesar were raised to a throne could Caesar's wife rise with him? Would Romans accept

Calpurnia as Queen? You know they would not! She would still be merely Caesar's wife. As long as you are merely a dictator marriage is not worth discussing."

He began to fall in love with her again, with all the more determination since she turned the conversation into other channels and encouraged him to unburden his mind of the problems of the hour weighing so heavily upon him.

The third day's triumph celebrated the victory in Pontus ; and the "Veni, vidi, vici" of the letter to Amantius was painted on an enormous tablet, borne through the streets in front of Caesar, who sat smiling in his chariot, less flattered by the mob's applause than cynically recognizing the effect of the timely use of carefully chosen phrases. The crowd raged with delight. The three words became a synonym for Caesar, and the least important victory of all became the greatest in the popular imagination.

But more thoughtful men, considering the boast in bad taste and afraid of Caesar's daily increasing popularity, were not at pains to hide their feelings from him; and when Caesar came to Cleopatra early in the evening he was irritable and it was a long time before he admitted her into confidence; but when he did he withheld nothing:

The following day he was to celebrate his victory over Cato, and there were rumors that his arrangements were not

likely to be over-well received. He was not in the least afraid of rioting; he had his troops where they could overwhelm the city at a moment's notice. But criticism and the hints that men kept letting

fall were like the dripping rain through a roof—discouraging and totally destructive of his own enjoyment of the triumph.

"I don't mind what Brutus says, for I know Brutus; he is ever old-fashioned and alert for something new to shock his moral susceptibility. He joins one school after another and at present is mourning Cato, whom he hated recently. But Cassius and others—I think Cicero is one of them—are accusing me of bad taste in celebrating a triumph over rebellious Romans. They are of the opinion that Cato's memory should be allowed to rest in peace."

He had come to the last place for discouragement or in any counsel of backsliding.

"Who is the ruler of Rome?" she retorted. "You or Cicero and Cassius and Brutus? Is it they who have shown such taste and wisdom and ability to rule? Or is it you who teach them? Did not Cato flee to Africa and set up a rival government on foreign soil? Has any other Roman ever done that? Do you think you would be justified in letting Rome forget too easily the fate of such rebels? And suppose you were to cancel your arrangements for to-morrow's triumph and omit that altogether, what then? Would not your malcontents say that you fear them?"

It was nearly dawn before he left her to snatch the few hours' fretful sleep that were all that his nerves permitted him. Before he left he had talked to her about his will and his nephew and heir Octavian, discovering her once more scornful of apparent opportunity.

"Caesar," she said, "if you should die and they should find you had left Caesarion your heir, with me as the executrix, what hope would there be of Rome assenting to that arrangement? It will be time enough to change your will when you are king of Rome, and have conquered Parthia, and the Romans recognize your acts and wishes as divine—to be obeyed, not tampered with." He nodded. He had known no woman, and remarkably few men, who at her age could refuse the shadow for the substance. All his old enthusiasm for her flooded back; his old impulsiveness returned; he would have proclaimed her his queen and wife before the world that moment if she had consented.

But when he was gone Olympus came and, standing beside her on the roof, gazed long in silence at the city, where the temple lights were dying and grimness, raw and ominous, was shaping the soft night shadows into bricks and mortar for the dawning day.

"It is a city of dreadful destiny," he said at last, turning to her. "A devourer! All life is its meat; all men and women are its fuel for the furnace of its passion. Give—give—give, and it will take—take—take, returning insolence for generosity and cruelty for gentleness! Self-glorifying, and self-destroyed at last, how many men and women—aye, and nations and hopes and aspirations shall not perish in its vortex, as the moths that are dazzled and die, when they cherish the flame! Caesar, I tell you, Egypt, is the soul of all that wolfish greed, that shall devour him and shall make of him an excrement, as fire makes ashes of the wood that feeds it.

And his soul shall enter into ashes; they shall be the ashes of ideas; so that

Queen Cleopatra

whatever is vile on the face of the earth and without merit but only empty and cruel and false shall be honored in the days to come in Caesar's name!" She resented it.

"Rome," she retorted, "is all that you say it is. Caesar is Caesar! If he is the soul of Rome, he shall redeem Rome, as our souls redeem our lower natures. Give? Give? Does he not give of his genius? What is there that Rome can take from Caesar that he can not give doubly again and again? That source is inexhaustible! The greater part of godliness is liberality and bounty. Gods give. Mortals take, and squander and corrupt. Let Caesar only know how much a god he is, and he shall pour such affluence of virtue into Rome as shall make Egypt stir herself to prove an equal merit! Fie on you, Olympus! You are become a raven croaking in the dark!"

She stayed away from that last day's triumph, not because she dreaded the possible outcome but because she was aware of Caesar's irritable dignity. She preferred not to witness such insults as the Romans might offer him, knowing that he would feel about that as he did about the epilepsy and perhaps remain away from her a day or two. He was morbidly sensitive and, when humiliated, as inclined to sulk as he was sure to be revengeful. She knew what a conscienceless rabble of bankrupt peasantry and mongrel aliens the Roman mob was, proud of its ignorance and taught to look to buyers of its votes for sustenance and fun; it was a vulgar, riotous, indecent mob, as cruel as superstitious; but its god was Rome and Cleopatra understood that just as well as Caesar did. All other gods were tributary. He who offered insult to the dignity of Roman citizenship, did so at his peril.

So Caesar's course was stark audacity, and in the outcome bitterly resented, when he rode through Rome parading wagonloads of captured Roman weapons and the standards of defeated Roman legions. The great spectacle that he provided—elephants, ivory, ostriches—ebony-black Nu-midians and droves of women—effigies of Cato and his friends—a chariot drawn by lions and a hundred more or less important victims, bound and naked, whipped along the streets to face the executioner—was received in silence. And in silence the senators greeted him when he ascended the steps of the capitol, where for three days in succession they had shouted themselves hoarse to demonstrate that, whatever their private feelings, they admired his generalship.

He paused and eyed them one by one with glittering contempt before he strode to the altar to offer the victor's sacri-fice.

"You do well to be silent," he assured them sharply. "Let the spectacle that you have seen to-day serve to remind you of the fate of all self-seeking and disloyal men!"

That speech committed him. Thenceforward there could be no compromise. He had issued his challenge. He was absolute. They must submit themselves obediently to his will or reckon themselves rebels against Rome and either take the consequences or else overthrow, him if they could.

That night he took the reins of power wholly in his own hands, conferring alone with Cleopatra as to what instructions he should issue for reorganizing all the provinces and reconditioning alliances with subject kings. He

made long memoranda to be drafted into laws and senatorial decrees, to be presented to the Senate for immediate confirmation without discussion—a deliberate challenge to the Senate—a repudiation of its power, its rights, its privilege.

And Cleopatra needed no urging to play Egypt's hand. She knew that Herod, among others, had been bribing every senator whose friendship was for sale. She showed her grasp of the strategic situation in the East and her almost unerring judgment of individuals, amazing Caesar with the shrewd advice she gave him and, at last, when they had settled nearly all the boundaries, as by an afterthought she slipped into her net the richest slice of Herod's heritage—the rich low-lying orchard lands of Jericho.

"Herod has been useful and not unmindful of the respect due to Rome and to myself," Caesar objected. "He appears to me to be a bright young man."

"Too bright. He will grow too powerful and too rich, unless his wool is shorn. Let him fall heir to Jerusalem, where the Jews all hate and fear him; but deprive him of that rich revenue. Thus in the days to come he will be jealous and yet always seeking favors, which is the easiest way to make him useful."

Caesar agreed and wrote the memorandum. And so Herod paid for Lolliane, and Apollodorus was appointed lord-collector of the revenues of Jericho, that Herod might rankle the more and that Apollodorus, pocketing his tenth, might taste in some degree at least the satisfaction of a personal revenge.

CHAPTER XXXVII Caesar—imperial Caesar—a god upon earth.

Neither in earth nor sky nor sea do great events occur that give no warning which a man may read aright, if he have understanding, but the heedless are a multitude and they who understand are few.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

UNTTL after the triumph very few prominent Romans visited Cleopatra, and they only in the most formal manner to inscribe their names on the scroll kept for the purpose in Apollodorus' charge. It was debatable whether Caesar wished that villa by the Tiber to be much frequented by society, and even whether Cleopatra wished it; and as it was noticed that Mark Antony held aloof that was accepted as a hint to await developments.

But two or three days after the last day's triumph Mark Antony, surrounded by about a dozen of his boon companions, rode out to visit her and prolonged his stay for the whole of an afternoon. He was the handsomest man in Rome and reckoned one of the most influential, since he had definitely attached himself to Caesar. But he was dangerously popular; it was common rumor that Caesar had frequently censured Antony's sway of the mob, and they were known to have seriously quarreled more than once. However, Antony was a man who quarreled thoughtlessly and made it up again without any more enduring malice than a child's.

His curly dark hair, burly figure, magnificent muscles and sensuous frank smile endeared him to the Roman crowd, that—next perhaps to oratory, for which Antony was famous—most enjoyed a gay good-looking man, whose swagger through the streets was entertainment and whose horse-play wit provided a relief from the monotonous deadly earnestness of politics.

He was an aristocrat, but with almost none of Caesar's aristocratic insolence and stern aloofness.

He possessed even less than Caesar's honesty in money matters, even more than Caesar's looseness in affairs with women; and his character was said to combine shrewdness, sheer stupidity and generous energy in almost equal parts—an under-estimate. He was a man of under-developed will and over-developed magnetism, as capable of genius as degeneracy and as yet not definitely headed either way although inclined toward over-self-indulgence—not sure yet of his own ability to mold the destiny of half a world and not yet sure in his own mind that he wished to be more than Caesar's henchman, always provided that Caesar paid him handsomely and gave him ample opportunity to enjoy life, a large part of which enjoyment necessarily consisted in receiving public plaudits. Antony was bored if not flattering and being flattered, amusing and being amused, starting something and leaving other men to finish it, or lending all his popularity and muscle and ebullient enthusiasm to the purpose of a moment.

A believer in luck; whereas Caesar believed in destiny, which is vastly differ-

ent. An overgrown boy, suffering misfortune comically with a wry face, squandering good fortune as it came; affectionate, irascible, thoughtless, irresponsible and recklessly responsible by turns; as capable of cruelty as kindness, and as likely to neglect his friends from sheer forgetfulness as to forget the very existence of his enemies from lack of enduring malice of his own.

His visit to Cleopatra was at Caesar's bidding, but he had a prior claim to her acquaintance and to her gratitude as having been the officer commanding the Gabinian cavalry that raided Alexandria and reinstated Ptolemy Auletes on the throne when Cleopatra was a child; a lawless, bribe-induced and heavily rewarded effort that might have cost him perpetual banishment from Rome had it not so unexpectedly succeeded. So he might, without much stretch of the imagination, claim to be responsible for Cleopatra's ultimate accession to her throne.

As temporary guardian of Arsinoe he had a claim of another kind on her attention, and he had doubtless heard from Arsinoe's lips a thoroughly uncomplimentary and critical account of Cleopatra's character and doings. He expected voluptuous scenes and wasteful gaiety, so he was rather taken aback by the atmosphere of demure retirement and unostentatious dignity that Cleopatra had contrived in expectation of his coming. There were lovely women in attendance to chat with and entertain the friends he brought with him, but they were under Charmian's watchful eye and there was great care taken not to suggest more breadth of social behavior than even Fulvia, Antony's grim wife, would have tolerated in her own home.

For there was nothing about Mark Antony's private or public life that Cleopatra had not ascertained—from the severity of his domineering fury of a wife to the cause and, the cure of his occasional quarrels with Caesar; from his father's reputation for corruption leading to an ignominious death, to his own rather scandalous youth and his consequent hatred of Cicero, who had denounced him in season and out, in the Senate, in private, in his correspondence and in his published writings. She had judged that to begin with an appeal to the voluptuous and extravagant side of Antony's character would be a mistake.

There would be plenty of time to do that afterward if necessary. She understood the apparent paradox that such a man as Antony, who laughed at women's pretensions to virtue and deliberately ruined as many of their reputations as he could, should admire his wife's termagant temper and return to her like a naughty boy for punishment as often as he disregarded her discipline and aroused her indignant ire with some new scandal. For the moment she was bent on impressing him with her unchangeable devotion to Caesar, with a view to stirring Antony's enthusiasm for his chief and subsequently making use of that to encourage Caesar along the dangerous, difficult course he had chosen. Far more clearly than Caesar did, she saw the dictator's need of thoroughly enthusiastic friends, who would take on themselves the responsibility of urging what they knew that Caesar wished and the suggestion of which would come better from them than from him. So it was for Caesar, not for herself, that she desired this interview.

