



CLEOPATRA

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palace. The reception was attended with the most splendid and imposing ceremonies.

One would have supposed that Cleopatra's cruel and unnatural hostility to Octavia might now have been satisfied; but it was not. Antony, while he was at Athens, and doubtless at Cleopatra's instigation, sent a messenger to Rome with a notice of divorcement to Octavia, and with an order that she should leave his house. Octavia obeyed. She went forth from her home, taking the children with her, and bitterly lamenting her cruel destiny.

In the mean time, while all these events had been transpiring in the East, Octavius had been making his preparations for the coming crisis, and was now advancing with a powerful fleet across the sea. He was armed with authority from the Roman Senate and people, for he had obtained from them a decree deposing Antony from his power. The charges made against him all related to misdemeanors and offenses arising out of his connection with Cleopatra. Octavius contrived to get possession of a will which Antony had written before leaving Rome, and which he had placed there in what he supposed a very sacred place of deposit. The custodians who had it in charge replied to Octavius, when he demanded it, that they would not give it to him, but if he wished to take it they would not hinder him. Octavius then took the will, and read it to the Roman Senate. It provided, among other things, that at his death, if his death should happen at Rome, his body should be sent to Alexandria to be given to Cleopatra; and it evinced in other ways a degree of subserviency and devotedness to the Egyptian queen which was considered wholly unworthy of a Roman chief magistrate. Antony was accused, too, of having plundered cities and provinces, to make presents to Cleopatra; of having sent a library of two hundred thousand volumes to her from Pergamus, to replace the one which Julius Caesar had accidentally burned; of having raised her sons, ignoble as their birth was, to high places of trust and power in the Roman government, and of having in many ways compromised the dignity of a Roman officer by his unworthy conduct in reference to her. He used, for example, when presiding at a judicial tribunal, to receive love-letters sent him from Cleopatra, and then at once turn off his attention from the proceedings going forward before him to read the letters.⁴

Sometimes he did this when sitting in the chair of state, giving audience to ambassadors and princes. Cleopatra probably sent these letters in at such times

⁴ These letters, in accordance with the scale of expense and extravagance on which Cleopatra determined that every thing relating to herself and Antony should be done, were engraved on tablets made of onyx, or crystal, or other hard and precious stones.

