



In the Battle of Actium, in western Greece, on September 2, 31 B.C., Mark Antony attempted a breakout with his fleet to escape Octavianus's blockade and regroup in Egypt. With his large ships, he sailed out of the Ambracic Gulf and engaged Agrippa's navy. Though Antony's naval forces fought valiantly, they were unable to counter Agrippa's vast numerical superiority. Under the eyes of both armies, the tide turned against Antony. The commanders of Antony's land forces promptly surrendered without a fight. Here Antony, with Cleopatra, points out to sea before the battle, probably discussing strategy, in a painting created in 1769 by Johann Heinrich Tischbein the Elder.

Antony & Cleopatra: A Populist Point of View

EGYPT HAS EVER BEEN A LAND OF UNSOLVED MYSTERY, of tragedy and dramatic episodes. Her myths are so mingled with her history and prehistory that her authentic origins are even more uncertain than once were the sources of the Nile. The Western world has always been fascinated by Cleopatra, the last native ruler of Egypt until after the Muslims took over. But ethnically she was not a true Egyptian; her blood was Greek (Macedonian). Yet certain interests persist in trying to portray her as a negro. Here is the romantic traditional saga of one of Egypt's classic, timeless tales: the death of Cleopatra, as related by the great populist Thomas Watson in 1908 in his *Sketches from Roman History*. The book looks at the history of Rome from a farmer's perspective instead of the usual imperialistic one. This article was adapted from that long-lost book.

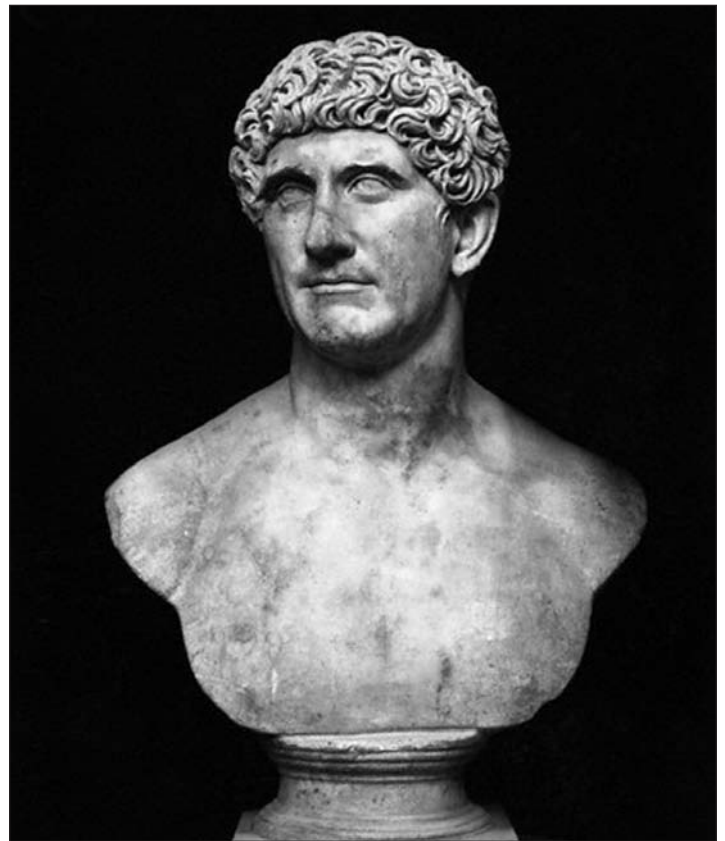
BY THOMAS E. WATSON

The youthful Moses was initiated into the secrets of the Egyptian religion, and who will dogmatically deny that what he learned deeply colored the laws and religion of the Jews? If that be so, who can measure the extent to which we ourselves are influenced by the religion of the great temple of Karnak, by the faith that was the support of the throne of the pharaohs?

Alexandria of today may give little physical evidence of venerable age, but one is impressed with its antiquity when he recalls that it was there that Alexander the Great slept in his coffin of gold, and the fierce beginning of the Christian religion emphasized its bloody conquest over paganism by tearing to pieces in the streets the learned and lovely pagan teacher, Hypatia (A.D. 370-415).

The story of the native race is one of almost continuous and cruel servitude. Slaves to the conqueror the Egyptians have been from time immemorial, and slaves they are today.