Queen Cleopatra

Antony's way with women was invariably hearty (even with his own wife) and expressive of his disbelief in either chastity or its advantages. His manner was an invitation to a woman to admire him and to fall into his geriaal strong arms—to enjoy his strength and masculinity—to laugh with him at the traditional conventions of morality. But Cleopatra baffled him. She was as wholly at her ease as if she had known him all her life long. His physical attractions and his bluff, boisterous, gay manner seemed to pass unnoticed. It was he, not she, who lost his head and yielded up most of his self-control after two hours' conversation, in which he discovered that she knew more than he did about world affairs and how to manage them. He began to understand why Caesar was devoted to her.

Before evening she had won Mark Antony to her view of Caesar's destiny, and he left her as convinced as she was that a crown and throne not only were Caesar's due but that his own best interests were likely to be served by urging Caesar to accept the kingdom. He had Caesar's ear. He was a plausible, amusing and convincing advocate. And he could begin to popularize the notion without consulting Caesar, so that Caesar should find himself urged by friends and public and should be able to appear to consent unwillingly.

It was from that time on that there began in Rome the definite and persistent rumor that Caesar would accept the crown if it were offered to him. But enemies were alert. There was an equally persistent counter-rumor, shrewdly given currency by Cicero and those who clung to the republican tradition, that Cleopatra was the source of the plot and its inspiration, hoping to make herself Caesar's queen in order to preserve the Ptolemaic dynasty at Rome's expense.

She had won Antony, and dozens along with him; but she was not so successful with Brutus, Cassius and Dolabella—three men of such totally diverse attainments and character as to make it extremely unlikely they would unite in one political purpose unless they thought their own lives or their own prosperity were endangered. All that they held in common was ingratitude to Caesar, who had spared their lives and given them important posts. Cassius and Brutus, both, had fought against him at Pharsalia, from motives that were mixed of bitterness and altruism—selfish in the one, self-laudatory in the other. Cassius was lean and mean, a fanatic, a hater of autocracy in any form although himself a despotic provincial governor; by nature an accuser although himself accused of misappropriation of funds in Syria and only saved from being brought to trial by the outbreak of civil war; a good general in the field, but so jealous of any other man's success as to be incapable of retaining friendships.

A capable, shrewd, sarcastic man, of ancient patrician family. As peregrine praetor for the year his profitable ' duty was to guard the interests of aliens in Rome, which gave him good excuse and opportunity to visit Cleopatra, ostensibly to discuss the petitions of certain Alexandrians that had been brought to his attention.

Brutus was scholarly, weak and excitable; a lover of high-sounding phrases and ideas, given to extremes of generosity and equal depths of cowardly

panic due to doubt whether his ideas were so excellent after all. Caesar had a quite peculiar affection for him, partly based on knowledge that he himself was actually Brutus' father. He was interested by Brutus' idealism which he considered harmless and occasionally even excellent; aware of his integrity in some respects; and amused as much by Brutus' indignant repudiation of their relationship as by his squally prompt assertion of it whenever he needed favors or forgiveness. In other words, he felt indulgently fatherly toward him. Nearly every one in Rome loved Brutus; but his intimates all recognized him as a man who could be easily manipulated for a moment's use but could not be depended on to stand firm once his philosophical doubts and the opposition between his ideals and his own personal interests had time to unnerve him. He had some of the qualities and all the aspirations of a hero, but no iron, and in the last resort, he was always likely to be swayed by the opinions of those around him.

Dolabella was Cicero's son-in-law, a general by profession and an utterly dishonest turncoat, plunderer and ambitious profligate in practise. Recognizing his danger if left in Rome, Caesar had taken him to Africa on the campaign against Cato, where his services in the field had been so valuable that it was next to impossible not to reward him for them and to include him in the government of Rome on his return.

Divining that those three men were leaders of opinion likely, each of them, to sway his own particular coterie, Cleopatra loaded them with presents and did her utmost to make them realize that Caesar's coronation as king or emperor of Rome would be to their own advantage and the best thing that could happen to the state. But she was unlucky, both in the event and in her choice of method.

Cassius took umbrage at the appointment of a man named Decimus Junius Brutus, a relative of Caesar's natural son, as urban praetor; he regarded it for a host of reasons as a reflection on himself and as an obstacle deliberately set between himself and higher office. As vindictive as an adder, he immediately turned on Caesar and, pretending to continue friendly to him, plotted against him day and night, including Cleopatra in his hatred, his plot taking first one form and then another, but his vigilance and his determination never once relaxing.

But it was Cleopatra herself who offended Marcus Brutus. Meaning to amuse him and to gain his interest, she showed him the child Caesarion and pointed out to him how much already he resembled Caesar. Precocious, as Caesar had been as an infant, he was already learning to walk and it was possible to imagine that he used his father's gait and gesture. There were those who said the same of Brutus, who, however, always did his utmost to avoid the slightest trace of resemblance of speech or habit.

Mild in his outward manner and disposed to be compassionate and kind rather than resentful, Brutus nevertheless was hag-ridden by obsessions, one of which was shame on account of his way of entering the world; another was that any reference to Caesar's sexual recklessness, however cautious, or if merely made by inference, if made to him or in his presence was an insult aimed deliberately at himself. And for all his protestations of benevolence

Queen Cleopatra

and altruism he could hate savagely—hate underneath while he loved on the surface—hate with the consuming and slow torment of a buried fire, not realizing that he hated, justifying the resulting treachery with high-sounding phrases anent right and wrong.

He hated Cleopatra from that instant. Cassius and Dolabella knew him better than he knew himself and easily coaxed the creeping fire into flame that burned up any gratitude that he might have felt toward Caesar, until Caesar's disregard of convention, tradition and his country's ancient laws became the dominant thought in his mind, and he thought of Cleopatra only as the temptress who was teaching him to violate the rights of man.

And Cleopatra made of Dolabella, too, an enemy by accident. She was discussing him with Caesar in the presence of Apollodorus, wondering what Caesar saw in him that he should treat him with such evident favor.

"He is a good general," said Caesar, "and a man of tried ability, whose fortune is dependent entirely on my goodwill for which reason I have some confidence in his devotion to me, seeing that he has good sense and would hardly be likely to bite the hand that feeds him."

Cleopatra summed up Dolabella in a sentence: "He is an imitation-Caesar, lacking all your royal nature but quite well able to copy you on the surface. He is a shaft that if you lean on too heavily will break and pierce your hand." The phrase "imitation-Caesar" stuck. Apollodorus circulated it. It came to Dolabella's ears. It rankled. The three, Dolabella, Cassius and Brutus, not conspirators as yet but drawn together by a hatred held in common that they had to mask, became a nucleus around which jealousy and fear of Caesar slowly crystallized into a passion—a thing of numbers, virulence and force. Material for them to work on was far from lacking.

Most of the Roman women, and particularly those who had been Caesar's paramours in former days, took up the cudgels in Calpurnia's behalf, commiserating with her and arousing hypocritical indignation against Caesar and Cleopatra in social circles in which adultery was reckoned a pastime rather than a vice. There is nothing easier than to excite jealousy of foreign competition, and nothing simpler than to convict by acclamation a woman who confesses openly that her child was by another woman's husband. Knowing well that Cleopatra was of pure Greek ancestry, they spoke of her as "the Egyptian" and spread through the crowd, by the lips of their freedmen and slaves, a vague, disturbing talk about the eastern peril, of which Cleopatra, it was hinted, was the guiding genius.

All of which came to Caesar's ears and stirred not only his resentment but his scorn. Wherever he went, beneath a mask of flattery he was aware of stinging accusation, that he did not choose to admit could sting him but that made him lonelier than moonlight on a forum wall. Only in Cleopatra's company he found relief. She not only had no criticism but seemed to understand his motives and his craving to express his genius. He felt he needed her. He found himself increasingly unable to deny her theory of the divinity of rulers. He and she alone could visualize in prospect such an empire as he meant to bring under the yoke. Others saw only a frontier here and there, and had no

greater sense of grandeur than to govern provinces or to occupy the Senate seat and prattle about what they thought was dignity. He and she saw the world, to which Parthia, was only one gate, too hard to enter for a man like Crassus, a mere ambitious, upstart money-miser; but to a demigod-Demigod? God!

He would accept divinity. He had the courage of conviction and he no longer feared to make himself ridiculous.

He took a temple and refashioned it. He set his image in there and he organized a corps of priests, a ritual of offerings and hours of worship. He caused Timomachus the sculptor to make Cleopatra's figure and then set that in the temple next to his—his answer to the critics! And when he took his seat in the curia to preside over the Senate and to make sure that his new laws were immediately passed, his arrogant demands all granted and his nominees confirmed in office, he frequently invited Cleopatra to share the seat he had caused to be installed, more like a throne than a republican place of honor. He rode rough-shod over the Senate, never hesitating now to threaten them or to exclude from the curia whoever dared to oppose or criticize him. Not satisfied with placing the financial reforms entirely in the hands of Alexandrians, he made over to Sosigenes the readjustment of the calendar: an action that antagonized the priestly colleges. And he began to clean Rome, giving serious offense because he told the Senate that the city was not fit to be a stable to Alexandria.

He felt, and despised, the increasing bitterness. He knew that the Roman wits were laughing at his newly claimed divinity, and he ached for opportunity to prove it to them before consolidating his assembling legions to invade the East; another victory, he felt,—a sudden, bloody and decisive miracle of violence,—would awaken them to the fact that he was not an ordinary mortal, not though epilepsy was increasing its drains on his mental and physical strength. It attacked him more than once while he presided in the Senate.

The opportunity for such a victory came with the news that Gnaeus and Sextus Pompeius, sons of the great Pompey, had rallied the defeated remnants of the Pompeian party and were already under arms in Spain.

It was annoying to have to interfere with the already advanced arrangements for his Parthian adventure and to send accumulated stores to such a distance in the opposite direction, but annoyance strengthened resolution. He was swift. He swooped on Spain in fury—calculating cold zeal, merciless and silent, falling on the enemy at Munda and destroying thirty thousand men. That satisfied him. He was not an ordinary mortal. He was Caesar—imperial Caesar—a god upon earth—an ancestor—a founder of a dynasty—divine, predestined ruler of the world.

CHAPTER XXXVIII "Oh, I know Antony."

Those few of us who have attempted it agree that it is difficult to be a man and play that part with dignity and merit.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

IT WAS while Caesar was in Spain that Antony and Cleopatra took their first real measure of each other's mettle. Antony had taken umbrage because Caesar had commanded him to pay for Pompey's mansion, which he had pretended to buy but actually had appropriated after Pompey's death. And Antony had been approached discreetly, but with definite enough hints to stir his imagination, by an agent of Cassius, who attempted to sound him out as to his willingness to join in a conspiracy against the great dictator's life. There was nothing novel or astonishing about that. Antony would likely have been more astonished had he learned by some means that Caesar's life was not in any danger. Rome, for several generations past, had been a city in which no prominent man had dared to go abroad without an armed escort, and Caesar's cool habitual indifference to the risks he ran was a perpetual invitation to the men whom he insulted recklessly to lie in wait for him and slay. The secret propaganda had gone far enough to enable Antony to turn whichever way he pleased, for or against it, but he mistrusted the men whom he suspected of plotting against Caesar more than he resented Caesar's recent drastic dealing with himself. And more than them, he thoroughly mistrusted Caesar's legal heir Octavian, who would have to be reckoned with in the event of the dictator's death. He was aware of the terms of Caesar's will, and he did not propose to himself to play into Octavian's hand. Without flattering himself, he knew that his own influence, one way or the other, easily might tip the scale and he was minded to take part in no conspiracy until assured that he, Mark Antony, would profit by the outcome. Temperamentally or morally he had no particular objection to murder as an argument, nor embarrassing theories of any sort that might restrain him from pursuing an advantage, but he liked to foresee the advantage, or to think that he foresaw it. He was not far-sighted.

So he went to Cleopatra and suggested to her, in the rather boyish, round-about and frankly guilty way that was destined to become so familiar to her in the years to come, that he and she might make a better pair of rulers of the world than she and Caesar. Willing to fall in love with any woman almost at a moment's notice and an adept at parading his own virtues, such as they were, he did his utmost to convince her, without definitely talking treason, that his heart was hers, his fortune with it, and that at a word from her he was ready to do what Caesar evidently feared to undertake—to make her empress—anything she pleased.

Had Cleopatra cared as much as to consider his proposal—or so Antony assured her often in the course of after-years—that moment might have

changed the face of history. With Caesar absent and with disaffection seething, with Octavian in the provinces and most of the senators writhing under a new sense of outraged majesty, a blow might have been struck that none could counter before Antony should seize the reins of power and proclaim himself the liberator.

"Caesar is old," said Antony. "He is gray and tired and weakening before his time."

"He is the father of my son," she answered.

"I might divorce my Fulvia and wed Arsinoe," Antony suggested.

He expected that suggestion to produce a sort of panic but he was disappointed.

"You will find her very different from Fulvia—less critical but much more dangerous. But it would be an excellent thing for Arsinoe, who needs a husband. Caesar might consent to make you King of Cyprus, which has a climate that hardly suits Romans but is a rich island, with mountains where you could hide from Fulvia."

