

Thesis  
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Respectfully submitted  
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## THE STORY OF CLEOPATRA IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Perhaps no story is better known than the story of Cleopatra. Even the ordinary child would have a pretty definite idea of beauty if someone would say to him that such and such a girl is as beautiful as Cleopatra. In spite of the development of civilization, man is not yet above the enjoyment of the same sensual pleasures that cost Antony his empire, and so the story of Cleopatra has continued to appeal to a large number of men, literary and otherwise.

Considering the strength of the appeal it has made, we believe that it will be a very interesting study to trace the story as it has been worked over and handed down by the master hands of our literature. Chaucer told the story; Shakspeare dramatized it; Dryden remodeled Shakspeare's version to fit the demands of the classicists; Tennyson furnishes us with a nineteenth century conception of the legend; and G. Bernard Shaw (trust it to Shaw) has given us a humorous sketch of this queen lover as the twentieth century regards her.

In order to make our remarks clear in tracing the story down through English Literature, it would be well, we believe, to give a brief summary of the story as told by one of the Latin writers. Inasmuch as Plutarch's account is the fullest, and since it furnishes a good basis for further discussion of the story, we have chosen to summarize it.

## CHAPTER I

### PLUTARCH'S RELATION OF THE STORY

"The last and crowning mischief that could befall Antony came in the love of Cleopatra, to awaken and kindle to fury passions that as yet lay still and dormant in his nature, and to stifle and finely corrupt any elements that yet made resistance in him of goodness and a sound judgment".

When Antony was preparing for the Parthian War, he sent Dellius to command her to make her personal appearance in Cilicia to answer the accusation that she had aided Cassius in the late war with Antony. Dellius had only to see her face and to note her adroitness and subtlety of speech to be convinced that Antony would not trouble her. He told her, therefore, to go to Antony, who was a man as well as a soldier. Though she may have believed somewhat in the kindness of Antony, she undoubtedly had even more faith in her own charms, "which having recommended her to Caesar and the young Cnaeus Pompey, she did not doubt might prove yet more successful with Antony". She had known them as a girl, but she was to know Antony as a woman in the full power of her beauty and intellect.

Cleopatra received several letters from Antony and his friends summoning her, but she paid no attention to these orders, until finally as if in mockery of them, "she came sailing up the river Cydnus, in a barge with gilded stern and out-spread sails of purple, while oars of silver beat time to the music of flutes and fifes and harps". Her whole appearance and surroundings con-

stitute one of the most sensuous appeals in literature. Antony invited her to supper, but she insisted that he come to her, and needless to say, "she made a hit"--to use a bit of college slang. "She, perceiving that his raillery was broad and gross, and savored more of the soldier than the courtier, rejoined in the same taste, and fell into it at once, without any sort of reluctance or reserve." She was not more beautiful than some other women, but she knew how to add to her attractive person the charm of her personality and conversation. She also had powers of intellect, as shown by the fact that she could speak all the general and a large number of the dialect languages of her time.

Antony was so captivated by her that while his wife, Fulvia, was fighting for him against Caesar in Rome, he kept a holiday in boy's play in Alexandria. Cleopatra always had some new charm or delight to meet whatsoever mood he professed. "She played at dice with him, drank with him, hunted with him; and when he exercised in arms, she was there to see!"

While engaged in this diversion, he received a despatch from Rome saying that his brother Lucius and his wife Fulvia had joined in war against Caesar, and having lost, had fled out of Italy. He set out against the Parthians who had uprisen, but later turned towards Italy on receiving lamentable letters from Fulvia. On his way, he learned that Fulvia had provoked the war, hoping

thus to draw him from Cleopatra. As she was coming to meet him, she fell sick and died at Sicyon. Caesar laid nothing to the charge of Antony, but blamed Fulvia for everything, so that the friends of Caesar and Antony were able to effect a conciliation, and also a partition of the empire among the triumvirs. But even a closer tie was thought necessary, and as Caesar had a half-sister, a very accomplished woman, whose husband had just died, and as Antony disowned marriage with Cleopatra, it was arranged that Antony should marry Octavia. Everyone thought that "the beauty, honour, and prudence" of Octavia would win the affection of Antony, and that all would be well and safe in mutual friendship.

Antony set out for Greece with Octavia, and all went well for several years, Octavia acting as peace-maker between Antony and Caesar. But when Antony set sail for Asia and approached Syria, the old passion for Cleopatra broke into a flame, so that he sent a messenger to bring her into Syria. On her arrival he presented to her several kingdoms, and acknowledged as his a set of twins by Cleopatra. Then he sent her back to Egypt and went to fight the Parthians, but in his haste to get back to Alexandria, he showed bad military judgment, and lost the war together with a large number of men.

But Octavia in Rome was desirous of seeing Antony, and secured her brother's consent, who hoped to start war on her unfavorable reception. When she reached Athens, she was told of Antony's new expedition against the Parthians and was told to await him there. Cleopatra seems to have become afraid of her rival,

fearing that by adding to her noble life and high alliance "the charm of daily habit and affectionate intercourse"; she should become irresistible. She feigned, therefore, to be dying for love of Antony, bringing her body down by slender diet, and whenever he left her, she seemed to languish and half faint away. She took great pains that he should see her in tears, and as soon as he had noticed it, she would hastily dry them up, as if she desired that he should know nothing of it. Antony was also prevailed upon by Cleopatra's friends, who persuaded him that she would die if he were to leave her and go away to war.

Meanwhile Caesar was accusing Antony before the Senate, saying that he had crowned her as queen, and with her Caesarion. Antony counter-attacked Caesar, but found it necessary to prepare for the war that Caesar was beginning against him. He was in Armenia with Cleopatra, and desired that she should return to Egypt, but she feared that Octavia might achieve some new reconciliation, and so she gave a large sum of money to Canidius, commander of the legions, to speak for her to Caesar. Because she was furnishing supplies and was considered equal in prudence to the kings, she was allowed to remain.

At Athens, Cleopatra courted the favor of the people, being jealous of the honors Octavia had received. The Athenians decreed her public honors, and Antony as an Athenian citizen was to make the speech. He <sup>also</sup> sent orders to Rome to have Octavia removed from his house,

who wept on leaving that she should be one of the causes of the war. ~~The~~ Romans, however, pitied Antony even more than her, especially those who had seen Cleopatra, who ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> they could say had the advantage either in youth or in beauty.

The speed and extent of Antony's preparation alarmed Caesar, but Antony put off the war, to his own great disadvantage. Also, several of the men who had opposed Cleopatra's remaining with the army went over to Caesar and told him of the contents of Antony's will. Caesar took this will from the vestal virgins with whom it had been placed, summoned the Senate and read certain portions of the will, emphasizing what Antony had said about his burial. He had ordered that even if he died in Rome, his body after being carried in state through the Forum, should be sent to Cleopatra in Alexandria.

As soon as Caesar had completed his preparations, he had a decree passed declaring war on Cleopatra and depriving Antony of the authority he had allowed a woman to exercise in his place. Caesar added that Antony had drunk potions which had bereaved him of his senses, and that the generals they would have to fight would be Mardion, the eunuch, Pothinus, Iras, Cleopatra's hair-dressing girl, and Charmion, who were Antony's chief state councillors.