Some years ago, they had a ruler who was splendidly lavish in his extravagance. He spent everything that he could lay his hands on, and when his supply of money was exhausted, he was taught the trick of issuing bonds. The Rothschilds and other European usurers were glad to get mortgages on so fertile a country as Egypt, and they eagerly bought the khedive's bonds. When they had secured a sufficient number, they



Bust of Mark Antony (83-30 B.C.). He had a thick head of curly hair and rugged looks that some might consider coarse but that had a certain appeal to many women.



CLEOPATRA'S BARGE, painting by Frederick Bridgman. Shakespeare presented this colorful description of Cleopatra's royal barge: "The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,/Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold; Purple the sails, and so perfumed that/The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,/Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made/The water which they beat to follow faster,/As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,/It beggar'd all description: she did lie/In her pavilion—cloth-of-gold of tissue—/O'er-picturing that Venus where we see/The fancy outwork nature: on each side her/Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,/With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem/To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool. . ."

stopped buying and demanded payment of interest.

The khedive had no money to pay with and, in the long run, Great Britain and France took possession of Egypt in behalf of the bondholders. Then, through a blunder of the French ministry, Great Britain became sole landlord of Egypt. In the process of quieting the title (1882), it became necessary for this Christian country to bombard Alexandria, slaughter many of the Egyptians and send their champion (Ahmed Arabi Bey; aka Arabi Pasha) into captivity; but they finally got full possession, and the land of the pharaohs is now ruled by the English for the benefit of the Jews.

* * *

Cleopatra was born in 67 B.C. [Most authorities say 69 B.C.—Ed.] She was the daughter of King Ptolemy XI, who died in the year 51 B.C., leaving a will in which he be-

queathed his kingdom to his daughter Cleopatra, and his eldest son Ptolemy. He directed that these two, brother and sister, should marry—this being an Egyptian royal custom. Cleopatra was proud, self-willed, accomplished and seductive. She spoke several languages, and had a fascination of manner that was irresistible.

There was a certain man named Pothinus, a eunuch, who was the tutor of the boy king, Ptolemy, and this eunuch was ambitious. He wished to rule Egypt through his pupil. Therefore he intrigued against Cleopatra, declaring that she was meditating on a plan to secure the throne for herself alone, by calling in the Romans to her aid. The fact that the eldest son of Pompey the Great had been in Alexandria two years before, and had become her lover, gave some color to the accusations of the eunuch.

Rioting took place in the streets, and Cleopatra, believing that Pothinus meant to have her killed, fled toward Arabia. Here she raised an army and marched on Pelusium. Her husband, the boy king, also collected an army, and he advanced to meet her.

At this time it was that the fugitive Pompey the Great came to Egypt, where he expected friendship from the children of Ptolemy XI, since it was his influence that had replaced their father on the throne.

But the unfortunate Pompey, having lost all his power to do more good or harm, had no mercy to expect from the cruel ministers of Ptolemy. They pretended to welcome the fugitive, but secret orders that Pompey be killed were given, and he was murdered.

Caesar soon landed at Alexandria, where he turned in horror from the embalmed head of his rival, and hotly denounced the criminals, Pothinus and Achihlas.

After learning that the two armies of Cleopatra and Ptolemy were confronting each other, and that civil war was about to begin, he ordered that both should disband forces and submit their dispute to him for adjustment.

Ptolemy, cunningly advised by Pothinus, did not disband his army, but appeared before Caesar, paid his court in the most deferential manner, and misrepresented the facts of the case as well as he possibly could.