Antony laughed. He never made a secret of his fear of Fulvia's temper.

Laughter offered Cleopatra opportunity. She turned the tide on him:

"Antony, you are offended because Caesar made you pay a debt that you rightly owe. But what is the price of a dead man's house compared to the honor of having upheld Caesar and supported him?" She laid her finger on a great Etruscan vase that stood beside her chair. "The meanest man on earth can break that, Antony. But can you make another like it? And if Caesar, as you say, is aging, need you be in haste to wear his sandals?"

"He is making himself hated," answered Antony.

"And do you expect to make yourself liked by playing traitor to him? Liked by whom? Would you compare those malcontents—that mob!—with Caesar? Did you ever know a man well liked who introduced a new idea to the world?"

"Then lend me money," answered Antony. "That payment that I made for Pompey's house has drained my coffers dryer than a bone. My steward wrings his hands and rolls his eyes at me."

She lent him all he needed, stipulating that the secret should be well kept if he made his peace with Caesar, and behaved toward him as a loyal henchman to his chief.

So Antony made public reconciliation with Caesar, riding out of Rome to meet him as he came from Spain, and they embraced before thousands of people, sharing the same chariot as they entered the city.

But Caesar said to Cleopatra: "How did you persuade him?"

They were seated in the small room where they had first conversed when Cleopatra came to Rome, because it was chilly and hot-air pipes kept that room warmer than 't the rest—and there were pictures on the wall of gods and goddess in human shape who, Cleopatra thought, provided a suggestive setting.

"How did you know I persuaded him?"

"Because he tried to make me think that he persuaded you! Oh, I know Antony. He is a good fair-weather friend. As long as Antony has money in his

Queen Cleopatra

coffers he is generous and willing enough to swallow flattery at anybody's cost. But what persuaded you to buy him?"

"My regard for him. I like him. He is a big good-natured boy who can be led and managed."

"Fed and managed!" Caesar commented. "But it might cost more to feed him than the management is worth!"

However, he welcomed Antony and made the most of him, contriving to suggest without exactly saying it that Antony would gain incredibly by being subject to a throne instead of a mere office-holder at the whim of bought votes and legions increasingly ready to lend an ear, and arms, to rival politicians.

Thenceforth Antony threw all his boisterous heart into the work, with only occasional fluctuations when he took offense at some remark of Caesar; and when that happened .. Cleopatra found it a simple business to flatter and coax him back to his allegiance, although by doing so she made a bitter enemy of Fulvia, who railed against her in every women's gathering in Rome. It was Cleopatra's suggestion that Antony even pretended to be plotting against Caesar, hoping to uncover treason in high places, but all that he gained by that was odium, since none believed him, or whoever did believe him refused to trust such a ready turncoat.

There was plenty of up-hill work for Antony to do, since Caesar had grown impatient to realize his dream and was already exercising the prerogatives of king without the title, giving scandalous offense that had to be offset by any extravagant means available. He began by ignoring the sharp lesson of his triumph over Cato and once more celebrating a victory over Roman arms, riding through Rome to the capital with hundreds of prisoners and scores of wagon-loads of captured Roman weapons trailing in his wake.

He sought to offset that with magnanimity that many men regarded as sheer recklessness or insolent contempt of lesser beings than himself; for instead of drastically clearing Rome of every politician credited with friendship for the dead Pompeian cause, as Marius and Sulla would have done, he calmly announced that the quarrel was over, declared an amnesty in favor of all former adherents of Pompey, restored the statue of Pompey to its old place in the curia and ordered every honorable record of the former friends of Pompey replaced in the forum and streets whence they had been removed.

The magnanimity evoked scant gratitude, and Antony, observing the effect, remembered it, so that later, when his own day of power came, he punished savagely. But 'Caesar had reached a realm of thought in which he appeared to have lost all sense of caution. He ordered his own statue made and erected on the capitol in line with those of the seven ancient kings of Rome, suggesting that he himself should be the eighth; and there was far more talk about that than about his lofty and wise forgiveness of Pompeian rebels.

When he received a deputation of the Senate seated there was such indignation that he had to plead a return of his old sickness as excuse; but he did not forgive the men who forced him to make that apology and one by one they suffered for it, either in the form of stinging snubs or in neglect of their peti-

tions.

He was increasingly irritable. He was overworked, since he was taking on himself all details of Roman government from the affairs of Syria and Gaul and Spain to the perplexities of city politics, the widening of streets and the erection of new buildings. Flattered, cajoled, occupied with preparations for the conquest of Parthia on which his heart was set, he had no time to be aware of the seething undercurrents that surrounded him, although he narrowly watched Cassius on occasion and remarked to those who happened to be standing near that Cassius was a lean and hungry-looking individual who appeared to be conspiring about something. But that speech of course reached Cassius, and Cassius grew careful.

Personally indifferent to the alleged delight of seeing men and animals destroyed in the arena, he held aloof from such performances but provided them with hitherto unheard-of extravagance. On several occasions he fed in the streets as many as twenty thousand people at a time in imitation of the Alexandrian festivities; and the reports that Antony kept bringing him were all to the effect that the populace would now prefer a king to a dictator, having tasted and approved the glamour and surfeit of entertainment that they were being educated to believe pertained to thrones rather than any other form of government.

There was a strong Caesarian faction that seconded Antony's efforts, but they were nearly all second-rate men, some lacking in experience and others courage; and they were all aware of the secret counter-propaganda that was circulating from a source that it was difficult to indicate. Halfhearted, they proposed alternatives and compromise. They prevailed on Caesar to accept the title of hereditary imperator. Next they asked him to accept the awkward and anomalous office of king of all Roman territories outside Italy. He refused it. It was all or nothing then. He would be king before he started on his campaign against Parthia; and he began to quarrel with the tribunes who removed the gilded crowns that his supporters, by way of suggestion, had placed on his statues in the forum and the streets.

Calpurnia said nothing, simply caring for him when he came home, sharing his bed for the few hours that he spent in sleep and letting no man know, not even Caesar, what dreads and jealousy made her life almost unendurable. She was a Roman wife, and there was nothing to be gained by argument, recrimination or complaint, though every step that Caesar took toward a throne was an unquestionable step toward her own dismissal and oblivion. A quiet unpretentious woman, she had no delusions about being queen. Nor was she able to be turned against him, though they tried all means of doing it, in the hope, by stirring scandal, to arouse a popular demonstration that should humble Caesar to his senses.

The last effort that was made to stir Calpurnia to revolt was when the news was made known of the death of Cleopatra's infant brother.

"Poison!" whispered Caesar's enemies. "They poisoned him because he was supposed to share the throne with her, and Caesar wants that office for himself. The next thing, they will put Egyptian powders into your food, too, Calpurnia— much simpler than divorcing you!"

Queen Cleopatra

But Calpurnia did not care. Or, if she did care, she concealed it. And she probably doubted Caesar's willingness to stoop to such a mean way of furthering ambition.

"Caesar is polygamous," she answered. "That is all. Polygamous and proud; and if a god, as some men say, not destitute of human merit."

CHAPTER XXXIX "Be silent, Tros!"

The wise will ever modify a plan, and only fools are obstinate. But what the gods have disapproved they wipe out utterly.

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

TROS came storming up from Ostia with news that secret discontent was seething to a head in Alexandria. He found Apollodorus—forced Apollodorus to summon slaves, who aroused women, who crept into Charmian's room and begged her to awaken Cleopatra shortly after dawn. There was an interview in Cleopatra's bedroom, she half clothed and curled up in a blanket of embroidered Persian wool because the Tiber mist was chilly.

"Liars and lie-abed sots and knaves are your ministers!" Tros burst out, opening his business as he would a battle, meaning to win with the first shot, or if not to win, to worry. "Marvelous dispatches they have sent you, doubtless! All is well in Alexandria! But luckily the Jew Esias has a half-breed slave named Bimbo whom he trusts to carry to me by word of mouth what no man who values his skin would dare to put in writing. When a king sleeps councilors see visions! There is a move on foot to make Arsinoe the queen, and the people are told it is because she will protect the library, whereas you brought away a shipload of the books for Caesar. They assert that Rome is to be made the home of science and philosophy, so that all the world will go to Rome instead of Alexandria. There is another move to proclaim a republic, many asserting you will never return, and others contending that if you do return you will fasten the yoke of Rome more tightly on their necks. There is a rumor, too, in Alexandria that Caesar is to be murdered, and you with him, to prevent his squandering blood and money on the conquest of the world."

"And you, Tros? What do you think of it all?" asked Cleopatra.

"Think? I rot at anchor! How shall a man think with Neptune's whiskers streaming under water from the hull of every vessel in the fleet—and no careening because Royal Egypt bids us lie ready to weigh!"

"Do you wait for my leave to clean ships?" she asked him sharply.

"I will clean them on the sand of Egypt. Month after month I have waited while you dally here with Caesar. I am not blind, deaf, a drunkard, or bereft of understanding. I have sent my man Conops to mingle with crowds in the streets and the booths and the brothels, and I know what rumors are abroad in Rome. Myself, I have endured the gossip of the dives of Ostia, and of the Roman captains, and of the money-lenders who buy mortgages on slave-gangs. I have heard it said, if once, a hundred times, that Caesar will set you on the throne of Rome beside him. And an equal number of times I have heard the answer: Rome will not have it! By Heracles, are you and Caesar strong enough to ride Rome in rebellion? Where is that fellow Olympus? Have you lost him? Have you lost touch with Philae? What is the plan now? Will you throw Rome into rebellion to save your Land of Khem? Whoever plays at that game, let me tell you, cuts his own throat—has rebellion on his

Queen Cleopatra

hands at home before he knows it—is as a scorpion pricked by his own sting! And they have told me tales of Caesar that a deaf and dumb man could read readily enough: you have poured your wine into his bottle until the ferment maddens him! To what end? Have you heard the proverb? Whom the gods—"Be silent, Tros!"

"I warned you, I will speak bluntly," he grumbled, striding away toward the window where he shrugged his shoulders and shook his head, with his back toward the others.

"What do you say to it all, Apollodorus?"

"Little, heyond that Rome is as ever, a dung-heap! Jewels in their proper setting glitter and men value them; buried in a dung-heap they are only pebbles for the lousy farmyard cocks!"

"You have, been talking to Olympus! And you, Charmian?"

"I have said my say. The men, yes. But the Roman women—"

Cleopatra interrupted her, arms around her shins under the blanket, chin on knees:

"The Roman women sicken me! I have only heard of one truly decent Roman woman, and have never met her. I would like to take Calpurnia to Alexandria! But even she would be afraid to accept my friendship because of the tongues of whores and hypocrites!"

"That lays no keels in Alexandria!" Tros commented from over by the window. "I hear you have bought pearls, lapis lazuli and amethyst. What else is there that you have from Italy worth taking home? You have sowed your seed here. You have planted your philosophers and priests and craftsman. Sail away and leave those seeds to grow before Rome plants in you a worm that will eat your heart out!"

She dismissed them all, giving the excuse that she would dress, and sent them for Olympus, whom she interviewed alone, without even Charmian being present.

"I said my say before you came to Rome," Olympus answered when she stabbed at his silence with one of her quick, keen questions.

"Yes, and you have filled Apollodorus full of wise remarks to make to me instead of doing your duty and telling me directly what you have in mind!"

"You are in Caesar's net—I mean the same net that has taken Caesar like the seine that guides the fish into the pool of their undoing. You should have stayed in Alexandria whither Caesar would have come if you had waited for him. But it is not too late—not yet."

"Too late for what, Olympus? Why do you look at me so sternly?"

"It is not too late to warn Caesar and perhaps to save him. He can turn back. And yet not many have the courage or the skill to do that. It is not too late for you to break free."

"S-s-sshah! You have "been reading auguries! You have been bitten by the Roman dogs and now you study entrails instead of stars!"

"Egypt! Should you take a dagger and cut Caesar's throat you would slay him no more surely than you shall if you remain in Rome! For I tell you, you and he have gone too far already and it is his way that you follow, not your own."

Neither do you understand the Romans, whose god is Rome, as Caesar's god is also, though they know it not."

"They call their god Jupiter Capitolinus," she objected. "Romulus would be a better name for him. Rome better yet. That force, that influence, that grim intelligence that men call Rome is as resentful as the she-wolf that the Romans took by intuition as their symbol. It will avenge itself on Caesar."

"Why?" she asked him. "Caesar has done more for Rome than—"

"Nay, nay! More for Caesar! He will slay Rome, he will abolish it if given time, for he despises it! So Rome will slay him, and devour him, and proclaim him in the years to come the greatest Roman. Caesar, who now calls himself a god, knows nothing about gods or devils but believes he deals with men—as in a sense he does. They are as much the masters of their own minds as the fire is master of itself, or water, or the wind. Caesar is too strong for Rome, but he is as easy to kill as any other man."