"So wholly was Antony now the mere appendage of Cleopatra that, although he was much superior to the enemy in land-forces; out of consideration for his mistress he wanted the victory to be gained by sea. But nothing seemed to be correct with the fleet, and

even Canidius, commander of the land forces, who had at first prevailed with Antony to let Cleopatra remain, now thought she should be sent back to Egypt, and that Antony should retire into Thrace or Macedonia and there face Caesar in a land-battle. But Cleopatra prevailed with Antony that a sea-fight should settle all, "having already an eye to flight, and ordering all her affairs, not so as to assist in gaining a victory, but to escape with the greatest safety from the first commencement of defeat".

After fighting all day, the outcome was still in doubt, when suddenly Cleopatra's ships hoisted sail and set out in full flight through the line of engaged ships. Antony, as if he had been born a part of her and must go with her whithersoever she went, abandoned all that were fighting and set out in a galley to follow her. Seeing him follow, she gave him the signal to come aboard. Without seeing her or being seen by her, he went to the prow of the ship and sat down, his head in his hands. He sat thus for three days until they touched land, where Cleopatra's ladies were able again to persuade Antony and Cleopatra to speak and later to eat and sleep together. Antony went on to Africa, but he found himself so deserted that he was persuaded to return to Alexandria. Meanwhile Cleopatra was trying out all kinds of poisons and venomous animals on Egyptian prisoners. She seems to have concluded that death from the asp-bite was the most desirable.

They also sent ambassadors into Asia to Caesar, Cleopatra asking for the kingdom of Egypt for her children, and Antony asking



that he might have leave to live as appriviate man in Egypt, or, if that were thought too much, that he might retire to Athens. Caesar would not listen to any proposals for Antony, but he told Cleopatra that there was no reasonable favor which she might not expect if she would put Antony to death or else expel him from Egypt. Cleopatra seems not yet to have given up hope, for she was still proud of her charms, and possessed of the power of her beauty. But Antony became jealous of the special honors paid to Caesar's messenger, and so had him whipped and sent back. Cleopatra than paid him all the attentions possible, trying to clear herself and to allay his jealousies. She even let her birthday go by, but kept Antony's with splendor and mgnificence.

Cleopatra seems also to have betrayed Antony's forces, so that when he prepared to fight, he found that his forces immediately went over to Caesar. Antony cried out that she had betrayed him, and she, fearing him, fled into her monument and sent messengers to tell him that she was dead. He then tried to get his servant to kill him, but his servant turned around and slew himself, so that Antony ran his own sword into his own belly. He did not die immediately, and no one around would put him out of his misery, so that Cleopatra's secretary finally came to him with orders to carry him into the monument. She and her two women pulled him up through a window by means of a rope. Just now she seemed to have forgotten her own misfortunes in his.

Just as he died, a messenger came to her from Caesar, telling her that Caesar would show her favor, but she refused him ad-

mittance. Later he entered through the window while another messenger was talking to her through the door. Then a guard was set over her with orders to keep her alive, Caesar desiring her to honor his triumph.

Many kings and commanders asked for the body of Antony, but Caesar would not take his corpse away from Cleopatra, by whose hands he was buried with royal splendor and magnificence. During her distress, Cleopatra fell into a fever and hoped to die by refusing food, but Caesar suspected her purpose and forced her to eat by threatening her children. He even came to visit her himself, but her old charm and the boldness of her youthful beauty seem not to have worked so well, though he did promise her, deceitfully of course, to treat her honorably, above her expectations.

However, she learned through one of her friends, a companion of Caesar, that she would be sent on to Rome in three days. So, she secured leave to go to the tomb of Antony, where she bemoaned his death. Then she returned, took a bath, and made a sumptuous meal. A country fellow brought her a basket of figs, whom the guards let in. After her meal, Cleopatra sent a sealed letter to Caesar, who guessed what she was doing from her pleas to be buried beside Antony. He sent in all haste to her, but she was found dead on a bed of gold, her woman dying beside her.

Some say that an asp was brought in in the basket of figs. Others say that it was kept in a vase and that Cleopatra teased it until it took hold of her arm. Also she is said to have carried poison with her in a bodkin about which she wound her hair. Yet no

spot was found on her body, nor any symptom of poison, nor was the asp seen in the monument; only a slight trail is said to have been discovered in the sand nearby. Some say that two slight puncture marks were found on her arm, and Caesar seems to have believed this, because there was carried in his triumph a figure of Cleopatra with an asp clinging to her. Of course Caesar was disappointed in her death, but he allowed her body to be buried by Antony in splendor and magnificence. Antony's statues were all thrown down, but Cleopatra's were left intact, one of her friends having given Caesar a large sum of money to save them.

We conclude, then, from Plutarch's account, that Cleopatra was beautiful, though not more beautiful than some other women of her time; that she possessed intellect and knew how to range her charms and attractions to appeal to "her" man; that she was sensual and recognized the power of her sensuality; that she loved Antony, but was never married to him; that she was not so "hard" as we are accustomed to think, as shown by her love for her children; that she was a woman, ambitious and jealous; and that in the end she was willing to show treachery towards the man she loved, and who had forsaken his home, his country, his kindred, and <sup>his</sup> empire all for love of her.

This account has been somewhat detailed, but it will help us to understand the English stories and will give us a definite basis upon which to base later discussions. Especially is this true when we reflect that Shakspeare's drama is drawn wholly from Plutarch.

## CHAPTER II

### CHAUCER'S LEGEND OF CLEOPATRA

Cleopatra seems to have been mentioned first in English by Alfred the Great in his translation of Orosius, a Spanish ecclesiastic of the fifth century, who gave a brief summary of the Cleopatra story. According to Alfred, Cleopatra is described as placing the adder against her arm, because she thought it would cause less pain there<sup>a</sup>.

But the first real literary account in English Literature of the story comes in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women under the title of The Legend of Cleopatra. We have given already some account of the story as told by Plutarch, but the story was also told, usually in a more or less varied form, by other late Latin and medieval writers. Some have tried to show that Chaucer got this story from Florus, others that he got it from Orosius, but Dr. Shannon<sup>b</sup> seems to have shown pretty conclusively that he borrowed the story from Boccaccio, who had given two versions of it, one in De Casibus Virorum Illustrium and <sup>the other in</sup> De Mulieribus Claris. Dr. Shannon has shown how these accounts furnish practically all the points of Chaucer's story, his theory being even more plausible because these two books seem to have been used by Chaucer in other instances.

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a. Cambridge History of English Literature: I, 105.

b. Shannon: The Source of "Cleopatra" in Chaucer's "Legend of Good Women"

The writer is deeply indebted to Dr. Shannon, not only for the theory of Chaucer's source, but for a number of the other conclusions drawn later in this paper in regard to Chaucer's story.

As Chaucer says in his Prologue, not only must he spend his time

In making of a glorious Legende  
Of Gode Wommen, maidenés and wyves,  
That weren trewe in lovinge al hir līves;

but he must also

Telle of false men that hem bitrayen. Prologue ll. 483-6.