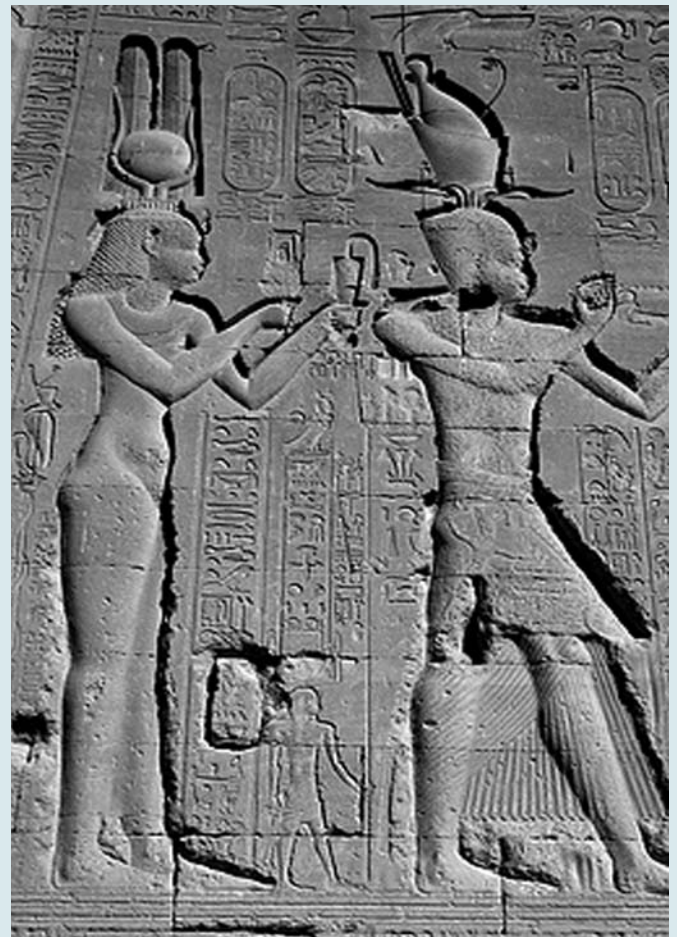
Cleopatra disbanded her troops but did not appear before Caesar. She knew that in the attempt to reach Alexandria she would fall into the hands of Ptolemy's soldiers, and that Pothinus would put her to death.

Indeed it was only when Caesar sent the message a second time that she knew he was expecting her, for Pothinus had intercepted the first message.

To reach Caesar in safety, she resorted to a clever stratagem. Aided by faithful servants, she went to Alexandria in the night; as a bale of goods and upon the shoulders of Apollodorus, a Sicilian, she was carried into the royal palace, and into Caesar's room. At his feet, Apollodorus laid down his burden, and the beautiful young queen rose from the unrecorded bale of goods; and with her luminous eyes, her musical voice, her voluptuous person, her bewitching manners, the sorceress of the Nile made instant conquest of the amatory Roman. Caesar became Cleopatra's champion, her lover, her entranced devotee.

A war followed—in which Caesar narrowly escaped ruin.

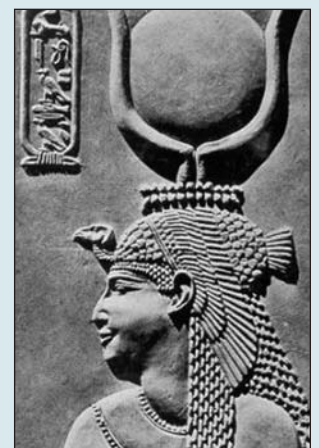
After Ptolemy and Pothinus had been defeated and slain, Caesar lingered on, in Egypt, when his legions were urgently needed in Asia, in Africa, in Spain and even in Italy. So infat-



ONLY ONE VERIFIABLE DEPICTION?

What are said to be the only contemporary sculptures of Cleopatra in existence are carved into a wall at the famous temple of Hathor at Dendera (or Tentyra), like the well-preserved one shown here. She looks nothing like later depictions of her, but has an odd chubby appearance, like a well-fed hamster. Her cartouche (her name in hieroglyphs) is at upper left. She is depicted as Hathor herself, the goddess of love, music and beauty, with horns representing the horns of a cow, also symbolic of the crescent Moon. A hymn to Hathor says: "Thou art the mistress of jubilation . . . the mistress of music, the queen of the harp playing, the lady of the choral dance, the queen of wreath weaving, the mistress of inebriety without end."

At right, this image from Dendera has been identified by some researchers as an image of Cleopatra. Others say it is the goddess Hathor. However, a royal cartouche appears at left.



uated was he with Cleopatra that he was planning with her a pleasure journey up the Nile. They fitted out a vast and sumptuous houseboat, upon which preparation was made for every kind of luxury, entertainment and dissipation.

But the Roman legionaries murmured mutinously, the officers protested that duty called them away and, thus, almost by force, Caesar was torn from the arms of this wonderful and most dangerous woman.

After he had finished a series of victories, Caesar wrote to Cleopatra to meet him in Rome. She went, taking with her the boy she had borne to her imperial lover. This child was named Caesarion.