"How shall they kill him? He will leave Rome. He will march on Parthia."

"He will never leave for Parthia. For if he did, he would burst through Parthia as Alexander did and, like Alexander, he would wreck, not strengthen what he leaves behind him. Rome knows, though the Romans do not and are only filled with vague dread. Who are you to question me? You who know that even as the spirit of the Land of Khem is a living spirit, an intelligence, so is the spirit of Rome a living thing and an intelligence. Caesar has lost his way between the two of them, and you have nearly lost your way. Turn ere it be too late!"

"Then did I not do well to match myself with Caesar and make him love me?"

"Aye, well; and well indeed. And had you stayed in Egypt, Caesar would have come to you. For in his heart he despises Rome. And in Egypt he could have been protected. As a king he would have presently defied Rome and destroyed it."

"Do you mean, you know that Caesar is to die?" she asked him. "Have you read his horoscope?"

"His horoscope is none of my affair. But I warn you that you are in danger."

"Danger?" she answered. "Do you think to terrify me with the name of danger? And if Caesar is in danger, shall I not stay here and guide and shelter him?"

"Are you for Rome then, or for Egypt?" asked Olympos. "Is it pride that governs you, or duty to the Land of Khem? Get hence! Get hence to your own land, Egypt, ere the Romans deal with you as they will with Caesar!"

"If Caesar is in danger I will warn him. I will stay and warn him," she retorted. "Caesar is the father of my son."

"And are you not the mother of your son? I tell you, Caesar is in greater danger if you stay than if you go away," Olympos answered. "I have done my duty. I have told you. I will say no more."

"What is this news from Alexandria?" she asked him suddenly. "Is it serious? Is it urgent?"

"I am no judge."

"Have you spoken to Tros about it?"

"Yes."

Queen Cleopatra

"Is it not a mere rumor that Tros has magnified into a monstrous danger to persuade me?"

"I know not."

"Have not you and he and Apollodorus taken counsel together to persuade me?" "We have spoken of it."

"I will speak of it with Caesar. You may tell Tros that if he ever lies to me again by as much as the width of a hair, and for any reason, that I will marry him to Charmian, whose chastity will give him gray hairs, and that I will set him thereafter to breaking ships, not building them! I am not pleased with you, Olympus. Oh, what a sordid gloom you live in. Oh, what a shroud of fearsome consequence you overlay on fairness! Are the gods deaf, dumb and blind that they should leave me helpless? Are they stupid? And is destiny so fickle? You have let the smoke and the stink of Rome become a veil between you and your good sense!"

Very early in the day she sent for Caesar, who came with Antony. Caesar was not pleased at being summoned, but he was complaisant since it was the first time she had ever taken such a liberty. The two drove slowly in a chariot, preceded by the lictors, followed by Caesar's almost royal body-guard, and looking very splendid as they sat behind the charioteer discussing some new plan of Caesar's for the drainage of the marshes, studying the drawings that they held stretched out between them on their knees. She received them in state and rather distantly, because she was annoyed that Caesar had not come to her alone.

Nevertheless, they spent the whole day talking, lying facing one another on three couches in the little room in which the gods and goddesses were represented as conspiring for and against the fortunes of embattled Troy. From time to time the servants brought in wine for Antony; and once he left them for the dining-room to eat enormously; but Caesar and Cleopatra fasted, and it was while Antony was absent that they actually determined their course, although every detail was discussed between the three of them.

"Caesar," she said, "they say the auguries are steadfastly against us."

"They have ever been against me," he retorted. "I have never won a battle but the augurs of the enemy advised them I must lose it. On the day I crossed the Rubicon a bird fell dead out of a blue sky. Nothing worse than that could happen, unless " that the standards should stick, in the ground when the order was given to march; and they did! I had to lie about it, or the legions might have mutinied. An augury is an excellent thing with which to paralyze one's opponents, but a very poor thing to depend on otherwise."

An Alexandrian tenor in the hall began to sing for them—a man of music, whose voice was an instrument interpreting the unseen glories of the universe. The words of the song were undistinguishable, so not robbing music but leaving it by that much nearer to the realm where limits are unknown and thought, like waves on an endless ocean, rolls in grandeur unconfined.

"Caesar, shall we be satisfied to leave a world the way we found it?" she asked suddenly, after one of the long silences left by the music when thought was feeling its way back to earth. "Do you suppose I care for this Cleopatra

that the Romans think would like to rob your wife Calpurnia of her bondage to a law?"

Caesar chuckled. "Have you heard the latest suggestion of the Senate? They propose a law permitting me to have two wives, so that I may marry you and not divorce the other."

"Caesar, there is no hope of explaining things to such men. They must be shown, and even then not many will understand, but they will obey, as a dog obeys his master. It must be proved to them that it is not theirs to make laws or to govern themselves, until they pattern themselves on better than a human model and become godlike."

Caesar rather resented that idea. "How many of them have it in them to be godlike?" he retorted. "I have only found one Caesar in the world."

She laughed. "And if you found another, you would conquer him or kill him!

Caesar, you must conquer Rome, or Rome will kill you!"

"Rome lies at my feet," he answered. "And as for killing me, I think they will wait for this poor worn body of mine to fill out its remaining years. If otherwise, if what you say of death is true, then death should be something rather to look forward to than to dread."

"Whoever dreads death is a fool," she answered. "But it is equally foolish to die too soon, seeing how long is eternity and how short are these little spans we spend on earth. Will you die, and at the hands of Romans, before you have done your work? You flatter them too much, Caesar. You have let them think it is their privilege to make you a king, or not to, as they please; so that they hesitate and some of them, swelled by their own importance, enter into mean conspiracies, pretending to themselves that one or two hundred mean men's minds are greater and more important than one Caesar's royal spirit. They are like pebbles, saying, 'Lo, we are many and we weigh much; is a single pearl the equal of us all?' And they can grind the pearl to pieces in the sea of their passion and greed and jealousy. Or they are like dogs that say, 'Why should a man rule over us, since he is one and we are many?' And they watch their chance to drag him down and kill him."

She watched Caesar's face. He did not answer her, but lay still, chin on elbows, looking very tired but with the cold-gray glitter in his eyes that spoke of an incorrigible craving to be absolute, and then more absolute. For even he had recognized that one limit reached is but the threshold to immeasurable altitudes beyond it.

"Caesar, why argue with dogs? Will you go on your knees to let them use their teeth on you? There is a nobler way. Present them with accomplished fact, as you did when you crossed the Rubicon; and in the meanwhile, give them bones to gnaw on, lest they gnaw yours: bones that will make them think, it may be, they are gnawing yours and mine, while you and I accomplish that which is our destiny."

"And you suggest?" asking Caesar, staring at her.

"I am the offense. They ascribe to me all kinds of lusts and black arts in order to justify and explain to themselves a hatred of me that they do not understand. It is not their hatred; it is Rome's. It is like the hatred of the old for the new, or of death for life—the hatred of corruption for the incorruptible. It

Queen Cleopatra

deceives them and makes them ascribe to me the vileness of their own thoughts. Unless they themselves rebel against it, it will live on them, devouring them and growing ever greater until the world goes down with them and it into a sleep of cruelty, stupidity and shame—as men who worship wine go down into sottishness, and still crave wine, and still say wine is the friend of man and not a vehicle of dark intelligence but a glorious stuff which man makes for his own profit. How shall they learn that their worship of Rome is a curse and a lie and a trap for themselves unless you prove it to them, and provide them with a better worship, that may lead on to a better yet?"

"I confess to you that Rome is a vortex of all the vile passions of men, that men have deified," said Caesar. "And Rome holds none of my affection. But I have started to cleanse it. And I have always used your method, that you advise, of giving Romans bones to gnaw on. They have never had such[^] spectacles in the arena as I have provided. Even Pompey, who always dreamed of being king, never dreamed of such feasts of blood and bones as I have fed to them. And I have fed to them no honest men—all criminals and scoundrels—"

"Wherein," she interrupted, "you have encouraged them to glorify themselves and their own self-righteousness, which in their turn they have attributed to Rome, the ghoul that is their guiding genius! And now you offer to permit them to make you king. But is it possible that two kings should ascend the same throne? Were not even Romulus and Remus enemies at last? Can you and Rome be rulers of the Romans? Romulus slew Remus. Rome will slay Caesar, unless Caesar knows what he is doing and destroys Rome by proving to the Romans that their god whom they ignorantly worship can no longer protect them and that the new, that Caesar shows them, must be better than the old. But if Rome slays you, then Rome will deify you later on, and hide behind your name, and instead of a kingdom of gods upon earth as there used to be will be a time of darkness masquerading as the will of men—vox populi, vox Dei—and of Caesars drawing all their inspiration from the sewers of the underworld, whence in very truth they will derive authority! But they will say they draw their inspiration and their power from the upper realms."

"What would you have me do?" asked Caesar, wondering at her. There was still the same hard glitter in his eyes, but the deeply chiseled lines of his aging face betrayed affection for her that he had never felt for other women—an affection of the intellect, that gave to him short and sudden glimpses of a feeling higher than emotion, which he could not and did not stay to analyze. She knew she had won Caesar. But to win Rome she must now reverse herself and play her masterstroke:

"In the first place, I will leave Rome. I am the offense. They have concentrated rancor against me. And so if I go, as it were I will open a gate in a brimming reservoir, and provide relief, and save you from a danger. And besides: it will do no harm to my Alexandrians to let them know that I am coming. There is unrest, that I know the trick of calming. And do you make ready to advance on Parthia. Send Brutus out of Rome. Give Cassius and Do-

labella their commands as far away as possible—difficult commands that will keep them occupied. Or, if you wish to be rid of them, leave Cassius and Dolabella here in Rome, to put themselves at the head of disaffection, which is sure to rear itself as soon as you start eastward. Encourage them to rise against you, Caesar, in your rear—Rome against Caesar, for the last time! Turn on them! Parthia can wait. Turn back and slay Rome! Let them know that their Caesar is king, and his capital Alexandria, or, if you will, some other place."

Mark Antony, returning from the feast of wine and wild-boar, pheasants, fish and anchovies, with half a flagon full of wine again to aid digestion, had no argument to offer against leaving Rome for Alexandria.

"For Rome," he remarked, "is a city of stinking narrow streets and filthy weather, in which for every Roman you find nine or ten of some other breed, too many of whom are citizens—a lot too many, so that it costs a fortune every year to buy their votes. By Heracles, I am a Roman, but I would exchange a long life here for a short one in Tarsus, or Athens, or Antioch, or Alexandria!"

But he was stubbornly averse to any sudden change of plan regarding Caesar's accepting the title of king.

"By Dionysus! Men will say you are afraid of Cicero! Caesar, you owe it to your friends, who have worked so hard for you, to go on and finish the business. We have a crown all ready, made from the gold of finger-rings of your supporters melted down. We have it all worked out: the legions have been told a king of Rome shall lead them to retake the standards Crassus lost. Will you disappoint the legions?"

Antony saw only surfaces, although he had been working in a fashion underground. His jovial face beamed enthusiasm. He nearly broke the onyx table that stood between them when he struck it with his fist for emphasis—then thrust it aside because it prevented him from sitting upright.

"All good men and true are for a kingdom. Caesar! We love and admire you. We are proud of you. And we are ready! Why, even Cassius and Dolabella gave me yesterday their secret promise to be among the first to pledge their loyalty, the moment the crown is accepted. They only hang back because, by Bacchus, they are chicken-livered cowards who fear you will not go through with it. The Lupercalia! The Feast of the Lupercalia! The day is set!"

Caesar assented, though he stared at Antony and it was plain enough that there were reservations in his mind, both as to Antony's judgment and the chances of success. He might have had his doubts of Antony's good faith, so coldly and with such reserve did he gaze at him. Antony, conscious of the piercing scrutiny, began to wonder whether he had not omitted something that Caesar waited for him to include in the plan, as a final inducement and a last proof of boisterous loyalty. He turned to Cleopatra—thought of it—and struck his breast. He held his arms toward her:

"Egypt!" he exclaimed. "Should Caesar fail to raise you to a throne beside him, Antony will do it! Jupiter! Be all the gods my witnesses! The loveliest and wisest woman in the world shall share a throne that Caesar's son shall later on inherit, or else Antony shall die—if necessary by his own

hand!"

"So now you know," said Caesar, smiling at Cleopatra. "Mark Antony is nothing if not a clear and loud exponent of his views!"

CHAPTER XL "Silence at last? Praise Zeus!"

Momentum and more momentum is a merit while the thread holds. When the thread is broken—?

