

Ferrero's "Greatness and Decline of Rome." By an interesting coincidence the Putnam has brought out during the author's tour in this country the fourth volume of the English translation of "The Greatness and Decline of Rome," by G. G. Coulton...

The last eventful years of Antony's life, including the precise significance of the battle of Actium (B. C. 31), which has generally been misunderstood, will be found on nearly 120 pages. A still more complete account is presented in an appendix. It is customary to impute the famous defeat at Actium to feminine weakness worthy of an Egyptian woman, by which Cleopatra was said by Plutarch and Dion to have been misled in the midst of the conflict.

Let us note then the grounds on which Ferrero dissents from the current judgment of history upon Antony. That Triumvir committed the great crime of suffering, ultimately and definitely, defeat and the consequent loss of his empire, is a fact which cannot be denied. We are reminded, however, that Caesar seems to have passed a very different judgment upon him. Caesar took notice of Antony when the latter was but a youth, gave him encouragement and support during the last campaign in Gaul and confided to him as a lieutenant difficult tasks during the civil war.

On his readmission to Caesar's intimacy Antony became the confidant of the Dictator during the last eight months of the latter's life; he had the knowledge of Caesar's plans and after his assassination was able to seize all Caesar's papers. Our author thinks that probably he was the only man who knew their importance. It is not denied that during the political struggle and the civil wars which followed Caesar's death Antony committed many mistakes, but he emerged triumphant from every contest and on many occasions gave proof of remarkable energy. Credit for the two victories at Philippi was his alone; for Octavianus gave no help when he defeated Cassius in the first and Brutus in the second engagement. Even these ancient historians, severe as they are in their final judgments of him, admit his capacity up to and including the victory of Philippi and place the starting point of his deterioration in the year of B. C. 41-40, when he met Cleopatra at Tarsus. As a matter of fact, however, in the year B. C. 41 he spent but a few months at Alexandria, and at the beginning of the year 40, on the first news that a Parthian army was marching upon Syria, he quitted the enchantress-queen, and for the next three years he only remained absent from Cleopatra, but far from being absorbed in love, his great energies were wholly occupied with his scheme for the conquest of Persia.

Ferrero here directs his attention to a persistent misunderstanding of the facts. The statement has been constantly repeated and is still advanced that Octavianus, afterward to be known as Augustus, was the heir of Julius Caesar in the history of the world and that he completed or performed what his adoptive father had begun or projected. In our author's opinion this is a serious mistake, because it prevents full comprehension of the action of the two rivals during the last civil war. If the true heir to a policy is his predecessor's plans it was through Antony and not through Octavianus that the spirit of Caesar continued to work. During the last two years of the life of Caesar had been preoccupied by political and economic difficulties resulting from the civil war and hoped to find the solution of them in the conquest of Persia. This great enterprise was to restore to his government the imperial force which it had lost by reason of its revolutionary origin; it was also to provide the wealth necessary to avert the fearful economic crisis under which the empire was staggering. At the outset of B. C. 44, when he was assassinated by Brutus, Caesar was working with great energy, not as is generally assumed to reorganize the empire or to crown the monarchy but to prepare for war with the Parthians. Antony had with Caesar's other papers the plans which the Dictator had drawn up for the execution of this enterprise. Others might have carried out Caesar's name and fortune, but Antony had secured his last great scheme. For two years thereafter his attention had been concentrated on the struggle with the conspirators, and

he was unable to put the project into immediate preparation. The political and economic situation had been threatening enough in Caesar's lifetime, and grew more embarrassing after his death. The forces of chaos which Caesar, though with great difficulty, had been able to check were now let loose upon the empire. It was obvious that the confusion could only end in fearful catastrophe unless some one man, some party or some institution could recover some measure of authority over the masses. Such authority Antony hoped to regain by the Persian campaign, and in Ferrero's judgment the mere fact that he entertained such a hope is a striking proof of his energy. "Can the man who was ready to contemplate so vast an enterprise be regarded as nothing more than a sensualist, madly in love with an Egyptian woman? He might have seized, like Octavianus, the highest position by petty intrigue and underhand aggression; he preferred, however, to secure it by means of a great and dangerous exploit."