It is in accordance, therefore, with his purpose to make The Legend of Cleopatra the first of a series of legends about women who have been faithful in love that Chaucer has manipulated this story. To the ordinary person, Antony is more nearly a martyr to love than is Cleopatra, but in order to "telle of false men that hem bitrayen" it was necessary for Chaucer, in addition to making Cleopatra a saint, to manage the character of Antony in such a way as to make him a false lover, and otherwise to cast disrepute on him. As early as line 12, Chaucer pictures him as a "rebel unto the toun of Rome" and then convicts him of being a false lover in the next three lines:

And over allthis, the suster of Cesar,  
He lafte her falsly, er that she was war,  
And wolde algates han another wyf

Legend of Cleopatra: ll. 13-15.

But the details of the early life of Cleopatra, which might convict her even more easily, are omitted, making her appear in a more desirable light.

Always Chaucer emphasizes the strength and loyalty of Cleopatra's love for Antony. First we have a relation of the madness of Antony's love:

But love had brought this man in swiche a rage  
And him so narwe bounden in his las,  
Al for the love of Cleopatras,  
That al the world he sette at no value.  
Him thoughte, nas to him no thing so due  
As Cleopatras for to love and serve. ll. 20-25.

And of course this model queen of love could do no less:

This noble queene eek lovede so this knight,  
Through his desert, and for his chivalrye. ll. 28,29.

In this version of the story, Cleopatra is the wife of Antony, whereas in Plutarch's account and in most of the other accounts, she is his mistress only. The fact that she is Antony's wife serves to give dignity to her character, and this justifies Chaucer in giving her a place among his "good women". Of course he is interested in Antony and Cleopatra as lovers, and so selects what facts concern him, letting the others go. He himself explains it in these lines:

And forthy to th'effect than wol I skippe,  
And al the remenant, I wol lete slippe. ll. 43,44.

According to Chaucer, Octavian made war on Antony, because he married Cleopatra:

Octavian, that wood was of this dede,  
Shoop him an ost on Antony to lede  
Al-cuterly for his destruccion,  
With stoute Romains, cruel as leoun.

Chaucer gives a lively description of the sea-battle, seeming to draw his material from contemporary sources, rather than from any edition of the Cleopatra story. He even carries it a step farther from the original story as usually given, and makes Antony, defeated, the leader of the flight:

And thus the longe day in fight they spende  
Til, at the laste, as every thing hath ende,  
Antony is shent, and put him to the flighte,  
And al his folk to-go, that best go mighte.  
Fleeth eek the queen, with al her purple sail,  
For strokes, which that wente as thikke as hail;  
No wonder was, she mighte hit nat endure. ll. 71-77.

Chaucer may have got a suggestion for this from Boccaccio, who seems to treat satirically Cleopatra as the leader of the flight, but

Chaucer shows her as faithful even in battle, and refuses to admit that she deserted her lover.

The regular stories tell us that Antony and Cleopatra went to Epirus and thence to Alexandria, where the final catastrophe occurred, but Chaucer cared only to tell a dramatic story, showing Cleopatra as the faithful lover, and Antony as the unfaithful lover, and so left out all the intermediary incidents, bringing about the catastrophe at Actium:

And when that Antony saw that aventure,  
"Alas!" quod he, "the day that I was born!  
My worshipe in this day thus have I lorn!"  
And for dispeyr out of his witte he sterte,  
And roof him-self anon through-cut the herte  
Er that he ferther wente out of the place. 11. 78-83

Antony is here the unfaithful lover, because he does not die a martyr to love, but rather because he has lost his "worshipe" and so finds himself in despair. Though the manner of Antony's death, suicide, is the same here as in the other accounts, Chaucer has not mentioned the servant whom first Antony asked to kill him. The point is a minor one, but goes to show how very far Chaucer has departed from the conventional historical Cleopatra story.

In the following line we have a suggestion of what in other stories shows Cleopatra's treachery to Antony, but of course Antony was dead here, and even then no point of treachery/<sup>to love</sup>would be suggested here to one unfamiliar with the other stories:

His wyf, that coude of Cesar have no grace,  
To Egypte is fled, for drede and for distresse.

The point suggested is, How could Cleopatra know that she could have no grace from Caesar after Antony's death if she had not been in communication with him?

Chaucer gets rid of Antony early in the story, and so has a good opportunity to speak fully of Cleopatra's faithfulness in preparing the magnificent tomb and in giving her final lament before casting herself into the grave with the serpents. It is interesting to note here that Cleopatra apparently has everything in her own power, whereas in the other accounts, including Plutarch, Caesar has control over Antony's body, but turns it over to Cleopatra for burial. According to Boccaccio, Caesar commanded that both be buried together in the sepulchre which they began to build while they were still alive. But Chaucer makes Cleopatra the sole builder of the tomb, having it built as gorgeously as possible, for the express purpose of furnishing a testimony of her great grief over the death of her husband. Again we find her the perfect and faithful lover, the true and suffering wife.

After this we have another passage that furnishes some difficulty.:

And next the shryne a pit than doth she grave;  
And alle the serpents that she mighte have,  
She put hem in that grave, and thus she seyde:

Was this passage original with Chaucer? He seems to have no direct source in any of the authors we have mentioned as having told this story. We do have an interesting parallel, however, in Gower:

I syh also the woful queene  
Cleopatras, which in a Cave  
With Serpentz hath hirsself begonne  
Alquik; and so sche was totore  
For some of that sche hadde lore  
Antonye, which hir love hath be.

Gower: Confessio Amantis: VIII:2572-2577.

Critics of a century ago would doubtless say that Chaucer was here borrowing from his contemporary, Gower, but it may have well been



that Gower was borrowing from Chaucer. The latter supposition would certainly be plausible, inasmuch as Gower has only a brief insertion in his long work, whereas Chaucer is telling a complete story. It might also be argued that both of these contemporaries were drawing from a common source unknown to us now. If so, only the discovery of this source can ever solve the problem. Of course Plutarch's account of her death is not definite, and we may well feel that it was left largely to the symptoms of the individual relater to end the story as he saw fit. Boccaccio has her die by applying serpents to her veins. Inasmuch as the serpents had to be kept, no long stretch of the imagination would be required to devise the idea of the pit.

To give up honor and everything for love as Antony did would be the part of a martyr. It seems clear that in omitting various details, if he really knew them, Chaucer has reserved this great honor of sacrificing all for love to his heroine. In accordance with his purpose, therefore, he has painted her as loyal and true to Antony, whom he makes her husband. Her death, therefore, is the result of her devotion to her husband. She thus becomes a real martyr to love, and deserves to be put first in a list of "good women", all of whom are famous for their loyalty to love.

Chaucer's account differs from Plutarch's in spirit as well as in actual subject. Cleopatra is here the wife of Antony; her character is more noble; she is loyal and true, and never the treacherous and deceitful woman; and she dies a martyr to her great love for her husband. Here, she is the first of a number of "good

women! There, she would perhaps be the most deceitful of "bad women". On one point, the two writers agree in part-- the point of Cleopatra's beauty. Chaucer says:

And she was fair as is the rose in May.