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIABY OF OLYMPUS

NONE knew any longer what the Lupercalia meant except that Rome kept holiday; but there was ritual, and some of it was so ridiculous as to set the key-note for a day of wild absurdities. Lupercus, the deity honored, was vaguely associated in the public mind with Pan and Faunus. There was an aristocratic priestly college of the Luperci, from which two young men were selected, and on the day appointed for the festival these two opened the proceedings by sacrificing a dog and a goat in public. Blood from the sacrifices was then rubbed on their faces, and the ritual prescribed that they should laugh. The mysterious significance of that laughter had been long ago forgotten; it was nowadays accepted as the signal for the merrymaking to begin. The skins of the dog and the goat were now cut into strips by the two Luperci, and were known as februa. Using these thongs as whips they ran through the streets of the city, striking at every woman within their reach, numbers of women actually offering their buttocks because a blow from the februa was supposed to induce fertility. The ceremony ended in the forum, where the Roman chosen to preside sat ready to receive the runners and to complete the ritual, surrounded by crowds of onlookers dressed in their best, who were careful to leave ample room for the runners to approach.

Of the runners that day one was Antony—none better suited for the purpose—boisterous, jolly-laughing, horseplay loving, handsome, active, fleet enough of foot and strong-winded in spite of his gluttony. And the Roman who presided was the great Dictator, Caesar, seated on a golden throne, emaciated, pale, but very splendid, with a crowd of his trusted adherents behind him and a number of others carefully distributed amid the throngs under the colonnades on either hand.

There were rumors and an atmosphere of expectation, artfully encouraged. There were men disguised as artisans and tradesmen, ready to insert themselves amid the crowd that would before long pour into the forum in the wake of the whip-wielding runners. But if Caesar, quietly conversing with his intimates, expected anything unusual he gave no sign of it, appearing rather bored than interested.

There was a long wait, during which the roars of boisterous laughter could be heard approaching up the narrow streets. The runners, it appeared, had separated. Antony, came first, hard-breathing and hot from buffoonery, roaring" his gibes at the women and now and then raising a howl of amusement by striking a man.

But when he came in sight of Caesar he stood still, as if suddenly almost overwhelmed by the importance of a duty. He bowed long and low, to recover his breath. He raised his right hand and advanced with dignity toward the golden throne, waiting for silence to fall that his bold voice might be heard as far away as possible. Amid a hush he greeted Caesar as the God Lupercus, begging him to accept a throne on earth since he already had a throne above the heavens.

Caesar smiled but made no answer. He sat pondering, apparently surprised and then absorbed in thought, his faculties in fact alert for any sign the crowd might give of its approval. Antony, more confident of the result of preparations, knelt and suddenly produced, as if by magic, a crown of golden laurel leaves.

Instantly Caesar's supporters began to cheer, endeavoring to start a demonstration. But none responded and the cheers fell flat and hollow. The crowd even groaned a little, and Cassius was seen to make off from a corner of the forum, where he had been watching; as he went he hid his face in a fold of his toga. Caesar noticed him, however, and remarked about it; there was not much that Caesar's eyes missed. He was perfectly aware, for instance, that his own supporters were looking crestfallen and that Antony was at his wits' end, although putting a bold face on it.

He rose to the occasion, never in his whole life having failed to act a part with dignity. He smiled. He waved the crown aside. He showed disdain for it.

The crowd applauded then, and Antony, for ever sanguine as he was, and flushed that moment with excitement, thought the demonstration, though a little late in coming, was now genuine. He repeated the offer, pressing the crown on Caesar with repeated praises and imploring gesture, using all the histrionic skill in which he so excelled. And again the friends of Caesar tried to start the cheering. But the crowd again grew ominously silent: now no groaning, but a stillness that was worse—more unmistakable.

So Caesar made the best of it. He did not touch the crown. He ordered an attendant to accept it, making his own refusal of it obvious with a gesture that suggested gratitude and yet a consciousness of incongruity. And in the stillness his autocratic voice could be heard from one end of the forum to the other, speaking presumably to his intimates but actually to the crowd:

"Take that toy to the capitol and let the entry be made in the official calendar that on this day the people offered Caesar the crown of Rome and that Caesar refused it."

Genuine cheering burst out then and Antony, recovering his presence of mind, resumed the day's buffoonery, laying about him with the whip and drawing the crowd out of the forum in the hope of seeing him play a few more practical jokes on Roman matrons, or perhaps on virgins not yet anxious for the touch of Lupercalian fertility.

Apollodorus brought the news to Cleopatra, who had avoided appearing in public that day.

"Send for Tros!" she commanded.

"Greeting," she said, "man of restless keels and fretting anchors! How long will it take you to convey my baggage to the fleet?"

Queen Cleopatra

"A day and a night," he answered. "I will do it with a great good will."

But that was too swift for her purpose. The appearance of a flight from Rome was something that she wanted to avoid; departure, made in haste, so swiftly on the heels of Antony's abortive offer of the crown to Caesar, might stir ridicule. And ridicule, she knew, endangers causes in the way the sea sucks out the ground-work of a granite wall.

"Secretly and slowly. Take a month," she answered. "Gradually get my servants and effects on shipboard and be ready with a fleet of boats to take the rest of us downriver when I give the word. Dispatch a ship to Alexandria with word that I am coming, but let them not know when they may expect me. Silence!"

"Silence at last? Praise Zeus! There has been too much talking!" was the only comment Tros made. But he knew that silence was impossible. To load on to the fleet at Ostia, under the eyes of polyglot and countless slaves and merchants, to say nothing of the Roman harbormaster and his crew, the enormous quantities of purchases and all the slaves that Cleopatra had accumulated, without attracting notice would be a feat without parallel. But he would do his best.

When Caesar came to her that evening, sarcastic about Antony, and moody, irritated by the tactless sympathy of friends and the intentionally obvious amusement of his enemies, he found her in a royal mood. She alone knew what the disappointment meant to him. She only knew which strings to touch of the harp of his ambition, how to tune it and to revoke its splendor. He was capable that night of breaking, and of yielding to the weariness of too much strain and rapidly encroaching age, if she had not been there to squander on him understanding and a love he had not known in other women's arms. She took him to the nursery to see Caesarion. They stood together watching the child asleep, and then returned to the little room with Trojan destiny depicted weaving on the wall, where they had held so many confidences.

"Caesar, are you not glad now that you did not divorce Calpurnia? Imagine what the Romans would have said, and how they would have grinned with malice? And now you can see for yourself how destitute of wisdom it would be, and how inevitably sterile, to allow the Romans to invite you to be king. Did you invite them to build you a temple and to deify you? No! You did it. You announced it. You yourself imposed it on them. Don't you see that you deny your own divinity by letting them imagine they have right or power to appoint you or remove you or to change your destiny in any way whatever? Kings are born, not elected, Caesar. They impose themselves, as the sunlight imposes itself and causes growth to flourish. But if kings forget that, or if they lose the royal touch with their divinity, they cease to be kings; they identify themselves with littleness and darkness, until littleness and darkness swallow them and they become one with the mob that thinks itself incarnate power. You derive your power from above, or you are nothing."

Caesar felt entirely confident that he was more than nothing. Cleopatra was the only being in the world whom he regarded as his equal or as able to match minds with him. Excepting her, he knew he was superior to any one on earth.

All other people 'bored him. He had no patience nowadays with the inanities and pawky meannesses, even of men like Cicero. Nobody but Cleopatra understood his craving to reoutline all earth's boundaries and weld a thousand nations into one beneath one despotism. Even she mistook his motive—did not realize how personal it was. She underestimated his monopolizing vanity. "If you are not my guiding genius, what else are you?"

"Caesar," she answered, "I have come too near to being your evil genius! And I would rather die than be that. I would rather die a thousand times. Unknowingly I have set these Romans' teeth on edge against you. And I have encouraged you to think in half-terms and in compromises. I have stayed in Rome too long and let you realize too well my love for you, that will endure through all adversities and stand (which is a test more trying) in the hour of my own fortune. So that you have dallied. You have taken me for granted. I have let you rob your destiny because you think that whatever happens you can turn to me for comfort and amusement. And that is true, but it is a companionship and not a journey's end. And so I leave Rome. I return to Egypt." "When?" he asked her. He appeared to have forgotten it was not the first time they had broached that subject.

Suddenly it dawned on him what Rome would be without her. It was like a stab. He tasted the stark loneliness again, that nowadays he dreaded, and that only she knew how to alchemize into a wonderland of living dreams. "You shall not!" he asserted.

But her low laugh undermined the rampart of his will and took in flank his sortie. She interpreted his meaning before words could coin it into shape: "You would rather rob me of my Land of Khem and keep me captive? Caesar, you are too great—too wise! Do you love me, Caesar? I will stay a month then—not another hour. I have already given Tros his orders. Make you ready for the march on, Parthia. Make haste. No, Caesar! No more dallying! And no half-measures! March on Parthia, and when the Romans rise behind you, turn on them and smite them! Be the king you truly are, and not by their leave, not of their choice, but because the gods have chosen you to be their comrade!"

"Very well," he answered, rather wearily again. He dreaded her departure. "A month? That is rather soon—a little early in the year. There will be snow up in the mountains. But it will give you time to send the corn ships to the coasts of Asia. And afterward—"

"You love me, Caesar? There will be no afterward when you are king. There will be you and I, Caesarion, and who else? Nobody who matters!"

CHAPTER XLI "Caesar, beware the Ides of March"

*And so the long day's task is done, and we may sleep. . . . FRAGMENT
FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.*

A MONTH went by amid a fuss of military midwives—Rome in travail of her only output, armament. The hammers of the swordsmiths and the armorers, by day a din above the city roar, by night were a cicada chorus, swallowing all other sound, pulsing in clattering fits and starts until the pause at midnight, when the gangs relieved each other and the agony of din began again. The forge-glow over narrow streets became a blood-red smear on clouds that slowly rolled along the Tiber Valley. Dawn saw narrow entries chock-a-block with spears in bundles, arrow-heads and javelins in baskets, helmets swinging by the chin-strap two score to the pole, and swords by hundreds waiting for the veteran inspectors—with the great oak log ready for the testing blow in -mid-street, boxes for the broken blades and hilts, and the accountant, shivering in the raw cold, waiting to attest the reckoning.

No wagon traffic. Horses and asses and men all laden with weapons, threading the maze of mean streets, up- and down-hill, zigzag—crazy alleys where the overhanging upper stories let a slit of light through to the rubbish underfoot. Thunder of oaths and shouting by the city gates where wains were loaded and the legion gallopers came thrashing through mud and dust to demand why in the name of Pollux and his brother seven centuries of the Eight-and-twentieth were lacking even spears to drill with. Fights—incessant quarreling, at least the half of it begun by veterans who stole such armor or well-handled weapons as appealed to expert eyes— and on the camping-grounds from end to end of Italy the shouting and the steady tramping of the men at drill.

And Caesar in his element, attending to a thousand interests at once, but far more irritable than he used to be, with furrows lining an emaciated face and sharp sarcastic comments for the members of his staff, who knew no longer whether to assume responsibility and risk rebuke or to incur indignity by asking. Caesar's vanity had grown intolerable. He was centralizing in himself all power, all executive authority, and blaming his subordinates for the inevitable, nigh-impenetrable jam of the machinery of war and state all crowding at one inner room.

The Senate was becoming used to stinging scorn and curt peremptory commands. Some senators were absent, choosing the monotony of country villa life in preference to supine and contemptuously watched obedience to Caesar's orders. Others wondered, watching Cassius and Dolabella, Antony and Brutus, Decimus Brutus Albinus, Trebonius, Tullius Cimber, Casca and Bucolianus—men who were indubitably plotting something and appearing day by day to gather new adherents, keeping their secret, however, whatever it might be, too well for its purport to be definitely guessed. Antony and Brutus,

it was evident, were not yet of the inner circle—Brutus evidently worried and unwilling to be drawn in; Antony endeavoring to worm his way in, and not trusted. Caesar appeared totally indifferent, though it was said on every hand that Antony had learned enough to warn him, and all Rome felt restless with the undertow of a conspiracy afoot.

And in spite of military fever-heat of furious preparation, Caesar with his usual unscrupulous audacity accumulating money and a sort of false prosperity ensuing on the scarcity of marketable stores, a gloom had settled over Rome, more shuddersome and ominous than anything that any man remembered since the days of Sulla. It was like the chill before a hail-storm.

Gladiators felt it and the best men dreaded the arena. Even in the dungeons criminals were restless.

Rumor crosscut rumor. It was known that Caesar meditated leaving Rome about the seventeenth of March, and that on the Ides of March (the fifteenth) he would appear before the Senate to deliver his final speech before departure on his great campaign. There was a story that the offer of the crown would be repeated on the , first; but that was Cleopatra's doing. She persuaded Antony to give the rumor currency in order to uncover a conspiracy if it had reached a head; her Alexandrians were combing Rome for information, and many a slave told half-heard secrets. But the law forbade the testimony of a slave against his master, and nothing definite was learned or done, except that Antony, refused to run the risk of offering the crown a second time.