For two years Antony gathered money, concentrated legions in Asia and remodelled the political map of the East in order to secure wholehearted supporters among the kings and chieftains of Asia Minor. He made every arrangement for the invasion of Persia by the road which Caesar had indicated through Armenia and by which it should be possible to avoid the pitfalls which Crassus had been ensnared. "What is still more extraordinary," says Ferrero, "in a man supposed to be hopelessly enamored of Cleopatra, he even married Octavia, the sister of Octavianus, to avoid the embarrassment of political difficulties at home during his distant campaign." From B. C. 40 to B. C. 37 our author finds it impossible to detect the least influence exerted by Cleopatra upon Antony. He does not assert that all connection between Antony and the Egyptian Queen was broken when he falls in love with her; he maintains that a correspondence with the Triumvir, "Cleopatra, however, is no longer paramount in Antony's life or policy; his attention is now concentrated upon the execution of Caesar's plans, and it is not until the end of B. C. 37 that an unexpected event brings Cleopatra back into his life."

In the spring of the year last named the intrigues of Octavianus had forced Antony to return with his fleet to the shores of southern Italy; there he had wasted at Tarentum months in negotiations with his brother-in-law, and the end of August he could return to Syria. From Corfu, however, he sent Octavia back to Italy, detached one of his lieutenants, Fonteius Capito, to Alexandria, and then betook himself to Antioch, where Cleopatra soon joined him. Ferrero now points out that "at the beginning of B. C. 36 an event takes place at Antioch which was never suspected by Shakespeare, who has depicted this loving couple for us in such glowing colors. The lovers who gave a kingdom for a night were married like two respectable citizens. Our author gives M. Lecomte the credit of elucidating by the study of numismatics this matter, which is left obscure in the narrative of the classical historians. At the beginning of B. C. 36 Antony becomes practically though not avowedly King of Egypt by his marriage with the Queen. "Why," asks Ferrero, "did Antony and Cleopatra resolve to marry? What was the meaning of this strange act? What negotiations preceded its accomplishment?"

It is pronounced not likely that the marriage was the result of precipitate decision, while the complete absence of any information concerning the preparations for it proves that it was secretly arranged. Antony did not divorce Octavia, and therefore had two wives after the beginning of B. C. 36. His marriage is celebrated not at Alexandria, the capital of his future realm, but at Antioch. He shows an obvious anxiety to hide the consequences of his act as far as possible. He does not assume the title of King of Egypt, though he strikes Egyptian coins with his image. Finally, no sooner is the marriage concluded than he leaves his new wife and starts for Persia.

Ferrero submits that Antony must have had several reasons for such extraordinary conduct, reasons which we must attempt to divine by conjecture for want of documentary evidence. Dion informs us that the whole history of the Roman government was by no means popular in Egypt and that she had everything to fear from one of those palace revolutions so frequent under the later Ptolemies. Our author deems it quite possible that she was anxious to protect her power from secret conspiracy with the help of Antony and his legions, and that she had invited him to Alexandria in B. C. 40 in order to propose the marriage which actually took place in B. C. 36. At first Antony realized the incongruity of the proposal, while enjoying, meanwhile, the means of persuasion employed by the Queen, he listened to her arguments with intellect unconvinced. Moreover he was soon recalled to Italy by disturbances at home, and was entirely preoccupied by his great Persian scheme. Cleopatra, however, did not lose courage; her spies and agents would be ever about the Triumvir; her correspondence with him was maintained and she waited her opportunity to advance her proposal once more. Thanks to the financial exigencies of the Persian war she was at that point out that Antony's political preparations for the Persian campaign were hampered by a most serious difficulty, the economic crisis resulting from the last of the civil wars. "A kind of universal bankruptcy had absorbed the stocks of the precious metals throughout the empire, had shattered public and private credit and depreciated securities of every kind. Antony was in acute want of money, as is shown by the coins which he struck at this time, which are almost all debased." Egypt, on the other hand, was extremely rich, and the royal family was in possession of the great treasure in the Mediterranean world which Rome had not yet plundered. Obviously, it would have been most dangerous to plunge into Persia with sixteen legions and without money for their regular payment. Hence Antony probably thought that the treasures of the Ptolemies would be cheaply purchased at the price of marriage.