Taking up her residence in Caesar's villa on the right bank of the Tiber, she held splendid court there as the mistress of the foremost man of all the world. The satellites of Caesar paid homage to her, and even Cicero sought her friendship.

After the assassination of her lover, she returned to Egypt.

Caesar had, as a matter of form and policy [and Egyptian tradition—Ed.], caused her to marry her younger brother—also named Ptolemy—and soon after Cleopatra's return from Rome, this brother and husband died. She was suspected of having had him poisoned, in order that she might reign alone.

After the Battle of Philippi, in which Mark Antony defeated the army of Brutus and Cassius, the Roman world was at the feet of the avengers of Caesar.

Cleopatra had really sympathized with that side during the struggle, and had sent a fleet to support it; but a tempest destroyed the fleet and Cassius, who was near at hand with his army, had compelled the Egyptian queen to send him troops. A part of the Egyptian navy also joined Cassius, but without orders from the queen.

Now that Antony was master of the east, he sent to Cleopatra, commanding her to appear before him at Tarsus, in Cilicia, to explain and defend her conduct during the war.

And with this message, which compelled the queen to come to him as before her judge, begins the most marvelous and dramatic love-story that history records. Poets, from the lowest to the highest, have sung of it and never tire of it. From Shakespeare's clown to the magazine versifier, the sorceress of the Nile fascinates them all. Historians, painters, sculptors, essayists, romancers, none can resist the subtle spell of the loves of the Roman soldier and the Egyptian queen.

When Antony's messenger saw Cleopatra and delivered his message, the young queen decided to go to Tarsus, not as a suppliant fearful of punishment, but as a goddess in search of conquest.

On a barge plated with gold, with sails of Tyrian purple, with silver oars that rise and fall to the music of lyres and harps, Cleopatra entered Tarsus by way of the Cydnus, she herself reclining upon a couch beneath an awning of cloth of gold, and surrounded by beautiful young girls, nearly nude, who pose as nymphs of the sea and bear garlands of flowers. As the vessel glided on, to the sound of music, it breathed perfumes as it went, for incense and spikenard were kept burning by the slaves that surrounded the barge.

When this gorgeous picture flashed itself upon the city of Tarsus, multitudes flocked to the river to gaze upon it. The splendor of the vessel, the charm of the music and the sweet incense that floated to the shore, and above all the dazzling loveliness of the queen and her semi-nude attendants drew everybody to the strand.

Antony, holding court in the agora, suddenly found his tribunal almost deserted. Asking and learning the cause, he too hastened to feast his senses upon so ravishing a spectacle.

Cleopatra went to a palace, in which she had secretly caused elaborate preparations for entertainment to be made, and when Antony, already half enslaved, sent her an invitation to sup with him,

she invited the Roman to sup with her. He did so—and was his own master no more.

Antony was a great soldier but a weak man. On the march and in the field, he was one of the hardest warriors of Rome. Next to Caesar, he was the ablest of Roman commanders. But in times of peace, he was a voluptuary, devoted to self-indulgence, a libertine, a drunkard, with a passion for the pleasures of the table. Prodigal as Caesar himself, he was much coarser in his sensuality, and infinitely more reckless.

Judged by the effigies, Antony was not only not handsome, but was gifted with a grand ugliness, which may itself have been attractive to women. At all events he was ardently loved by his wives, and appears to have been loved by Cleopatra. He was large and tall in person, black-eyed, with a mass of black hair, and had the frank, blunt manners of a soldier.

The first favor Cleopatra asked of her lover was that her son Caesarion be recognized by the masters of the Roman world—Octavianus, Antony and Lepidus—as legitimate heir to the throne of Egypt. It was so decreed.

“Taking up her residence in Caesar’s villa on the right bank of the Tiber, she held splendid court there as the mistress of the foremost man of all the world.”



Then this fascinating fiend requested Antony to cause her sister, Arsinoe, to be put to death. Hired assassins were sent, accordingly, and Cleopatra's sister was murdered in the temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

Then several other individuals were put to death at her insistence; but details would be tedious.

At the time the Egyptian queen came to Tarsus, the Roman army was about to march against the Parthians [see January/February 2010 TBR—Ed.]. The arrival of the sorceress changed these plans, and Antony followed Cleopatra as she went back to Alexandria.