The Ides (the fifteenth) was the day that had been set for Cleopatra's going, but not many knew it. They were few who came to bid her farewell, and to most of those she pleaded some excuse or other through Apollodorus; for the gloom had penetrated her thought, too, until she lacked, or felt she could not spare the spirit necessary for an interview with people who, she knew, were only enemies in masks. And she saw almost nothing of Caesar, though there was not a thing he did that she did not know within the hour, nor a word he said outside the secret conferences with his staff that did not reach her ears by messenger. Her confidant in those last days was Antony, who came and went much oftener than Caesar knew.

It was only an hour that Caesar snatched to say good-by to her—the fourteenth, in the afternoon. They walked alone together in the gardens overlooking the Tiber, near where he had met her on the night of her arrival. She had mastered herself. She had bitted and ridden her fear until not even she was aware of it. Caesar, full of admiration for her, praised her royal courage:

"For I know," he said, "that you have heard these rumors. Rome is full of them. And you must be acutely aware of how difficult your own position would be if some murderer should end my life. However, you are better off than if I had done what I at first intended, that is, changed my will. If I should die too soon, and they should find that you and Caesarion were my chief beneficiaries, I fear that my nephew Octavian, and even Antony perhaps, would turn on you and rend you. All Rome would applaud them. But it will be otherwise when I return from Parthia—or if they rise against me, as we half expect, and I should teach them the lesson they need."

Queen Cleopatra

His own courage was phenomenal; for he, too, felt the gloom that overrode the city. He confessed it; but he had almost none of the Roman dread of auguries and portents. Danger acted on him like a tonic.

"And I never could see," he said, smiling, "how if there is anything in portents, what is ominous for one side should not be propitious for the other. I am willing to believe that Rome is possibly fore-conscious of the drastic purging I may be obliged to administer before my goal is finally accomplished. But if that is so, then Rome's anxiety is my encouragement! But I think it is mainly the weather; and I feel the temporary loss of your companionship far more keenly than I do this brooding gloom that they are making such a fuss about."

She tried to make him promise to protect himself with a double body-guard. She offered him Apollodorus, and even Olympus, "who is quicker to perceive a danger than a mouse is, since he reads men's minds before the thought can turn into a deed." She offered Tros: "He has come from Ostia. He waits to take me down the river. He is a man of peace, who fights more fiercely than—"

"I know him," Caesar interrupted, smiling. "I am hardly likely to forget Tros! He is the bravest and least self-seeking enemy I ever fought—my enemy this moment if the truth were told! Both of which facts are an excellent reason for contentment that your life is in Tros' keeping. For myself, I much prefer a sudden death to any other; but I think my time is not yet."

He insisted on her promise to go down the river without making another attempt to say good-by to him:

"Both because I shall be occupied, and also because if there is any truth in all this premonition and this talk of a conspiracy, your presence in the city might start rioting; and that might lead to unanticipated and unnecessary damage."

He was eager to be gone and she did not cling to him or add a feather's weight of anguish to the burdens of responsibility beneath which he had aged a dozen years in fewer months. They said their farewell by the river-bank, each throwing golden coins into the Tiber:

"Not that I believe in superstitious practises, but—Egypt, if we never again see each other, you may know this and remember it: that Caesar loved you, and that he never knew whether his greatest victory was yours or his—Caesar or Cleopatra! Name it for me. What shall be the name of that field?"

"Let it be Caesarion!" she answered. And then Charmian came, bringing the child with her; and Caesarion was the last who touched him, clinging to his outstretched finger, crying because Caesar would not stay and be a horse or something sensible.

It was a gray dawn. She, Apollodorus, Tros and Charmian sat listening to Olympus as he spoke of destiny and what a man might do to make himself a mocker of the waves of life that swallow one and cast another on the beach. For Cleopatra had refused to sleep in fear of dreams that might undo her courage and, by flooding her with evil from the world between the outer and the inner planes, might make a gate of her for floods of negative, destructive forces.

"I am using all my will, and if I break down—tell me, Olympus: if I break down, do the gods know what will happen?"

"Which of the gods should care about phenomenal events?" he answered.

"They have lived through that experience and they are gods, not mortals.

Does a ray of sunlight worry about rotting husks or green sprouts? Does it know of darkness? Nay, it shines! It summons, it evokes the life that lies imprisoned in the clothes of death; and if they fall off, is the life less living? So, the gods care nothing for events. They look for qualities. As quality emerges out of quantity, they cherish it and if the quantity should perish, are they answerable? One by one we meet our destiny, and no man's quality is limited or governed by another's nor by quantity nor rank nor even opportunity. And one by one we change as seed that changes into flowers, species evolving out of species. Eternities are moments. Moments are eternities. There is neither time nor size in the eternal calculus, but only, quality. The quality of water is inherent in the least drop equally with oceans. And yet who shall name the quality? And who shall name the spirit of a man, or say that this one is a laggard—that one speeding into godliness? A destiny is neither more nor less than character; and he who would change his destiny, for better or for worse, needs no more for that purpose than to change his character—for better if he study gratitude and duty; but for worse if he indulge himself in greed and hate and envy. Morals are geography and law is land-marks, like the banks of a river and the boundaries of peoples, ever changing. There is nothing to be won but character, and character begets its destiny as certainly as light begets the day, and darkness the night."

"And Caesar's character?" asked Cleopatra.

"That is Caesar's. Good, bad, splendid, mean and envious, magnanimous and patient, intolerant, generous; in some ways reckless and in others rigid; critical of self in some ways and in others purblind. Caesar's! His and no other's. He who judges Caesar, let him stand, if he dare, in Caesar's sandals—and then judge himself in that fierce light, with all that opportunity to show himself his hidden qualities!"

"But he is great?" asked Cleopatra. "Do you reckon him not great, Olympus?"

"Greatness, Royal Egypt, is the measure of a man's or woman's will to face a destiny and build a nobler one on character—not other's but his own."

"And Caesar's destiny? What of it?"

"It is Caesar's. If he meet it like a man, then he is master of it. An event has no importance saving how each man and woman meets it; and to each his consequences, each of his own doing or not doing."

"You have read no stars," she said. "These two nights past the clouds have been a veil between us and heaven. And you make no prophecy. And yet, I feel foreboding in your words, Olympus. Or is that my own gloom shadowing your thought? —Tros—"

She turned toward him suddenly, and paused, and met his gaze.

"When do we leave?" she asked him.

"To-night. The last loads go on at noon. I have a barge for you with cushions in the stern, and curtains—fifty rowers—"

"Tros! I have promised Caesar I will not attempt again to see him before leav-

Queen Cleopatra

ing. Will you go for me, with Apollodorus —armed, the two of you—and watch him—watch him from the time he leaves his house until he leaves the curia again— as close to him as you can come without his seeing you— will you bring me back word that he is safe? And if you see a danger to him, will you—"

Tros laughed—something like an anchor going overside, with cable out-following over the hawse.

"Save Caesar and slay Parthia! A destiny is, as Olympus intimates, a puzzle for us, one by one! However, many—a long league stretches between here and Parthia. And one thing at a time. I have been Caesar's enemy since I was old enough to lay my weight against a weather helm. Myself, I had three opportunities to slay him in a war of his own seeking. I am wondering how many men and women have paid in blood and anguish for my sparing him. And yet, if Caesar perish, who next? And how many slaves would Caesar's death set free?"

"And what is freedom?" asked Olympus. "Is it not, when all is said and done, the right to hammer our own character upon the anvil of events?"

"No, freedom is art," said Apollodorus. "Art is an amusing dream that no one understands."

"Cock-crow! Do you understand that? Time to wake up and cease dreaming," Tros remarked and hid a yawn behind a giant hand. "I go to have a last word with the boat-crews. Then a meal. And then into the city to watch Caesar. Do you come?"

The streets were chilly and a cold wind swept along in gusts under a leaden sky. Apollodorus, loathing Rome at any time, half smothered his face in his toga and made muttered comments on the filth of the winding thoroughfares and the uncivilized behavior of citizens who let their slaves sweep clouds of house-dust on the passer-by.

Drunken men were laying in the gutters, with pigs and fowls and mangy dogs investigating them for pickings. They avoided more than one corpse, product of a midnight brawl, not yet stripped and tossed into the sewer (to save trouble) by the slaves of the municipium. The drinking booths were opening and sleepy slaves were measuring out wine to legionaries home on leave and to all the olla-podrida of mean humanity that had excuse or inclination to exist in Rome. Beggars everywhere maimed and starving, begging the lees of wine-cups or disputing with the dogs for leavings from the tavern meals—veterans most of them, many laying bare the scars of honorable wounds for Tros to see and pity. For Tros looked a warrior, every inch of him—a man who would understand, and grieve and give.

To the curia first, beside the forum, where a mute crowd loitered, mostly shrugging in their togas from the raw wind, idly curious and no man knowing when the Senate session would begin. And so to Caesar's house, not very far away, where lictors stood on guard and there was almost endless running to and fro of secretaries, military messengers and orderlies—a small house in a rather wide street (wide, that is, by Roman standards) where the sunlight on an ordinary day should glimmer on the stucco walls. None knew when Caesar

was expected to come striding out, though scores were watching, many of them bearing their petitions written out on parchment scrolls that they hoped to thrust into his hand as he passed.

And so nothing to do but wait, and grumble at the weather, and observe the individuals who also waited, speculating as to which one might have nerve enough to be a murderer. But they were all too gloomy and depressed, and evidently thinking of nothing except their own discomfort in the wind and whether their petitions had a chance of being read. No fanatic, no resolute- or reckless-looking man among them.

Presently down-street there came a cohort, Caesar's bodyguard, all polished bronze and red plumes, stately, as imposing as the thought of eons, an embodiment of vigor harnessed to obedience, in charge of a gray centurion who knew that life and death are all one in the long run and there is nothing to be gained by flinching. They had an "eagle" with them—bronze on a white ash pole—its S. P. Q. R. polished and assertive as if Caesar had not subordinated Senate and Roman people both. They halted, fifty paces down-street from the front of Caesar's house, then faced about and stood at ease. Tros spoke with the centurion:

"Caesar has sent word," he answered, "that he is indisposed. He may go to the Senate and he may not. We are here in case he does go. That is all I know." Another long wait. Then a messenger in high haste—Decimus Brutus Albius, a senator, notoriously Caesar's friend, approaching from the curia with half a dozen slaves around him, and a number of curious hangers-on, who joined the crowd that waited in the street. The newcomers had information; they exuded it while Decimus entered Caesar's house, where he remained a long time.

"They are waiting in the curia to offer Caesar, after all, the kingdom of all Roman possessions outside Italy."

"He has sent word he is unwell, but Decimus is to try to persuade him to come."

"There is a strange excitement in the curia. Some men think there must have been a disaster somewhere, that the senators are keeping from public knowledge for fear of a panic."

"Have you heard about the auguries this morning? Adverse, every one of them! Ominous—ominous! There have been weird birds roosting on the forum. Some say that when Caesar performed the sacrifice a day or two ago the victim's heart was missing!"

"Aye, aye. Others say that Caesar stays at home because of it; and who shall blame him?"

"Have you heard how the old soothsayer followed Caesar through the streets and cried out, 'Caesar, beware the Ides—beware the Ides.—Beware the Ides of March!' I heard that. It made the blood run cold in me."

But Caesar came forth, chatting pleasantly with Decimus, whose hand he held, and there was no sign on his face of any nervousness. He was wearing his purple emperor's cloak, the gilded laurel-wreath that now he never went without, and a very deep purple fringe to his embroidered toga. There was a cheer from the crowd as the cohort clanged its shields on armor in salute and

Queen Cleopatra

the lictors, fasces over shoulder, strode ahead, up-street, in the direction of the curia, and Caesar, still in conversation, followed about twenty paces behind them. Fifty or sixty slaves came, running from the house to crowd back the petitioners, and into the space they cleared the cohort strode, reforming until, shoulder touching shoulder in four ranks, they closed the rear in such way that no friend nor enemy could possibly get by.

Tros and Apollodorus followed, keeping step to the swing and the clank of the cohort. As they neared the curia they had to wait, because a senator named Popilius Laena came out from the portico to talk with Caesar, holding him in low-voiced conversation for several minutes while the cohort, spreading out to two ranks, blocked the wider thoroughfare.

"They take good care of him. Not much risk of anything happening to him," said Apollodorus, his voice sounding almost disappointed. "Have we had all our trouble for nothing? Not even a riot?"

But Tros was gazing at the gloom under the portico, where half a dozen senators whose names he knew, were lurking and not acting with the normal dignity of Romans in a public place. He saw Cassius and Brutus. They and the rest of that group were watching Caesar as if, it might be, they had set a trap for him. They appeared self-conscious—nervous. When a loud voice, from an unseen hiding-place across the forum, cried out, "Caesar, beware the Ides of March!" they glanced at one another as if terrified, though Caesar only smiled, not even glancing to see whence the voice had come. There was a large crowd lining the forum porticoes; its voice rose in questioning, querulous snarl and the centurion of the body-guard looked to his men to assure himself that they were ready for an instant service. But that bodyguard and the lictors set Tros' mind at rest; without a bow and arrow or a javelin it was impossible to reach Caesar, let alone to injure him.