"Whatever," says Ferrero, "the view of modern historians may be, the fact remains that republican tradition which still very strong in Italy. Antony was aware that a marriage with the Queen was not included in those political expedients to which a representative of Rome might lawfully regard; Italian opinion would have resented him as mad or criminal if he had proclaimed his intention of becoming King of Egypt." For that reason he strove to hide the real purport of his act, and therefore did not divorce Octavia; celebrated his marriage in a Syrian town and avoided using the title of King of Egypt on his coins. The progress of the Persian campaign,

which began in the spring of B. C. 39, was naturally watched with anxiety by Octavianus and his party in Italy. Throughout the summer Octavianus and his friends offered great public sacrifices to the gods for the success of the Roman arms, but they must have secretly longed that Antony's army might be swallowed up like that of Crassus. Antony's triumph would make him master of the situation. Octavianus's secret wishes were but half fulfilled. More fortunate than Crassus, Antony escaped destruction at the hands of the Parthians, but his attempt at the conquest of Persia proved failure. After a prolonged siege of the Median capital he was obliged to retreat without touching the actual territory of the Parthians. The only clear narrative of the war, Plutarch's, is extremely brief and does not enable our author to decide whether Caesar had been mistaken in his estimate of the Parthian power or whether Antony mismanaged the inherited plan of campaign. One thing, however, is patent to Ferrero: "The fact that Octavianus became Augustus was due much more to the Parthians than to his genius. The retreat from Media meant for Antony what the retreat from Russia meant for Napoleon; it marked the beginning of his downfall. Antony himself specially realized that his reputation could only be restored by some brilliant exploit to counterbalance this initial check; but the inconsistent nature of his policy now became pronounced and endangered his position."

Of this fatal inconsistency Octavianus took advantage by sending Antony a detachment of troops for the ostensible purpose of making good the losses incurred in the Persian war. These troops he placed under the guidance of his sister Octavia, Antony's wife. Under the circumstances Antony would be forced to acknowledge which woman was his legal wife, and the dilemma was the more embarrassing because at the same time the demands of Cleopatra became more urgent. In B. C. 36 Cleopatra had acquired an almost clandestine marriage for the reason that she had not then been able to secure any further concession, but her intelligence comprehended that if a second expedition against Persia should be successful Antony would break off his alliance with her and become reconciled to Octavia at the expense of Egypt; he must therefore be forced to accept the offer of Octavia, King of Egypt and to divorce Octavia. Antony's confidence in the success of Caesar's plan of campaign against the Parthians was no longer absolute, and the foundation of a new dynasty in an aggrandized Egyptian empire seemed to him an exploit which might well compensate for the conquest of Persia.

In the end Cleopatra had her way. During the autumn of B. C. 34 Antony made great territorial concessions to Egypt, known as the "Donations of Alexandria," and in the spring of B. C. 32 he sent letters of divorce to Octavia at Rome. The divorce of Octavia inevitably provoked war between the two Triumvirs. In the spring of B. C. 31 their two armies were encamped upon the shores of the Bay of Actium and the two fleets nearly faced one another. The spring and part of the summer, however, were passed in an almost complete inactivity, which was surprising on the part of Antony, who commanded superior forces and from whom a vigorous offensive was expected. At the end of August it was reported that Antony meant to withdraw his army to Egypt without fighting a serious battle; he would pretend to give battle by sea to cover his retreat, but he had resolved to return to Egypt with Cleopatra. Our author believes this report to have been well founded. Repeated delays, indeed, had led Octavianus to suspect that Antony had no intention of attacking but wished merely to retreat. Ferrero holds that Admiral Jurien de la Graviere and Herr Kromayer have proved this to have been really his purpose. But why should Antony wish to retire without fighting when his army and his fleet were more powerful than those of his rival? The historian Dion says that the project to this retreat was inspired by Cleopatra. But again we are constrained to ask why Cleopatra, who was with him the preceding year and had then expended her energies in promoting a war between the Triumvirs, should have come in the course of B. C. 31 to oppose the continuation of hostilities?