Plutarch would perhaps have accepted this very line as descriptive of his Cleopatra's physical beauty, though he would no doubt have desired to qualify 'rose' by some such word as 'fragrant', inasmuch as this would aid considerably in bringing out her extreme sensuality.

### CHAPTER III

#### SHAKSPERE'S "ANTHONY AND CLEOPATRA"

The next great literary work dealing with Cleopatra in English Literature is, of course, Shakspeare's drama, Anthony and Cleopatra. Several writers, however, had mentioned our leading lady in the interim, and several dramas had been written with the story for their Cleopatra/subject.

Spenser refers to Cleopatra in his Faerie Queene as a very beautiful woman, and naturally we feel Spenser's justice in using Delilah and Cleopatra as examples of cases where beauty alone can soften the hardened hearts of great warriors, "enur'd to blood and cruelty". Spenser's reference is noteworthy only as indicating that he knew the story, and that undoubtedly it did make a considerable appeal to him. He says:

And so did warlike Antony neglect  
The worlds whole rule for Cleopatras sight.  
Such wondrous powre hath wemens faire aspect,  
To captive men, and make them all the world reject.

Faerie Queene: Book V, Canto VIII, 11.14-18

In 1592, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, published a translation of Garnier's M. Antoine, published in French in 1578. The original tragedy was modeled after Seneca, observing the unities, and containing the traditional chorus, with another thrown in for good measure. There is no development of character in the tragedy, Cleopatra being the same repentant, love-sick woman at the end that she is at the beginning. The translation is of interest to us only because it has been suggested that Shakspeare may have used it

as one of his sources for his drama. The suggestion seems not to be very important, however, even though Shakspeare may have known the play. <sup>a</sup>

Samuel Daniel also tried his hand at dramatic composition, having printed in 1594 "The Tragedie of Cleopatra". The tragedy is patterned on the Senecan model, in which everybody talks a good deal, and nobody does anything at all. The unities are carefully observed. Though the tragedy, together with the other poems of Daniel, was read widely, it was never acted. There can be no detection of Daniel's influence on the action of "Anthony and Cleopatra", but there seem in several cases to be slight similarities of thought and expression. <sup>b</sup>

It would be folly of course to compare any one of these plays with that of Shakspeare which we are to discuss now. As we have mentioned before, Shakspeare drew his material for Anthony and Cleopatra from Plutarch, but it is indeed a pleasure to see how, in the hands of a great poet, lines of the "commonest" prose have been transformed into verses of most highly inspired poetry. The one thing that we do want to remember, however, is that inasmuch as Plutarch is the source it is not likely that Shakspeare is trying to give us some interpretation of characters as they might have been, but as Plutarch most evidently did not give them. Those

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a. See further: Furness edition, Anthony and Cleopatra, p. 513.

b. For the possible influence of Daniel upon Shakspeare, see: Furness edition, Anthony and Cleopatra, pp. 514-5.

who maintain that Cleopatra was not intended by Shakspeare to appear sensual, that she was not treacherous, and that what appeared to be treachery was not treachery at all, seem to forget that our great poetic master does not usually interpret the same incidents so as to reveal elements of character essentially different from those the incidents reveal in his sources. We prefix this statement simply because we fail to agree with even so eminent an editor as Horace Howard Furness, who goes almost to the point of making Caesar a god and Cleopatra a saint.

The story opens with Antony and Cleopatra interrupted in their love-making by a messenger from Rome. Antony sends him away in spite of the protests of Cleopatra, who insists that he see the messengers and find out what the message is from Caesar or Fulvia. And then we have a few words on Anthony's part, based directly upon Plutarch's account, which give give us the real clue to Cleopatra's charms:

Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh,  
To weep: who every passion fully strives  
To make itself (in Thee) faire, and admir'd. --Act I, Sc. I, ll.64-

Then Anthony decides that they'll go through the streets in order to note the quality of the people. This is based on a statement in Plutarch to the effect that Anthony and Cleopatra used to put on old garments and go thus throughout the city knocking at people's windows and doors.

In the second scene we find that one messenger has to relate that Fulvia and Lucius, after fighting against each other, have confined their forces against Caesar. He also tells that Labienus has been extending Asia with his Parthian forces. In 20

few moments another messenger comes in announcing the death of Fulvia. Here we have a modification of the story as told by Plutarch. Anthony at first went against the Parthians, but received several lamentable letters from Fulvia, and so set out for Rome. It was not until he was approaching Rome that he learned that Fulvia had taken sick and died. Of course Shakspeare, for dramatic purposes, has cut out all the details, shortening the period and getting down to the places where there is real action. The motion picture could easily have recounted the adventures of Anthony as he left the Parthian shores, sailing for Italy, and learning of his wife's death on his way. But Shakspeare's was no motion picture theatre! In his first act, we have really only an introduction to the characters, with a hint at the action that is to follow. Nothing really takes place, except that Anthony manages to pull himself up finally and to leave Egypt for Rome.

Besides the difference we have mentioned above, this first act seems to show Anthony in just a little different light from that in which we find him in Plutarch. He seems to be fully conscious of what he is doing, and realizes full well the wiles of Cleopatra. He says in reference to them;

She is cunning past man's thought.

--Act I, Sc. ii, l. 168.

and then as if realizing what he is doing, and the danger from which he cannot escape:

Would I had never seen her.

--Act I, Sc. ii, l. 175.

Though we do not have the long sensuous descriptions that we have in Plutarch, we do not feel that the queen (of Egypt) is any the less sensual. In the very first few lines, we are told that Anthony's great captain's heart

Is become the Bellows and the Fan  
To coole a Gypsies Lust.

--Act I, Sc. i, ll. 15-16.

Gypsie seems to be used here in the double sense of Egyptian and bad woman. In addition to this, Cleopatra says, as if she admired the epithet, that Anthony is perhaps even now wondering? "where's my serpent of Old Nile?"

In the **Second Act**, we find Pompey discussing their situation, Pompey especially believing that Anthony will not leave Egypt, and ~~refusing~~ to believe reports to the effect that he is about to arrive in Rome even then. He says:

Make Anthony  
In Egypt sits at dinner, and will make  
No wars without doores. --Act II, Sc. i, ll. 16-18.