The life they lived in Egypt can be summed up in one sentence. Boundless extravagance, shameless dissipation, a carnival of lustful pleasures that left no sensual appetite unsatiated—such was the mad orgy of the lord of all the east and the sorceress of the Nile. It was during one of the feasts of this wild and prolonged debauch that Cleopatra and Antony drank a pearl, dissolved in vinegar, that was worth a fortune.

During the latter part of the year 39 B.C., the Persian war made it necessary for Antony to go to Italy. His wife, Fulvia, is said to have fomented this conflict for the purpose of compelling him to break away from Cleopatra. Fulvia died at this time, and mutual friends of Octavianus and Antony brought about a meeting and a reconciliation. Another arrangement was made between them by which Octavianus remained mas-

CLEOPATRA'S DEBT NOT TO BE FORGIVEN

Although Egypt was inherently a wealthy land, loaded with gold and grain, Cleopatra's ancestors had already worked up a vast debt to Roman Jewish bankers. As a result, Rome had no use for a friendly relationship with Egypt. This debt gave the Roman ruling class a reason to feel vengeful toward Cleopatra and Egypt. Cleopatra thought that through her relationships with Caesar and Antony she could gain respect and power—perhaps even forgiveness of Egypt's debt. Here she was sadly mistaken. Her extravagance impressed many Romans, but did not reduce the animosity of Roman senators and their wives, who also hated the sexual freedom Cleopatra exemplified. The painting above by Alexander Cabanal shows Cleopatra watching as she tests poisons on prisoners. She enjoyed studying poisons by making experiments with them on wretched prisoners.

ter of the west, Antony of the east and Lepidus of Rome's holdings in Africa.

Besides, a marriage between Antony and Octavia, the sister of Octavianus, was brought about, and thus permanent peace seemed ensured.

Had Antony been able to have been faithful to his noble wife, it is reasonably certain he would never have had a war with her brother. Master of the east, Antony would have lived and died, leaving his children by Octavia to ascend the throne of imperial Rome, on failure of nearer heirs. As a matter of

fact, descendants of Antony did in this manner come to inherit imperial power.

After his marriage to Octavia, Antony lived in Rome nearly a year. Then he and his noble spouse went to Greece, and made their home in Athens for two years.

For three years, the Roman triumvir had seemed to forget Cleopatra. But military necessity compelled his going to Syria, and he was no sooner on the soil of the east than the old madness seized upon him again.

He sent for Cleopatra; she came; and the licentious orgy was renewed. Forgetting the devoted Octavia, oblivious to the danger of insulting Octavianus and the Roman people, lost to pride and shame and honor, this frenzied lover lavished upon his wanton the provinces of Rome and the revenue of the empire.

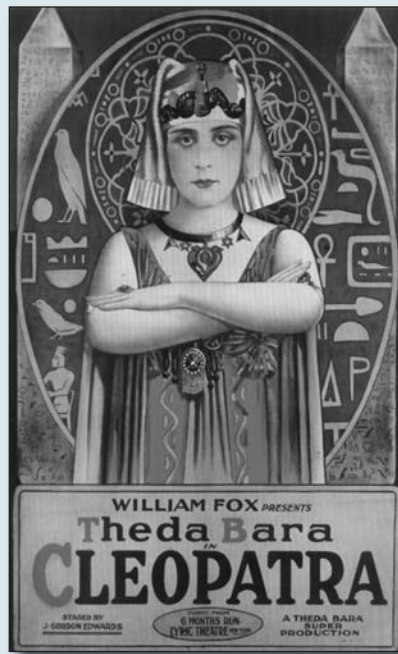
After an ill-considered expedition against the Armenians, which resulted in great disaster and a frightful winter retreat for the Romans, Antony reached the crisis of his career. The noble Octavia, hearing of his plight, begged her brother for reinforcements and supplies for Antony.

Obtaining them, she sailed for Athens, and from there wrote to her husband, asking permission to join him.

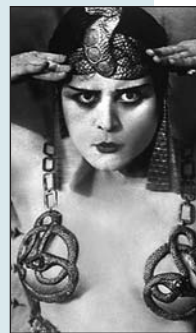
He and Cleopatra were together, and he refused to allow his wife to come. The wiles of the sorceress overcame the hesitation of her lover, and the doomed man reeled recklessly toward the abyss.