Then he saw Antony, close to one end of the portico, talking with the senator Trebonius, who held a paper in his hand and seemed to be convincing Antony that there were matters elsewhere calling for immediate attention. Antony appeared in two minds, but Trebonius in one, and it emphatic. When Popilius Laena walked away at last and Caesar resumed his stride toward the curia, Trebonius appeared to be almost using physical force with Antony to keep him from turning toward the door. But Cassius and Brutus and the others, on the far side of the door, looked visibly elated. First they surged forward. Then they fell back as the lictors advanced up the steps and formed in two lines, facing inward, raising their fasces in salute as Caesar passed between them, Decimus following.

Tros strode up to Antony, who was still in the midst of an argument, insisting that Trebonius was wrong about some proposal or other. Antony appeared glad to see him since it gave him an excuse to turn away from his persistent companion.

"By Heracles I I thought you were already on your way to Egypt!"

"No, not until to-night," said Tros. "I thought to witness what goes on within the curia. Are visitors admitted?"

"Wait, and I will lead you in," said Antony. "There is a place behind the col-

umns at the rear where strangers properly accredited may stand and look on." Trebonius resumed his argument with Antony, or rather tried to. Antony rudely broke away from him, Trebonius persisting:

"Antony, will you not understand that as a friend and your admirer, I have more than an idle purpose in prevailing on you to come away with me?"

"You have kept me standing idle too long," Antony retorted. "Can you not see I have friends who wait my courtesy?" But it was several minutes yet before Trebonius would let him enter through the door, past Cerberus-like attendants, sharp-eyed, armed with long wands, who made Tros and Apollodorus leave their swords in a little anteroom.

"There will be nothing much to-day," said Antony, "except a speech by Caesar and an address in response from some senator expressing confidence and good-will. Everything purely formal. Possibly a few petitions to begin with." He led them by a passageway around the rear of the columned hall—a very ordinary building, with the seats arranged in tiers in a wide semicircle facing the tribune, where Caesar was already seated on a throne of gold. There was a rustle as if all the senators had stood to receive their arrogant dictator and had hardly again settled in their places.

"Here," said Antony, "stand here."

He stood between them with a hand on Tros' great shoulder. But Trebonius came whispering and Antony went with him, back through the door to the forum, two other senators following.

It appeared that a petition was on foot. A group of senators, with Tullius Cimber leading and with Brutus bringing up the rear, were crossing the curia floor toward where Caesar sat. They moved quickly, almost treading one another's heels. They pressed so closely around Caesar that he sharply ordered them to stand back. Suddenly he stood up, towering above them on the step below the throne, his face a livid mask of anger. Tullius Cimber, snatching at his toga, dragged it from him, pulling him down from the step, and after that none very clearly saw what happened, for the curia became a pandemonium, with senators standing on seats and struggling in a panic in one another's way. But Caesar's voice came loud above the din: "You villain, Casca!"

Tros and Apollodorus tried to fight their way toward the tribune, but they were met by a tide of fleeing senators, who swept them backward; and the next that Tros saw, Caesar was bleeding from a dozen dagger-wounds and fighting like a madman with his stylus—successfully fighting—his assailants were too many and in one another's way—his strength and savagery cowed them—he broke free, reeled and stood gasping, with his back against the pedestal of Pompey's statue.

Tros tried to get to him, to rescue him. He bellowed, hardly forming anger into words, not caring what he said but fighting against the crowd of senators that bore him backward, pressing him beside Apollodorus back against the rear wall in their frenzy to escape. Then both of them were hustled along before a tide of about two hundred fugitives toward the door, where there was a panic in which men tried to tread one another under foot, and Tros, with cracking muscles, in a burst of frenzy raised himself head and shoulders above the rest of them—so crushed, at that, that he could hardly breathe.

Queen Cleopatra

And so he saw the last of it as he was borne out backward through the doorway. Casca was the first to close again with Caesar, who defended himself and, seizing Cas-ca's wrist, attempted to wrench away the dagger. But the others came on, Brutus last, until a few of them made way for Brutus, thrusting him forward—and Caesar saw him— recognized him.

"You, too, Brutus? You, my son!" he exclaimed. And Brutus struck at him. Then Caesar fell, and even in that moment he was thoughtful of appearances; he gathered the folds of his tunic and was careful they should cover his thighs as dagger after dagger stabbed into his spare frame. The murderers, like white wolves worrying their kill, knelt on him, hacking and stabbing, wounding one another in their frenzy.

Weaponless and breathless, Tros and Apollodorus faced each other on the portico. For a moment there was a stream of fleeing figures in the forum. In another moment the whole forum was deserted. Even -the cohort vanished— Caesar's hand-picked body-guard, with its "eagle" and its gray centurion-commander. The doorkeepers were gone and there was utter silence—until three crows came into view and settled on the rostra at the far end, cawing. Tros shuddered. Apollodorus adjusted his toga. Neither spoke. Then Tros turned to the curia and entered to hunt for his sword. ApoUodorus followed him. They were in the anteroom when the murderers came striding down the passage, no man making any noise and most of them with togas held before their faces. Brutus had a paper in his hand, and it appeared that Brutus meant to make a speech to the excited crowd that he expected in the forum. He and the rest of the murderers appeared more frightened by the silence and-the loneliness than if a mob had been awaiting them to wreak swift justice. For a while they spoke in undertones, then strode away across the forum in the direction of the capitol—a blood-bespattered, furtive, fearful group, who made haste, appearing to dread to look behind them.

Tros came out into the passage, paused a moment watching them, then turned into the curia. He had his sword drawn, ready for he knew not what contingency. ApoUodorus followed and together the two stood in silence, staring at the pale face of the man who had been ready to go forth and conquer all the world. He lay in pools of blood but his features were not badly injured, and the hand of death was dealing kindly with him, softening the harsh lines and the furrows that had made him look so old and tired. He was almost young again; and Pompey, his old enemy, whose marble statue Caesar himself had ordered replaced in the curia, stood smiling down at him with a gaze that suggested half-amused, half-pitying contemplation.

Tros was not the first to speak. It was ApoUodorus' pleasant voice that brought Tros back to earth, and now he was remembering old battles on the coast of Britain against Caesar and his veterans from Gaul—land- and sea-fights, and his own determination to fight Caesar to the end, whatever that might be: a promise to himself that he had not kept, because of destiny that had determined otherwise.

"Vale, Caesar!" said ApoUodorus. "And may I, too, die as swiftly when the day comes, in an hour of dignity and fame! And may I be as great an artist!

But may I not leave such a riddle for my friends! For what Tros and I shall say to Royal Egypt is beyond my wit to imagine!"

"Say to her?" Tros spoke at last. "I will say to her that mice and rats have bitten her lion's veins and bled him! I will tell her that mean men slew a hero! I will say to her that, though the cruelty and crime of Caesar was a foul blot on a fair earth, they who slew him are no better than the worms that writhe on battle-fields! A man lies dead, ApoUodorus. A rogue and a liar—a slayer—a thief—a vain intolerant, ambitious tyrant, but not a coward—a man, upstanding! They who slew him are the rats of Rome—faugh!—sewer rats!— too cowardly and too incapable and mean to win a shred of liberty by being worth it!"

"Tros," said Apollodorus, "do you realize that we are standing here with naked weapons and that any one who enters—"

"Come!" Tros answered. "Let us go and do our duty. Caesar's task is finished. Egypt's and ours lies all ahead of us."

**CHAPTER XLII "Row—row, you lubbers, and take Egypt home
again!"**

This little life we lead on earth is but a school for courage. If we learn more courage when the game is losing, or is lost, should we then envy the apparent winner?

FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF OLYMPUS.

IT WAS five days before Cleopatra left Rome. There were not five minutes of them wasted. Dry-eyed, unflinching, she received the news from Tros' lips, Apollodorus looking on in silence and she lifting her chin as Tros faced her in the garden where she and Caesar had so recently said their farewell.

"Courage, Royal Egypt! I bring—"

"There is no need, Tros, to warn me what you bring, for I can read it in your eyes before your lips speak. Caesar is dead. Is it not so?"

"He is dead," Tros answered.

"Did he die of epilepsy?"

"They have slain him. Miserable men—a Brutus, seeking coward comfort for his own soul, blubbering about honor, stabbing his own father for the sake of a sneak's theory of statecraft! Cassius, Casca, Dolabella—swine and servile flatterers!—a dozen cowards hacking at a man unarmed!"

"Caesar will be glad," she said, "that he did not die of epilepsy. I, too, am grateful for that; for he was very proud. And where was Antony?"

"They fooled him. There was a senator named Trebonius, who was presently joined by others, who held Antony in conversation outside the curia." "Antony, I think, might not be very difficult to fool," she answered. "Where is he now? And who rules Rome? Is there a man who can do it?"

Tros told her how he and Apollodorus, leaving Caesar where he lay, had gone in search of Antony and found him hiding in his house—that great house he had bought from the estate of Pompey with the money Cleopatra lent him. And how Antony begged them to keep Cleopatra for a while in Rome—until it was certain what the mob would do and how the legions would receive the news of Caesar's death.

"By Bacchus, I am surprised they did not kill me," Antony had said. "And they will kill her if she calls the least attention to herself before the mob is got under control! If she should run now they would raise a hue and cry. By Bacchus, what an opportunity! Do you see what Cassius and Brutus will attempt? They will blame poor Egypt for all Caesar's sins, and justify themselves by inflaming the people against her. Bid her stay until I feel my way a little. She must not be taken fleeing on her way to Ostia."

Cleopatra, however, was not in a mood for flight, though Tros was all in favor of it:

"Make haste!" he advised her. "I will take you down the river before Rome even starts to think. We will be in Egypt before the mob has found a leader."

"Think you Antony will fight?" she asked him.

"Fight whom? Whom shall he fight, and for what? Mark Antony is thinking of his own skin—thinking himself lucky that he was not slain along with Caesar—likely enough to run for it—probably wanting you to stay here so that he may bolt along with you if necessary! Study your own best interest."

"Tros, if I think of myself," she answered, "I shall break down and the gods will go away from me in scorn. I think of Egypt. Where is Antony? You say in Pompey's mansion? I will go to him."

Disguise was easy—an Arab burnous and a golden-hilted scimiter. It was easy to imagine hec one of those young scions of a patriarchal clan, followed by a veiled wife, Charmian, bearing the child—not so easy to imagine Tros a tribal servitor; Olympus and Apollodorus looked the part far better. Tros, though, had the advantage that he looked too powerful and savage to be interfered with; he wore his long sword beneath an Arab cloak, for practical considerations, and an Arab scimiter on view to save appearances, which were almost comical, because he strode as no Arab ever did, and the white cloth, bound with a golden cord across his forehead and descending to his shoulders, made his head look twice even its normal size. There was no time to get horses, litters, anything—nor anything to gain by letting slaves into the secret. They went on foot.

All Rome was in a ferment, men and women surging through the streets, their flow on the whole toward the forum but broken and interrupted, by the backwash of gathering factions in quest of a leader—and no leaders anywhere to find. Five—ten—twenty thousand different accounts of Caesar's death, none even near approximate; and several reports that legions were on the march already, either to wreak vengeance on the city or to make Brutus—Cassius—some-body, perhaps Octavian, dictator. Stories that half the Senate had been butchered.

Nobody seemed to think of Antony. His great white marble house was guarded, but with the guards so carefully hidden that the place seemed vacant. There was a porter's ledge, but no porter, and the outer gate was locked and fastened with an iron chain. It was not until Tros looked up into a cypress tree that overhung the wall and saw a leg protruding from a shadow that they obtained any response to efforts to attract attention. Apollodorus climbed on Tros' shoulders, seized the leg and dragged down a slave, who was frantic with terror but amenable to threat, persuasion, bribery and violence all blended into one. When he had cried out half a dozen sentences two lictors came and undid the lock on the gate, but they were without their red cloaks and fasces.

Antony received his mysterious visitors in a darkened room, to which Pompey's splendid furniture gave an atmosphere of dimly suggested eastern luxury. He was wearing chain mail under his outer clothing, and his face was a picture of doubt, fear, worry, indecision, anger and a sort of Heraclean energy seeking an outlet. Nobody in Rome could look, or be more boyishly perplexed than Antony whenever the props of optimism had been knocked away from under him. Normally more boisterous and merry than a gale in spring-time, he was now a beaten bull, as dangerous, but not more dangerous,

Queen Cleopatra

inclined to hide and sulk and pity himself.

But Cleopatra knew exactly how to manage him. It was not for nothing that she and Caesar had discussed Mark Antony or that Caesar, never knowing when his end might be, had told her secrets that no other person in the world knew, unless possibly Calpurnia, and except the Vestal Virgins—the custodians of all such documents as men wished to be kept inviolable and not even discoverable until the proper time. Her whole thought was for her Land of Khem, as Caesar's had been to avoid such rivalries, in the event of his sudden death, as sundered Alexandria's empire.