To him Cleopatra is salt(most wanton), and he hopes that Cleopatra will join witchcraft to her beauty, and then join lust to both the others, until his brain is kept fuming. Of course Pompey is making war on Caesar and the other triumvirs, and is having considerable success. Then we have a scene arranged between Caesar, Lepidus, and Anthony. As in the regular story, the fortunes of these three are reconciled, Caesar forgives Anthony, and it is decided that Caesar will give Anthony his sister to wife. As in Plutarch, Caesar objected to this suggestion until Anthony assured him that he was not married to Cleopatra. Then we have an interesting scene, in which Enobarbus is the chief speaker. Enobarbus plays the part of the Greek chorus, and the scene here serves to bring the ~~the~~ action up to the present state. Shakspeare follows Plutarch very closely here in describing the first meeting of Anthony and Cleopatra when he had summoned her to come to him. The same sensuality appears, even enhanced at times because of the dramatic genius of the person who is telling the story here. And then we have that passage which only the master poet could have written:

Never he will not (leave her utterly):  
Age cannot wither her, nor custome stale  
Her infinite variety: other women cloy

The appetites they feede, but she makes hungry,  
Where most she satisfies. For vilest things  
Become themselves in her, that the holy Priests  
Blesse her, when she is Riggish. Act II, Sc. II, ll. 273-9.  
Shakspeare

Naturally, all through the play/invents his own conversation, and some of the scenes of home life, of friendly meetings, or meetings of old friends are among the very best in the play, even though they do not add a great deal to the action of the play. Such a scene is Act III, Sc. III. Here we have Anthony and Caesar walking along with Octavia between them, uniting them here as she was to do later until finally she could no longer perform the functions of a peace-maker. The last part of the scene, however, goes back to Plutarch. Here we have the Egyptian Soothsayer, an employee of Cleopatra, who tells ~~him~~ Anthony that he must leave Caesar's side, and is careful to back up his statements or prophecies by referring to a few cases in which experience seems to tell Anthony that what the soothsayer has said must be correct. The soothsayer tells him that he is bound to lose if he plays any game with Caesar. On reflection, Anthony decides that just this has been the case. Always Caesar's luck has managed in some way to overcome Anthony's greater skill in these games. On further reflection, Anthony decides that the only thing for him to do is to go back to Egypt, and so he resolves. Although the soothsayer influenced Anthony considerably in Plutarch, Anthony does not seem to have been led directly by him to this definite resolve to return to Egypt. He says

I will to Egypte:  
And though I make this marriage for my peace,  
I'th'East my pleasure lies. Act II, Sc. III, ll. 43-5.

In Scene V, we have another return to Egypt. Most of the incidents and even the points mentioned in the conversation between



Cleopatra and her servants are based upon statements in Plutarch.

We have an interesting bit of dialogue here of this kind:

Char. 'Twas merry when you wager'd on your Angling, when  
your diver did hang a salt fish on his hooke which he  
with fervencie drew up.

Cleo. That time? Oh times:

I laught him out of patience: and that night  
I laught him into patience, and next morne,  
Ere the ninth houre, I drunke him to his bed:  
Then put my Tires and Mantles on him, whilst  
I wore his sword Phillippan. --Act II, Sc. v, ll. 20-28.

The next scene in which the three Triumvirs and Pompey meet and make peace and afterwards feast each other is taken almost word for word from Plutarch. As in the source, Shakspeare has the lot for the first feast to fall on Pompey. We also have various words spoken to Anthony with reference to his Serpent of Egypt. In fact, the drunken pillars of the world make Anthony and his Egyptian revels the subject of their conversation, and of course their highest ambition just then is to approach an Alexandrian feast as nearly as possible. We also have the scene in which Menas, one of Pompey's pirates, approaches Pompey and tells him that if he is allowed to cut the cable and let the ship on which they are feasting drift out to sea, they can fall on the drunken Triumvirs, and the whole world will be Pompey's. Pompey reproaches him for not going ahead, but says that since he has told him about it, he must not do it, because he (Pompey) does not allow profit to lead his honor. This of course is Plutarch's even to the words used.

Act Three informs us of Ventidius' victory over the Parthians. This is very close to the story as found in Plutarch. Ventidius kills the son of the king in revenge for a Roman who had been killed in an earlier campaign. But Ventidius fears to push the Parthians as far as he might have, for fear that Anthony might not like it, because

it seemed already that both Anthony and Caesar accomplished more in their campaigns when they were managed by lieutenants. In the same act we find Anthony and Octavia leaving for Athens. A little later we have another glimpse of Egypt. The messenger is describing Octavia to Cleopatra. Perhaps he may have learned a lesson from the rough treatment he had received just a bit previously when he had brought Cleopatra the news of Anthony's marriage to Octavia. At any rate, the description he gives of Octavia seems to be one that Cleopatra would have desired, and not the one that we find in Plutarch. There she is equal with Cleopatra in beauty and far surpassing her in modesty. Here she is described as "dull of tongue and dwarfish" and instead of bearing herself as a queen,

She creeps: her motion, and her station are as one:  
She shewes a body, rather than a life,  
A Statue, then a Breather. --Act III, Sc. iii, ll. 27-29.

Also her face is "round, even to faultinesse" and her hair

Browne Madam: and her forehead  
As low as she would wish it, --Act III, Sc. iii, ll. 45-6.

in an age when a high forehead was accounted a great beauty, and a low one a proportionable deformity.

In the same act in which Anthony and Octavia leave Rome, Octavia asks Anthony's permission to go back to Rome, and to try to smooth away some of the differences that have arisen between her husband and her brother. One of the things to which Anthony objects is that Caesar

Made his will, and read it,  
To publicke eare, spoke scantily of me,  
When perforce he could not  
But pay me terms of Honour: --Act III, Sc. iv, ll. 5-8.

Of course there is a corruption in the text here, for Anthony would have had no reason for getting angry at Caesar if he had made his own will and read it to the people, but according to Plutarch, it

was Anthony's will, which Caesar had taken from the vestal virgins in whose hands it had been placed, which Caesar read in public. Of course this would naturally make Anthony angry. Anthony allows Octavia to go to Caesar, but prepares for war with Caesar.

In Scene Six, we have Octavia's meeting with Caesar and his two generals. Of course Caesar hates to see his sister come like this, for he thinks that she should be accompanied by great armies. Mecnas gives what may be taken as an estimate of the way in which the Romans regard Anthony's treatment of his wife. It is taken from Plutarch.

Welcome deere Madam,  
Each heart in Rome does love and pittty you,  
Onely th'adulterous Anthony, most large  
In his abhominations, turnes you off,  
And gives his potent Regiment to a Trull  
That noyses it against us. --Act III, Sc. vi, ll. 99-104.

From this point on to the end of the long Third Act, we have a remodeling of Plutarch, with enough of Shakspere's own added to suit the purposes of conversation. Cleopatra has prevailed upon Anthony to fight at sea, and so he has decided to do, in spite of the recommendations of his generals and soldiers. In Scene X, we are told by men who see that Cleopatra with her sixty ships has fled, and that Anthony has followed, and together they have gone in the direction of Peloponnesus. A little later, Anthony asks his friends to take his gold which they will find in a ship in the harbor and to proceed to Caesar. Of course they refuse. We are told that Anthony's schoolmaster has been sent to Caesar, in the hope of saving something out of the wreck. Anthony asks for exactly the same thing here as in Plutarch, and so does Cleopatra. Anthony is turned down as flatly here too, and Cleopatra is told that she may hope for <sup>at</sup> most anything if she

will kill Anthony or else send him out of Egypt. We do have an interesting touch of Shakspeare's own here. Enobarbus is made to tell Cleopatra that Anthony "onely" is responsible for the loss, because "he would make his will Lord of his Reason".

What though you fled,  
From that great face of Warre, whose severall ranges  
Frighted each other? Why should he follow?

Act III. Sc. xiii, 11.6-8.