Returning with Cleopatra to Egypt, the bacchanalian revels began again, and it was not until the year 34 B.C. that Antony finally marched again against the Armenians. The campaign was brilliantly successful, and a triumph was decreed him. Instead of going to Rome to celebrate it, as custom bound him to do, he celebrated his triumph in Alexandria—to the scandal and indignation of Rome.

Alexandria never witnessed such a magnificent spectacle as that of Antony's triumph. The victor himself rode in a chariot drawn by four white horses, while the captive king and queen of Armenia, and their two sons, walked, bound in



Cleopatra (1917), a silent film directed by J. Gordon Edwards, starred Theda Bara as the evil queen, and was a box office smash. One of the most elaborate Hollywood films ever produced up to that time, it featured lavish sets and cost \$500,000 to make and employed 2,000 people. The film was loosely based on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Bara wore a variety of fantastic, elaborate costumes, some quite risqué even by today's standards.



chains of gold.

When the triumphal chariot came to where Cleopatra sat upon a throne of gold and ivory, Antony halted and presented his royal captives to the Egyptian queen. Then there was a vast banquet spread in the gardens of the palace and in the public squares.

After this, Antony and Cleopatra seated themselves upon two thrones of gold and ivory, while the trumpets sounded, the troops presented arms, and the multitude acclaimed the lovers. Then Antony announced that Caesarion, the son and heir of Julius Caesar, should be called “king of kings,” and that Cleopatra herself should be called “queen of kings.”

Then he gave kingdoms to each of the three sons that Cleopatra had borne to himself.

Completely infatuated, Antony passed the bounds of sanity in his passion for the queen. Her effigy was engraved on his imperial coins, her name upon the shields of his soldiers. He accepted an Egyptian office under her, and she was borne about the streets in a chair. He, the lord of the east, condescended to follow on foot in her train.

He even made a will in which he divided the Roman East between Cleopatra and the children she had borne him. In this will Caesarion was recognized as the heir of Julius Caesar to the Roman west. Of all the mad things that Antony had done, this of setting up Caesarion as heir to Julius Caesar, and therefore as a rival to Octavianus and his descendants, was by far the maddest. It made war inevitable should Octavianus learn the contents of the will.

* * *

Octavianus at length grew weary of Lepidus and deposed him. This left two men supreme in the Roman world, Antony and Octavianus. That peace between them would be difficult to keep was natural, but Antony forced the issue by claiming that Octavianus had not shared with himself the provinces taken from Lepidus, nor Sicily, taken from the younger Pompey.

The great rivals began to intrigue against each other, to

indulge in mutual reproaches, and to compete for the favor of the Roman people.

The partisans of Octavianus made the most of Antony's scandalous profligacy at Alexandria and of his lavish gifts of Roman territory to the Egyptian queen. Meanwhile, Antony did nothing effectual in the way of helping his partisans at Rome. He had many powerful friends there, and his faithful wife was eager to do whatever was possible in his behalf; but Antony was his own worst enemy and paralyzed the efforts of his wife and his friends.

While Octavianus by his prudence constantly added to his strength, Antony lost ground steadily. Some of his partisans fell off, because they could see nothing ahead but disaster, as the natural consequence of his sloth, his prolonged debauches, his insane infatuation for the queen. Some were offended by Cleopatra, whose sarcasms and veiled threats were quick to be aimed at any friends of Antony whom she suspected of wishing to rouse him from the spell she had cast upon him.

Two of Antony's friends—very intimate friends—who had been thus made enemies, not only went over to Octavianus, but carried to his jealous ear the story of the will.

Violating the law, Octavianus tore the will from the sacred keeping of the vestal virgins, and it was read out loud in the Senate.

There can be no doubt that Octavianus was more alarmed and incensed by the recognition of Caesarion as the heir of Julius Caesar than at all the other acts of Antony combined.

I think that historians have not dwelt sufficiently upon the two great provocations given Octavianus by Antony—first, the outrage to his sister and, second, the setting up of a foreign bastard as heir to the Roman purple.

Each of the rivals began to make preparations for the final struggle. Octavianus was careful, persistent, systematic, wasting no time and losing no opportunity. Antony's management was just the opposite. He began, on a great scale and with a bold plan, but he allowed Cleopatra to join the army, and she came with all the essentials for turning the camp into a Capua. In vain Antony's officers implored him to send the fatal woman away. He had not strength to resist her tears, her lascivious embraces.