"Antony, Caesar is dead, and there is nothing to be gained by any such unmanly or unwomanly yielding to desolation as would only stir his spirit to contempt. It is an hour for deeds, not meditations. Sorrow is ill-served by idleness. Those ingrate murderers will not be idle."

"They are likelier to send and murder me," said Antony. His fear was not physical. He was afraid of losing, not of dying; whereas Caesar had never feared either possibility. "I am wondering whether or not to offer myself to the legions as their leader."

"You may find that Brutus, Cassius and Dolabella have preempted you in that," she answered. "And you would waste time. You would be giving cowards time to bridle cowardice, instead of playing on their fears, and stirring jealousies, and forcing them to recognize you as the only man around whom they can rally! Caesar has left Octavian his heir. Do you propose to let Octavian have Caesar's throne as well as Caesar's money? Caesar told Calpurnia, if he should die, to turn to you as his executor. He did that to prevent Octavian from taking too much."

"I despise Octavian!" said Antony.

"Then understand this; I never met Octavian, but from what Caesar has told me he is no fool. He is a better man to count on than those murderers, and he is likely to be much too wise to try to ingratiate himself with the public by blaming dead Caesar. But that is what those murderers will do. They must. How otherwise are they to justify their miserable deed? They must accuse him of all imaginable treasons. And Octavian, unless you forestall him, will come hurrying to Rome to appear as Caesar's champion and to defend his memory. He will come—he will come in any case, and he is likely enough to march with several legions from the north of Italy. So when he does come, let him find you a far stouter advocate of Caesar than he himself could ever hope to be; so that he must befriend you, and take your side of any argument."

"It will take Octavian days and days to get here," answered Antony. "And what about those others meanwhile?"

"Shivering for their coward skins, mistrusting one another, and waiting to see what the soldiers and the mob will do about it!" she retorted. "Stand up, Antony! Get Caesar's will and read it—read it to the people! Send a messenger to those caitiffs—is it true that they are hiding in the capitol?—then send them a messenger and suggest they should proclaim a general amnesty: something they can hardly do without including your name in it. That will give you

the advantage of initiative, and it will make them think you hold a stronger hand than at the moment is perhaps true. Strength, Antony, is decision—swiftness—will, to leap at opportunity!"

"And you?" he asked. "You are not safe now in Caesar's villa."

"I will stay here," she retorted.

Sudden, new emotions changed the entire expression of his face. It had not dawned on his bewildered mind until that moment that she would need a new ally to provide the force, so necessary to protect her wealth until Egypt could stand on its own feet. Fortunately, Fulvia was absent. He stood up. He extended his hands toward her.

"Egypt! Royal Egypt!" he began. But she interrupted him.

"Octavian," she said, "may covert Egypt."

"If I defend you from Octavian?"

"Defend me, and then discover whether I lack gratitude."

"I will need money," he suggested.

She had thought of that before she came to visit him. Apollodorus had a bill of exchange in her favor, drawn by Esias the Jew on a Roman firm of corn contractors. It was already endorsed. She bade Apollodorus hand it over, and even Antony's eyes opened wide at the amount.

"That is a royal present, Egypt," he said, stressing the noun with noticeable emphasis. Repayment, unless of grudges, was not a permanent obsession with him.

Nevertheless, he was a man of deas when sober, and aroused, with somebody to put ideas in his head, and to inspire him with funds and a view of the future. He had brains—ability—a splendid presence—energy; and if his gratitude was mere emotional reaction and as evanescent as the money in his coffers, it was as heroic as his appetite and muscles while it lasted.

He began that minute. He became a titan of directed energy, his guiding spirit Cleopatra and his field of action all the purlieu of the city. He tired out men and horses and his own throat—slaked the latter with a gallon of the choicest wine from Pompey's cellar, - and, when night fell, staged a masterpiece of melodrama. He had ordered Caesar's body carried out into the forum, where it lay in state on woven gold and purple, with a cohort guarding it, all standing with their arms reversed.

There, by moonlight, and with flickering torches adding smoky mystery, he stood—a figure of heroic grief—and gazed in silence at the stern face of the dead dictator. Thousands watched him. They were even on the roofs of the forum buildings. There in solemn melancholy, by appointment, he received Calpurnia, Caesar's widow, and received from her authority as sole executor of Caesar's will. He held her hand and led her toward two Vestal Virgins, who had come in state, with their lictors and their company of guards, to offer their commiseration and the protection of their own inviolable sanctuary. By midnight Antony was much the most important man in Rome.

Dawn found him in the saddle, showing himself here, there, everywhere, allaying the excitement, and yet stirring the suspense, announcing the suggested amnesty and thus obliging the conspirators to approve it, with their thunder stolen, and authority and influence by inches slipping into Antony's sole

Queen Cleopatra

hands.

That afternoon he opened Caesar's will and read it to an astonished audience, who had never dreamed Caesar would make such thoughtful and ironic preparation for sure and condign vengeance on whoever might succeed in killing him before his time: for every Roman citizen three hundred sesterces, and to the Roman people his estates and gardens; not a hint that he expected to be king; no mention of Caesarion or Cleopatra. The last will of a man who loved the Roman people. An indictment of his murderers, that might have been the reason for that grim ironic smile whenever intimates had warned him of the danger of assassination.

Promptly the conspirators began to try to change their tactics. But it was too late. Cinna and some others had been making hot-head speeches against Caesar's memory and it was already known all over Rome that they had sought to justify themselves by blackening the great man's name. They were at Antony's mercy, and he forbearing with them for the moment solely because he might need their support against Octavian, who had no other possible course than that of follower in Caesar's footsteps, and whose jealousy might make him openly the enemy of Antony unless Antony took care to have alternative alliances available.

The ferment in the city raged until the fifth day after Caesar's death, when all the preparations for the funeral were ready—mainly preparation of the public mind by Antony's adherents, who had worked up a fever of expectation. None knew what would happen. All knew that the occasion would be seized by Antony to make his bid for popular approval. Every street in every direction near the forum was thronged with men and women, through whose ranks the victors conducting Antony had the utmost difficulty in forcing a way.

He was not alone. Cleopatra had insisted on her own eyes witnessing what happened; she had sent Caesarion under escort in Charmian's care, to the riverside, where the long barge waited, manned by forty of Tros' best rowers. So there followed Antony four hooded mourners in long drab-colored robes—all males, apparently, and one enormous, one so small as possibly to be the big man's son. But they might have been slaves, or almost anything; they were nondescripts—quite unimportant-looking people, who attracted no attention. All eyes were on Antony.

The forum was smoky and red from the flare of the torches, the shadowy shapes of the buildings vaguely framed a strong that moved in unison. A copy sheen flashed from the soldiers' shields, that clashed and clashed together, punctuating—rhythmically pulsing to a dirge of women's voices: dirge as old as Rome, that had a litany of lamentations unning through it, borne by the murmuring voices of men, like rumbling underground. The wild clouds, curtaining the moon, took gruesome and fantastic shapes as if the whole of nature were in league to signalize that night. The very soul of Rome seemed riven by the grief that—swaying, wailing, ululating—dreed its dirge in final salutation of the mighty dead.

The victors made a place for Antony's four drab attendants, deep in the shadowy coiner of an office portico, where they could stand on upturned boxes

with their backs against the wall. There were steps within two paces of them lead-ing to the alley between that building and the next; and thence there was a maze of back-streets, leading anywhither unsafe, but affording easy pas-sage, since the crowd was in the wider thoroughfares.

"Now by the brow of Pallas, you shall keep your word!" Tros growled in Cleopatra's ear. "No dallying! We go hence to the instant of my decision!" "I will go when I have seen that fatal arrow I have shot at Rome!" she answered. She was watching Antony. He had mounted the heavy scaffolding on which the bier was laid and for a moment he gazed" at Caesar's dead face. Then he Hirst into a flood of tears and, turning toward the crowd, began to lead their dirge, monotonously chanting and repeating lines from Accius that every Roman knew.

"I saved them. I have given life. They slew me. They have given death!" Every few moments Antony would pause, amid the clashing of the shields and shrilling lamentations of the women, to turn toward Caesar's corpse and break into loud weeping. He was making magic—the old magic of the fo-rum—concentrating in himself in person all the passionate emotion of a city, gathering its impulse, leading it until it should uplift him to a feat of oratory that the very roots of Rome should recognize as Rome's own heart made manifest in golden words.

"Friends! Romans! Countrymen!"

He burst into his speech at last, and there fell, like the hush of the forest when night waits for a rising moon, a silence filled with breathing.

"Come," said Cleopatra. "Come now. Antony has won them. Rome shall pay a price for slaying Caesar such as even Caesar might have hesitated to en-force!"

She had to tug at Tros' long hood; he would have waited to hear that oratory. And Apollodorus would have lingered, only Tros took hold of him and thrust him forward down the steps into abysmal darkness, where their feet went splashing into pools of filth and unseen mutilated beggars scrambled out of reach of hurrying feet. Tros picked up Cleopatra—carried her—and ran to where horses waited for them in a stable up a back-street.

In mid-stream darkness of the hurrying Tiber, swiftly to the rhythmic thump and dip and drip of forty oars,—no lantern, and no drum-beat,—Royal Egypt sped toward the waiting fleet at Ostia. Tros stood in silence at the stern, his left hand on the shoulder of a one-eyed helmsman.

"Port a little, Conops. Mark where the bank shoals outward at the bend."

Apollodorus and Olympus sat like a pair of vultures with their backs toward the rowers, watching the changing skyline of a monster city silhouetted against moonlit clouds. Charmian held Caesarion, and Cleopatra, silent, stared straight forward into grim night. None spoke, except for the low-voiced orders to the helmsman, until the boat swept past a vista between trees and homesteads, along which Rome lay visible—a crimson glare below ascending smoke projecting half a city in lurid and monstrous light and shadow."

"Is all Rome burning?" asked Apollodorus suddenly.

So Cleopatra turned, and saw the light of Caesar's funeral pyre—the plunder of fifty cities, furniture of every building around the forum, brought forth by

Queen Cleopatra

the crowd and heaped about his bier until the flames shot high above the temple roofs, and the mob roar, and the din of burning came down-river like the far-off thunder of a battle-field.

Erect and dry-eyed, resolute until that moment, Cleopatra shrunk at last among the cushions and Tros heard her sobbing, trying to make himself believe it was the sound of un-greased oars against the thole-pins. Once or twice he grumbled at the rowers angrily. And then he tried to make himself believe it was the squeaking of the steering-oar, so he swore at Conops, bidding him keep the helm more steady.

He could face all sorrow and all disappointment, or whatever destiny might bring, except the weeping of a woman. He was glad when the darkness swallowed them between the Tiber banks, lest he should see by accident what his ears assured him, but what his will refused to recognize.

But women who seldom weep are like the strongest dams, which, when they break, let through the stored-up measureless reserve of months and years.

Tros began cursing Char-mian, Olympus and Apollodorus underbreath. It was for them to speak—their business to comfort her. What did he know about courtier phrases and the soft words suitable for women in the pangs of misery. But Charmian, Olympus and Apollodorus were as mute as ravens sitting on a ridge-pole in the night.

So for a while he took the helm himself, left-handed, and tried concentrating on a mid-stream course to keep the oar-blades out of shallow water. But Cleopatra wept and there was no ignoring it. He returned the helm to Conops. He must think of speech.

He tried for a long time to imagine what Apollodorus ought to say—some courtier-like, comforting condolence that should dry tears as a mother lulls a baby off to sleep; some witty and appropriate remark about her friends all loving her. But when he thought of love and weaving words about it to a woman, Tros stuttered in his thought; speech would not even take shape. Friendship, too, was something that a man did, not a mess of sentimentalism to be said or sung.

However, he could not endure it any longer. If the others would not speak to her he must. He conned his memory. A line of poetry occurred to him—surely she would like to hear a line of poetry. He repeated it to himself a time or two—made sure that he had the words correctly. It appeared to him as very apt and edifying—something that Apollodorus would be sure to wish afterward that he himself had said, although it might sound a trifle incongruous from the lips of a blunt old mariner. He had half a mind to grab Apollodorus by the neck, whisper the line in his ear and make him say it to her; but on second thoughts he thought it too good for Apollodorus. So he said it to himself again to make sure he had the stresses right—and as he laid a great hand on her shoulder it left him: left his mind blank and bereft of anything except the knowledge that she had answered the touch of his hand and he must speak now or she would think that touch impertinence.

"Egypt," he said, "let Rome rot! It will be spring in Alexandria, and birds all nesting in the Nile reeds!" Then, to hide his own embarrassment: "By Pallas!

Are you sleeping on the oars there? Row—row, you lubbers, and take Egypt home again!"

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Queen Cleopatra