This question is answered by Ferrero as follows: Cleopatra had insisted upon the divorce of Octavia in order to compromise Antony and make impossible any repeal of the "Donations of Alexandria." When this object had been attained, when the project to this retreat was inspired by Cleopatra, but again we are constrained to ask why Cleopatra, who was with him the preceding year and had then expended her energies in promoting a war between the Triumvirs, should have come in the course of B. C. 31 to oppose the continuation of hostilities? This question is answered by Ferrero as follows: Cleopatra had insisted upon the divorce of Octavia in order to compromise Antony and make impossible any repeal of the "Donations of Alexandria." When this object had been attained, when the project to this retreat was inspired by Cleopatra, but again we are constrained to ask why Cleopatra, who was with him the preceding year and had then expended her energies in promoting a war between the Triumvirs, should have come in the course of B. C. 31 to oppose the continuation of hostilities?

In a word, while defeat meant Antony's ruin victory meant the triumph of the Roman party, and either result was equally formidable for Cleopatra. On the contrary, if she could persuade Antony to take back his army to Egypt without fighting Octavianus would scarcely venture to attack the royal pair in Egypt; where they could dispose of thirty legions; Antony could assume the official title of King of Egypt and found a new dynasty, abandoning Italy and the European provinces to Octavianus, to the Senate, or to any one who cared to take them.

The realization of Cleopatra's project, however, encountered one obstacle which proved insuperable. Antony's Roman friends required that he either should be reconciled to Octavianus or should crush him. Cleopatra's programme, which contemplated neither peace nor war, would be to them disastrous. Our author's opinion is that the obstacle explains the most obscure points in the campaign, including the quarrels between Antony and Cleopatra, which must have been bitter from time to time if as Pliny says Antony sometimes feared that she would poison him. Ferrero suggests: "This is in no sort of harmony with the love story imagined by ancient writers, but it is entirely consistent with the struggle of political interests which we have described." He goes on to say that it would be most interesting to know by what means Cleopatra obtained the consent of the Triumvir to her Roman project. "The Queen would probably have proved unsuccessful if Antony had not been enfeebled by much fatigue, constant strain and debauchery. Worn out by terrible anxieties, exhausted by work

and pleasure, unassured by the increasing difficulties which the inherent impossibility of his policy presented, he eventually lost his grasp of facts and was carried away by the keen sophisms of Cleopatra to a world of imaginary ideas, where the gravest difficulties seemed to vanish." Antony, however, could not venture to avow his intentions to the Roman nobles with his legions and his suite; he feared the storm of protestation and discussion which such an announcement would provoke. Cleopatra also dreaded the avowal, for she foresaw that it would compel her to sustain a desperate struggle against the Roman party. These fears gave rise to the scheme of a sham naval combat to mask the retreat. Dominated by Cleopatra, Antony seems to have revealed his purpose to none but his chief lieutenant, Canidius, who was ordered to explain his chief's departure (after the event) to the army and to lead it back to Egypt. Then on September 2, 31 B. C., Antony started to retreat in the height of the sea battle; with her little red sailed fleet Cleopatra carried the Triumvir back to Egypt, expecting there to become the King of the country and the successor of the Ptolemies.

This then is one of the distinguishing features of this volume, namely, the author's conclusion that Actium must be removed from the list of the world's great naval battles. It was nothing more or less than a feint, executed to mask one of the most curious and shortsighted of political intrigues. What Antony and Cleopatra had not foreseen was the ensuing formidable explosion of national feeling in the camp of his soldiers. The oversight proved their ruin. In the eyes of his countrymen their General had become a traitor. In irresistible indignation and fury the legions surrendered to Octavianus, who became the object of general admiration and was regarded as a heaven sent deliverer. In the eyes of Italy he was the savior of the world's great empire and the capital. Some time elapsed, however, before he himself comprehended the opportunity which chance had given him. Neither he himself nor his lieutenant, Agrippa, nor any of his friends, realized the true importance of the events that immediately followed Actium.

If Octavianus and his friends were thus unable to understand the events in which they had taken part it is obvious that most contemporaries must have been still further mystified. In the end the conquerors turned to the universal ignorance to account, and with the help of writers who were ready to accept false history the heroic legend of the battle and its three personages was gradually formed: "Cleopatra, longing to conquer Rome, to overwhelm Italy with a flood of Orientals and degrade proud Senators to the infamous posts of eunuchs; Antony, intoxicated by her caresses and delirious from her spells, placing his army and his reputation at the service of her criminal ambition; Octavianus, rising in proud, bold heroism to confront this formidable coalition and save Rome from Oriental servitude." 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