The lovers were in Athens during portions of the years 32 B.C. and 31 B.C. It was at this time that the vindictively jealous queen prevailed upon Antony to send orders to his wife,

Antony & Cleopatra: What did they really look like?



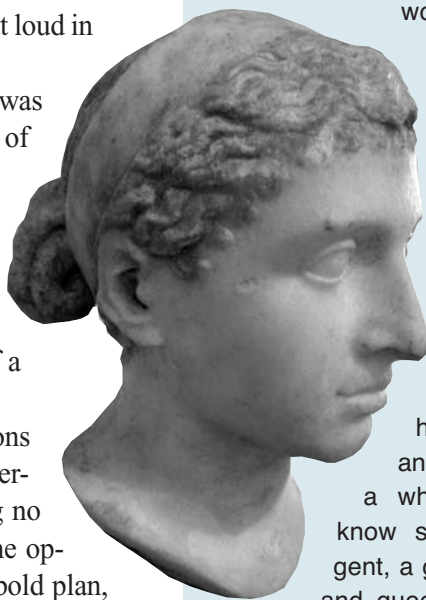
Was Cleopatra beautiful? Ugly?

Or somewhere in between? She is depicted in the movies and by many a modern artist as a great beauty. The Egyptians portrayed her as a chubby cheeked (see page 7). Do the coins shown above show us what she and Mark Antony really looked like? Here he appears to have a "boxer's" nose (broken possibly from combat), while she is shown as a plain Jane with a beaky nose. Since these coins are from her reign, one

would think this is at least how she wanted posterity to remember her and her lover. In one set of coins Cleopatra and Mark Antony look very similar. In another set, she has "an enormous neck and the features of a bird of prey." At left is a bust presently found in a museum in Berlin. Below, a different looking bust from Smyrna. What evidence we have seems to suggest she was not a beauty. But one thing appears clear: In all these depictions,

however different from one another, she is certainly

a white woman. We know she was intelligent, a good diplomat, and queen of an area important for Rome, so it is no wonder that leaders of Rome like Julius Caesar and Mark Antony would "fall in love" with Cleopatra, while another Roman leader, Octavianus (the future Emperor Augustus), would fear and revile her.



at Rome, to vacate his house. The noble woman had refused to obey her brother when he had directed her to leave Antony's palace, but when her own husband commanded it, she wept and obeyed.

The army of Antony consisted of 110,000 men. Besides, he had a great fleet. Octavianus, also, had a large army and a large fleet. His forces both by land and sea were smaller than those of his rival but were better commanded.

Antony's resolution and confidence forsook him, and he vacillated in his plans. First he would join battle on land; then, he changed his mind and preferred a sea fight. In fact, he was torn by contending emotions and acted like one distracted.

There were 17 kings in his tent one evening before Actium, and all of his allies and lieutenants urged that they make the struggle with his army.

As Antony had never commanded in a naval action, there can be but one explanation of his fatal decision to stake all upon a sea fight: The queen of Egypt was there with her 60 sail, and the queen, with an eye to a safe return to Egypt, urged a naval action. The wavering Antony so decided, and lost the Roman world in the Battle of Actium.

It appears that all might have gone well for him had not the queen at the turning point in the fight, spread sail and fled. Antony lost his head completely, for this Egyptian fleet was his reserve. To lose his reserve and his paramour at the same instant overwhelmed him, and he pursued her, taking his own ship out of the action. The reserves gone, and the chief gone—the Antonians were completely beaten.

Antony abandoned his fine army, which slowly went to pieces. Following the flagship of Cleopatra as it fled, Antony overtook it, and boarded it. Then, prostrated by a sense of his loss and degradation, he sat down on the prow of the vessel, buried his face in his hands, and so remained, silent and suffering, for three days and nights.

Refusing for several days to see the queen, Antony at length allowed her women to bring them together. They supped, the wine flowed, Actium became a memory, and the lovers were lovers again.

On their return to Egypt, Antony acted the recluse, the Timon, for a little while, making no preparations to meet the attack that he knew that his rival would soon make. The queen, on the other hand, acted with courage, vigor and foresight. But

what did she hope to do against the might of united Rome?