Then we have the familiar scene in which Caesar surprises the messenger who is in the act of kissing Cleopatra's hand. He has the messenger whipped and sends him back to Caesar. Cleopatra seems to have no great trouble, however, in getting back Anthony's affection, which had undoubtedly been ~~put~~ to the test on seeing Cleopatra allow a messenger from Caesar to kiss her hand. If this was not a sign of treachery on Cleopatra's part, as Mr. Furness contends it was ~~not~~, then we must indeed say that Shakspeare not ~~only~~ dramatized Plutarch's story, but that he went even farther and created new characters to fit the same situations. Obviously this is not true.

In Act IV, we are told that Caesar has refused Anthony's challenge to personal combat on the ground that he (Caesar) has other ways to die. No wonder that Anthony calls his answer tame, but Shakspeare seems to have got this from a mistaken translation which he used. Dryden follows him in this respect. Then we have several scenes in which there is general revelry in Anthony's camp previous to the battle that is to be staged. Then we have Anthony putting on his armor, assisted by Eros, but more particularly by Cleopatra. It is interesting to note here what Kreyssig says of this:

She knows well enough that what must here decide is not the heroic courage of a warrior, but wary judgment and essential superiority. But, at that very moment, her fine, aesthetic temperament pays homage to the man who is even in that instant betrayed.

Quoted in note, l. 50, Act IV, Sc. iv, Furness edition.

The editor simply remarks that he is not responsible for the opinions of commentators quoted. Whether or not Cleopatra did betray Anthony as he later accuses her, we are left only to conjecture. One thing is sure, Anthony accuses her of it and there is no explanation by Shakspeare or by Cleopatra as to why his forces deserted him in such a fashion. Then, too, Shakspeare is following Plutarch, and since the incidents are the same and Anthony delivers the same accusation against Cleopatra, which again is unanswered, we may feel reasonably safe in saying that Shakspeare also considered her treacherous.

In this act, we also have Enobarbus going over to Caesar. Anthony sends him his property, after which Enobarbus dies, convinced that nothing can be worse than to betray a friend and general. We have again the incident in which Caesar fresh from the fight comes in and takes Cleopatra in his arms in spite of his coat of armor. He also recommends to her favor a soldier who has fought valiantly during the day, asking her to hold her hand out for him to kiss. She gives him "an Armour all of Gold" which had formerly been a king's. Here we have a slight difference from Plutarch, for there the soldier goes then immediately and deserts to Caesar. Here we find him in the next day's battle, standing off with Caesar just before Caesar goes off a little way and sees his navy giving over to Caesar without fight. Also when Anthony notices this and accuses Cleopatra of treachery, we find her coming on the stage for a few moments and then leaving for fear. She was even too afraid to do anything except to go off and shut herself up in her monument according to Plutarch. That might be explained <sup>on the ground</sup> that she was more conscious of her guilt to Anthony there, and of course that would furnish Mr. Furness the chief point in his argument that Cleopatra is not guilty of treachery here.

As in Plutarch, Cleopatra sends to tell Anthony that she has killed herself. He decides that he can be no tardier than his queen, and asks Eros to kill him. However, Eros kills himself, and Anthony taking the lesson tries to kill himself. He does not die immediately, and Cleopatra judges from the noise that something is the matter and so sends her messenger to bring him to her monument. On finding out that she still lives, Anthony calls for his guards and is taken to the base of the monument. From thence he is pulled up through a window by Cleopatra and her maids. He soon dies, and all go out carrying his body.

in the Fifth Act

Cleopatra tries to find out how she will be treated by Caesar, but he sends to assure her that he will deal gently with her. He sends then Proculeius, who gets into her monument by the same sleight as in Plutarch. Cleopatra realizes that she is taken prisoner, and Dolabella tells her Caesar's real purpose concerning her. Caesar then comes on the stage for a few moments, telling her that he will show her kindness, and that unless she eats and takes care of herself, he will have her children killed. As in Plutarch, this induces her to eat and sleep. We also have the scene in which Seleucus, Cleopatra's treasurer, says that the queen has kept back part of her gold when giving Caesar the list of her property. She flies at him, but is prevented by Caesar from injuring him. The editor of the Variorum seems to agree with a German scholar in saying that this scene had been prearranged by Cleopatra and her treasurer, and that Caesar simply fell once more into the snare, believing as Cleopatra was trying to get him to believe, that she was desirous to live and would not kill herself. This explanation seems to me rather far-fetched.

If she was merely acting, and then blushed so deeply that Caesar noticed and mentioned it, then Caesar was not fooled so badly after all.

Cleopatra then receives the basket of figs from the countryman, and in them the aspics. She applies one of these to her breast, and then apparently another to her arm. Caesar comes soon, noticing the puncture marks, and also discovering a trail on the floor and on the fig leaves as of an aspic. Caesar then concludes that she has died from the bite of the aspic, and not from poison as the latter would have left some trace in swelling. Caesar celebrated her death briefly and then ordered that she be buried in the tomb beside Anthony. Shakspeare does not seem to follow so closely Plutarch in giving the manner of Cleopatra's death. Plutarch says that death may have resulted from an asp being applied to her arm, but Shakspeare says definitely that the aspic was applied to her <sup>breast</sup>/~~arm~~ and also to her arm.

As regards Anthony and Cleopatra, then, we may say that Shakspeare took the story directly from Plutarch, using the same characters, incidents, and even the same language. Only in a few cases has the major story been modified. What the play does show is the working of a master hand. Not only have those passages been turned into good poetry, but the events have been arranged so as to produce a tremendous dramatic effect. And in addition, Shakspeare has added those home touches and touches of personal feeling which only a master-poet with the most profound knowledge of human nature could ever have penned. To make the idea clear, we may turn to Dryden, whom we honor by comparing with Shakspeare.

## CHAPTER IV

### DRYDEN'S "ALL FOR LOVE"

Following Shakspeare, Thomas May of London gave a version of the Antony and Cleopatra story in The Tragegie Of Cleopatra Queen of Egypt. This was written in 1654. It is so weak as a play, and so lacking in imagination that we may readily pass it by. In 1677 Sir Charles Sedley perverted Antony and Cleopatra into rime. He permits the queen to speak these last words:

Good asp bite deep and deadly in my breast  
And give me sudden and eternal rest. (She dies. <sup>a</sup>

But the greatest of these versions and the only one really worthy of being compared with Shakspeare's version is Dryden's All for Love. This play was presented in 1677 and first published in 1678. The subject is Shakspearean, and it was the Anthony and Cleopatra from which he drew his material. The ground covered is that of the last two acts of the earlier play. Growing sentiment in favor of the doctrines of the unities, the adaption of movable scenery for the stage to take the place of the simple stage scenery of the earlier period, and perhaps a realization of his own limitations caused him to narrow the scope of his play. To keep the unity of place, he has all the action to take place in the temple of Isis. The story is changed to suit the need. Anthony dying is not drawn up by ropes into the monument, nor do the Roman soldiers climb the ladder into the monument. Rather Cleopatra comes to the temple herself just as Anthony has fallen on his sword. Her own death follows in the same place.

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<sup>a</sup> A long quotation from this play is given in the Variorum edition of Anthony and Cleopatra, pp. 531-535.