As Octavianus drew nearer, both Antony and Cleopatra wrote to him. Antony, indeed, offered to sacrifice himself if Octavianus would spare the queen and leave her in possession of her throne. Octavianus did not reply.

The queen, more selfish than her lover, endeavored to negotiate terms for herself, leaving Antony to his fate. With her, Octavianus temporized, for he wished to prevent her from destroying anything of great value.

At length, the Roman legions appeared, and Antony gave battle. In a cavalry fight he won a brilliant victory, and he then led out his army for a general engagement. His infantry broke, bore him along with the rout, and all was lost. The queen, in anticipation of the worst, had built a large and lofty structure, at once a treasure-house and a tomb. When the last hope should be gone, she meant to withdraw into this building and kill herself.

When Antony reached the palace, after his final disaster, he found it deserted, for Cleopatra had betaken herself to the tomb.

In the belief that the whole world had abandoned him, and that even the woman for whom he had thrown the world away had forsaken him also, he turned to his faithful freedman, Eros, and commanded that Eros slay him.

Instead Eros slew himself.

Then Antony thrust his sword into his own breast, and sank upon a couch,

mortally wounded.

Cleopatra heard of the tragedy and was frantic with grief. She sent, and Antony was borne by, a few faithful soldiers, to the base of the tomb. From above, the queen and her two women, Eiras and Charmian, threw down ropes that were made fast to Antony's body, and the three women drew him up to a lofty chamber in which they had taken refuge. Cleopatra from above, tugged at the ropes, her face full of horror, her raiment disordered, and Antony slowly ascended from below, bleeding, dying, gazing upward fondly and stretching out toward the queen his supplicating hands—how piteous the spectacle!

At length he was dragged into the room, and lifted to a bed. He died in the arms—covered with the kisses—of the queen. The maddest of imperial lovers had added the gift of his life to the sacrifice of pride, of honor, of power, of home, which he had already made to the sorceress of the Nile.

By stratagem, Octavianus secured possession of the person and the treasures of the queen. There was an interview in which she made a ghastly attempt to ingratiate herself with

“It appears that all might have gone well for him had not the queen at the turning point in the fight, spread sail and fled. Antony lost his head completely.”



the conqueror, but his cold voice and averted eyes told Cleopatra but too plainly what her fate would be after Octavianus had used her to grace his triumph.

Deceiving Octavianus for a moment, she managed to have brought to her feast a basket of figs in which was hidden a viper, which, aroused by a golden pin, struck its fangs into her arm, and thus gave her the painless death that released her from the power of Rome.

Her faithful women, Eiras and Charmian, died with her.

Lifeless on her golden couch, arranged in her royal robes, Eiras dead at her feet and Charmian dying—thus the Roman soldiers found Cleopatra when, suspecting her purpose, they forced the door.

Charmian with her dying hands was placing the diadem on the cold brow of the queen.

“Is this well done, Charmian?” cried a Roman soldier.

“Yes,” the heroic Egyptian replied, “it is well done, and worthy of a queen, the descendant of so many kings.”

Octavianus allowed Cleopatra to be buried beside Antony, and he gave honorable interment to the bodies of Eiras and Charmian; but Caesarion was put to death.

Antony’s folly in setting him up as the heir of Julius Caesar cost Caesarion his life—just as it had much to do with

This portrayal of the death of Cleopatra by French artist Jean Andre Rixens (1846-1924) goes along with the official story, complete with the handmaidens following their mistress into the void. There are holes in this version, one being the note Cleopatra sends Octavianus just before killing herself. It is uncharacteristic for one bent on suicide to deliver a warning to someone likely to try to stop the person. It is more likely Octavianus had her killed and concocted the whole “asp bite” story.

Antony’s own ruin.

It appears to be a historical fact that Cleopatra experimented with various poisons in her efforts to find one that gave death without pain. Criminals under sentence were the victims upon whom she practiced her horrible experiments. It was by this method that she learned that the bite of the viper called the aspis caused no suffering, but led the victims, through a gentle sleep, to the portals of death. ♦

THOMAS E. WATSON (1856-1922) was a famous populist U.S. senator from Georgia and a prolific author. He is remembered as a voice for the disfranchised white Southerners. Watson led an interesting life, working both within the Democratic and Populist parties. He rose to power while refusing to compromise his support for working-class Americans and farmers. Watson is featured in *Profiles in Populism*, by Willis Carto.