In the matter of time also, Dryden differs from Shakspeare. In the All for Love, everything is made to happen in a single day, the anniversary of Anthony's birth. This observance of the unity of time was indeed praiseworthy according to seventeenth century standards, which allow <sup>h</sup> chronology and even probability to be disregarded.

In treating Anthony and Cleopatra as his source, Dryden used it with the utmost freedom. Practically all of the first four acts are his own; in fact the whole spirit and character of the work is altered. But Dryden was ~~at~~ not pains to refrain from using whatever Shakspearean phrases that suited him. "Dull Octavia;" "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety?" "She render'd life, Thy name so buried in her;" "The long day's task is done"; and the picture of Cleopatra in her barge are taken directly. But still the plays are very different. Vividness characterizes Anthony and Cleopatra; orderliness characterizes All for Love. In Dryden, "sentiment has largely replaced passion, eloquence has often replaced poetry, and the complex and insoluble characters that Shakspeare accepted from Plutarch have made way for a perfectly intelligible pair of almost conventional tragic lovers!"

Dryden's story begins after the battle of Actium and he limits the story to Alexandria. Caesar does not appear in person, though we still feel his presence as the instrument of punishing justice. Enobarbus, one of the most interesting characters in Shakspeare's play, does not exist for Dryden. No such scene as that on Pompey's galley has been attempted here. All this results in a great simplification in story and character. A great spectacle involving the fates of empires has given way to a story of individuals involving the fortunes of individuals.

As changed by Dryden, the Cleopatra story is very simple. After

having been defeated at Actium, Antony has withdrawn to the temple of Isis, refusing to see Cleopatra and forbidding all to approach him on the pain of death. However, Ventidius comes to him with the offer of twelve legions of Parthian veterans if he will only abandon Cleopatra. He decides to accept the offer, but Cleopatra learns that he intends to leave her, and while pretending to tell him good-by, she lets him know that she has rejected Octavius's offer of two kingdoms if she will betray him. Antony refuses to leave her now. Ventidius then tries again, and has Dolabella come from Caesar with an offer of an honorable reconciliation. When Octavia and Antony's two little daughters also confront him, Antony again resolves to go. But he is afraid to undertake to say farewell to Cleopatra and so sends Dolabella to do it for him. Cleopatra is urged by Alexas to seem to show love for Dolabella. Octavia and Ventidius notice and carry the news to Antony. As Alexas had intended, he becomes mad with jealousy and upbraids Octavia, Cleopatra, and Dolabella. Cleopatra gives up hope and tries to kill herself. Then it is announced that the Egyptian fleet has gone over to the enemy. Alexas to carry out his plan and also to save his life and Cleopatra's, brings Antony the false report of Cleopatra's death. Antony falls upon his sword. Cleopatra arrives in time to give him the last farewell; then she sends for the asp and dies.

As suggested above, Dryden drew upon his own imaginative faculties for the series of incidents that make up the first four acts and also for the incident of Cleopatra's attempt at self-destruction which begins the fifth act. The arrival of Ventidius with his twelve legions, the mission of Dolabella, the meeting of Octavia and Cleopatra

all of these are unhistoric, but are very necessary to the story as Dryden has constructed it. Antony's jealousy of Dolabella is modeled upon his jealousy of Caesar's messenger in Anthony and Cleopatra.

In one or two cases Dryden may have got his material from Plutarch, but in ~~the~~ most of the cases it comes from Shakspeare. In a few cases in which Shakspeare differs from Plutarch, Dryden chooses rather to follow Shakspeare. Antony challenges Caesar to single combat, according to Plutarch, after the successful sally against the Romans. Dryden follows Shakspeare in making it before. In Plutarch, Caesar replies that "Antony has many ways to die"; but as mentioned above this was ambiguously translated in the version of Plutarch that Shakspeare used, so that Shakspeare makes Caesar reply "~~have~~ <sup>other</sup> many ways to die". Dryden does the same thing. In Plutarch, the soldier whom Antony asks to kill him turns his head aside. Eros in Shakspeare, and likewise Ventidius in Dryden, asks Antony to turn his head. It would seem, therefore, to be a correct assumption to say that the only real source of All for Love is Shakspeare's Anthony and Cleopatra. No doubt Dryden did read over the various other accounts of the story, which he mentions in his Preface as his sources, but only in the cases mentioned above in which he follows Plutarch does there seem to be any real use of them as such.

When we first find Antony in All for Love, his spirit has already been broken, and he no longer has within himself the impulse to action. In Shakspeare, we find him the victim of all kinds of self-indulgence, but here he possesses only the passion for Cleopatra. Cleopatra also has undergone a marked change. Here she is an ideal heroine--"compounded of queenly pride and true love". Even Chaucer would

have had to make very few changes in her Character as portrayed by Dryden to make her fit into his list of Cupid's saints. Shakspeare's characters are far more human also. One element does not constitute a human being as Dryden seems to believe judging from his characters. We get a hint at the difference in this brief quotation: "While Shakspeare gave his Cleopatra all the fascinations that were needed to catch Antony in her strong toil of ~~grace~~, he did not suppress the cruelty and deceit and enervation that were cousins to her sensuousness!" To Dryden, on the other hand, Cleopatra was only the true and proud queen-lover.

## CHAPTER V

### TENNYSON'S "DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN"

A number of other dramatic versions of the Cleopatra story have been given, but most of them are by foreign writers and possess in themselves no great literary or dramatic value. Only one more, that by G. Bernard Shaw needs to be mentioned here, as giving an idea of the way in which the present looks at the charming queen.

Before we take up Shaw, however, we must say something about Tennyson's mention of Cleopatra in his Dream of Fair Women. This is only another dream-vision after the manner of Chaucer's Legend of Good Women, to which Tennyson refers in his first stanza. After a long praise of Chaucer's work, Tennyson imagines himself carried away by sleep, and thinks to have "wandered far In an old wood!" After seeing Helen and Iphigenia, each of whom give a short monologue, the dreamer's attention is called for by another:

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,  
One sitting on a crimson scarf unrolled;  
A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes,  
Brow-bound with burning gold.

In the fact that Cleopatra called for the dreamer's attention without waiting for him to notice her of his own accord, we have at the very beginning a hint as to how Tennyson was to regard her. It is interesting to note how well his conception was to coincide with our conception coming later. For the first time, we have a personal description; "a queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes, brow-bound with burning gold!" This verse also gives a hint, broadened in the following verses, that Shakspeare's Anthony and Cleopatra furnished our author with the elements of his story.

And then in the next ~~stanza~~, we have given the secret of Cleopatra's power--the same secret that we find in Shakspeare.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began:  
'I g~~o~~verned men by change, and so I swayed  
All moods!

Her only trouble now is," 'Tis long since I have seen a man!

'Once, like the moon, I made

'The ever-shifting currents of the blood  
According to my humor ebb and flow.  
I have no men to govern in this wood:  
That makes my only wood.

This is carrying Shakspeare's conception of her pretty far, but he would still no doubt recognize here his heroine. It is interesting to note a new tone <sup>also</sup> ~~here~~, a tone which even yet characterizes Cleopatra as a woman with power over man who used her power chiefly for the sake of using it.

One man, however, she could not bend to her will:

'Nay--yet it chafes me that I could not bend ~~me~~ will  
One will; nor tame and tutor with mine eye  
That dull cold-blooded Caesar!

But there's consolation yet--in the thoughts of her great times with Mark Antony.

'We sat as God by God;  
The Nilus would have risen before his time  
And flooded at our nod.

'We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep, and lit  
Lamps which out-burned Canopus. O, my life  
In Egypt! O, the dalliance and the wit,  
The flattery and the strife!

Then we have a close parallel to Shakspeare in these stanzas:

'And the wild kiss, when fresh from war's alarms,  
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,  
My mailed Bacchus leaped into my arms,  
Contented there to die!

'And there he died: and when I heard my name  
Sighed forth with life, I would not brook my fear  
Of the other: with a worm I balked his fame.'

The incident mentioned here in which Anthony, fresh from the war, jumps into the arms of his mistress/has already been mentioned in connection with Shakspeare. Her manner of death is also that of Shakspeare's Cleopatra, whom Tennyson seems to have regarded as sufficient unto herself. He describes her death in ~~these~~ stanzas:

With that she tore her robe apart, and half  
The polished argent of her breast to sight  
Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a laugh,  
Showing the aspic's bite.--

'I died a Queen. The Roman soldier found  
Me lying dead, my crown about my brows,  
A name forever!--lying robed and crowned  
Worthy a Roman spouse!

~~Only one thing we need~~

Only one thing more we need to say about Tennyson's conception: His Cleopatra is modeled directly upon Shakspeare's, and she is intensely interesting, as any Cleopatra must needs be, but she seems to lack the same human appeal and the same human qualities with which Shakspeare has endowed his creature. But then there could be only one Shakspeare!

## CHAPTER VI

### SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA STORY

We can do no more here than mention a few of the side-lights thrown upon Cleopatra's character by several English writers who have dramatized the Julius Caesar and Cleopatra story. Several of these are: 'the Matchless Orinda', who translated Corneille's Pompée in 1678; Colley Cibber, who wrote Caesar in Egypt in 1725, this being a composite of Corneille's French work and of Beaumont and Fletcher's The False One; Bernard Shaw, who treated this subject in his play, Caesar and Cleopatra.

Of all of these, perhaps that of The False One is the best and the most commonly quoted. As the writer has no source for a personal review of the play, and due to the limitations of this paper, he will not go into the story itself. The story has been told by Mr. Furness in his edition of Anthony and Cleopatra, and a lengthy quotation from it may be found there.<sup>a</sup>

The only other account that we need to notice here is that by Mr. Shaw. It is interesting to us only as giving a hint as to the way in which the modern reader, or writer, regards the story of Cleopatra. The heroine at the opening of the story is about as good a characterization of the modern, innocent young "flapper" as one would hope to find. Caesar is not the stern old warrior either, but is just a kind-hearted old gentleman, a friend to helpless girls like Cleopatra, then at the happy age of sixteen. Of course he fights a few battles, but even that is done in good sport--as only Shaw's

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<sup>a</sup>Furness: Variorum Edition: Anthony and Cleopatra: pp. 516-521.



Caesar could **have** done.

What Shaw has done is to make a play in the form of a highly humorous satire on the original story, and his situations, and especially his lines that must provoke to laughter anyone at all well-acquainted with the old story, are doubtless the best things about the play. It is good to read, but its success on the stage is to be doubted. Every word must be read to catch the humor, which is not always so evident as it at first appears, and a few stage directions are all that are really necessary to carry the story along. In fact, there is very little action to the play, and what action is suggested could never be portrayed in the manner in which it is suggested--all the fun, or the sacrilege to some perhaps, would be lost in the actuality of facts.

Imagine for instance a scene like this. Caesar has found Cleopatra in the shadow of the Sphinx, has taken her<sup>to her</sup>/home and made her act the part of the queen, which by the way she likes well enough when she realizes how well authority sits, and has gone to the council-room where Ptolemy, aged ten, sits in state with his counsellors. The scene goes:

Pothinus, The King's treasury is poor, Caesar.

Caesar. Yes: I notice that there is but one chair in it.

Rufio(shouting gruffly).Bring a chair there, some of you, for Caesar.

Ptolemy(rising boyishly to offer his chair). Caesar--

Caesar(kindly). No, no, my boy: that is your chair of state. Sit down.

Caesar and Cleopatra: Act II.

Then Ptolemy says that his sister is not in Alexandria, but Caesar calls her nurse, and she comes in peeping from behind her nurse's skirt. She jerks Ptolemy from the throne and takes it herself, but she becomes jealous of her brother and husband who has taken a position near Caesar, and so insists, very pointedly to be sure, that he exchange positions ~~with her~~

with her.

Though a young girl, she would have no compunction at cutting off her brother's head. Listen to this, because it has to be read aloud to be appreciated:

Britannus. You are Caesar's prisoners, all of you.

Caesar (benevolently) Oh no, no, no. By no means. Caesar's guests, gentlemen.

Cleopatra. Wont you cut their heads off?

Caesar. What! Cut off your brother's head?

Cleopatra. Why not? He would cut off mine, if he got the chance.

Wouldnt you, Ptolemy?

Ptolemy (pale and obstinate). I would. I will, too, when I grow up.

--Act II.

She is already a woman, to her own satisfaction, here too:

Oh yes, yes. You are very sentimental, Caesar; but you are clever; and if you do as I tell you, you will soon learn to govern.

--Act II.

This story is connected in a way with the Antony story, <sup>also</sup> ~~too~~.

Caesar tells Cleopatra that he sent Antony across to help her father regain his throne, after Cleopatra has told Caesar of her love for this "beautiful young man, with strong round arms". And then:

Cleopatra. Would he be my husband, do you think, if I asked him?

Caesar. Very likely.

Cleopatra. But I should not like to ask him. Could you not persuade him to ask me--without knowing that I wanted him to?

--Act II.

In the end, however, when Caesar is leaving for Rome, he does promise to send Antony over to her.

In the next act, the Roman forces are about to be cut off.

In the meanwhile, Apollodorus takes Cleopatra, in a rug, in a boat to Caesar in the parapet. The parapet is then about to be taken. Apollodorus swims for a boat to save the ~~four~~ people there, and Caesar swims after him. He has one of his two men pitch Cleopatra into the sea to him after he has made his dive. She, screaming and the men laughing, ~~she~~ lands near Caesar and is made safe by him.

In Acts IV and V, Caesar conquers the Egyptians, leaves Alex-

andria in the hands of one of his soldiers, and returns to Rome, promising to send to Cleopatra the beautiful man with the white arms.

Such a story! and yet, it is really well to have something at least presumably humorous to conclude such a serious study as most of the ~~rela~~ters of the Cleopatra story have made necessary. There is no great deal of merit about the story as it is here, but it is particularly Shawvian and gives a hint as to the manner in which most twentieth century people regard the legend. Funny? Well, mention the name of Cleopatra to the first person you meet and see if he doesn't laugh! Perhaps Shaw wasn't so far wrong after all.