

AUGUSTUS CAESAR'S  
**WORLD**

44 BC TO AD 14



GENEVIEVE FOSTER

*Other books by Genevieve Foster*

Abraham Lincoln's World

George Washington's World

The World of Captain John Smith

The World of Columbus and Sons

The World of William Penn

AUGUSTUS CAESAR'S WORLD



AUGUSTUS

**AUGUSTUS  
CÆSAR'S  
WORLD**

A STORY OF IDEAS AND EVENTS FROM

**B.C. 44 TO 14 A.D.**

ILLUSTRATED BY

THE AUTHOR:

**GENEVIEVE FOSTER**

BEAUTIFUL FEET BOOKS

©Copyright 1947 Genevieve Foster

©Copyright renewed 1975

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without the permission of Beautiful Feet Books.

ISBN -13: 978-0-9643803-2-5

ISBN -10: 0-9643803-2-3





## CONTENTS

### PART I

#### WHEN AUGUSTUS WAS THE SCHOOLBOY OCTAVIUS 1

Telling how Julius Caesar was murdered by his enemies · an astrologer studied the stars and predicted the future · young Octavius tried to avenge his great-uncle's death · Cleopatra, Egypt's beautiful queen, sailed for home with Caesar's small son · the Roman calendar was made, and July was named · Juno's geese saved the Capitol · the Saturnalia was celebrated at our Christmas season · etc.

### PART II

#### WHEN OCTAVIUS WAS THE YOUNG GENERAL OCTAVIAN 61

Telling how Hannukah was celebrated in Jerusalem · Herod, the young governor of Galilee, made himself useful to the Romans and hated by the Jews · Brutus saw a ghost at Philippi, and near-sighted Cassius made a great mistake · Antony fell in love with Cleopatra, and she won a bet with him by swallowing a pearl · Herod fled to Rome, and was made King of the Jews · Jerusalem was besieged and sheep were hoisted over the temple walls · Antony foolishly sailed away from the battle of Actium · Cleopatra found death in a small basket of fruit · Octavian celebrated a three day triumph as master of the Roman world · etc.

### PART III

#### WHEN OCTAVIAN WAS GIVEN THE TITLE OF AUGUSTUS 131

Telling how the Druid priests of Gaul gathered mistletoe from the sacred oak · the primitive Germans and Britains lived · Virgil happened to

write his poem about Aeneas · Father Time swallowed his children, and Mars and the other gods came to be worshipped · a new religion was brought back from Persia by Roman prisoners of war · Sunday and the other six days got their names · Herod built a new Temple for the Jews · Hillel, the great Pharisee, answered an important question · Augustus was made a god · etc.

#### PART IV

##### WHEN AUGUSTUS WAS WORSHIPPED AS A GOD

197

Telling how the Roman emperor was also pharaoh and god of Egypt · "Cleopatra's needles" were moved from the city of the sun · a visit was paid to the sacred crocodile · a picnic was held beneath the famous lighthouse · the Bible was translated into Greek · Greek philosophers answered three puzzling questions · a strangely bright "star" appeared in the sky · Strabo wrote of the world in his geography · the month was named August · the Mayans lived in America · the sun was worshipped by natives of Peru and Japan · silk was carried from China to Rome · the teaching of Lao Tzu and Confucius were remembered in China · the world's oldest sacred book was written, and the caste system began in India · the emperor of China received the wisdom of Buddha · etc.

#### PART V

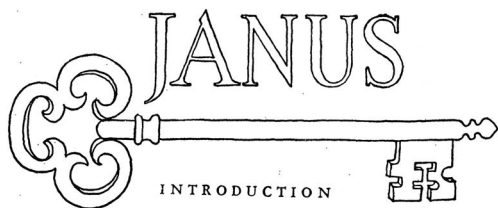
##### WHEN AUGUSTUS WAS HONORED AS THE FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY

275

Telling how the return of the sun in December was celebrated in many lands · Matthew and Luke wrote about the birth of Jesus · Tiberius was finally adopted by Augustus, as his heir · a boy of Nazareth learned about the Hebrew prophets · Hermann became the first German hero · the Passover was celebrated in Jerusalem, and Jesus talked with the wise men · Augustus died, and Tiberius took his place.

Then, looking ahead to the year 29 · how Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, and what he taught his followers · how he was crucified · how Paul carried a new religion to Rome · a new year I was to be established · Roman calendar, and the old Saturnalia, replaced by Christmas





**O**LD JANUS, WHO COULD see two ways at once, both in time and space, was one of the earliest gods of ancient Rome. Guardian spirit of the house door, he also protected the city gate, and was even believed to hold the key to the gates of heaven. A temple to Janus in the market place of Rome always stood open in time of war, but was closed with great ceremony in those rare times when there was peace.

It was for Janus that the first month of our calendar was named.

And since he watched over all openings and beginnings, it seemed right that he should also be here at the opening of this book.

For this is a story of the world, centered in old Rome, during the lifetime of Augustus Caesar, Rome's first emperor, who closed the gates of Janus for the first time in over two hundred years, and established peace and order in the Roman Empire.

That peaceful age had not yet dawned, and Augustus was only Octavius, a boy of eighteen, when our story opens in March, 44 B.C. with the murder of his great-uncle Julius Caesar.

The story tells of the exciting events that followed those fatal Ides of March—of the conspirators, Brutus and Cassius, and what became of them—of Antony and Cleopatra and their famous love affair—of Cicero, the orator, and Virgil, the poet—of Herod, the hated King of Judaea—of Hillel, the wise and patient rabbi—and of Jesus, the boy of Nazareth, who, according to Luke, was born when a decree had gone out "from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed," and was still living in Galilee when the year 14 A.D. brings the life of that first Roman emperor to a close.

We are now almost 2,000 years away from those days when the Roman world was kept in order by Augustus Caesar. What was it like—that ancient world, under the Roman law? How did people live and travel? What did they believe? To what great heroes of the past did they look back? To what Golden Age to come did they look forward? What did they think about the stars and planets? Had they discovered that the earth was round?

And of that far world outside of the Empire on the Mediterranean—What of ancient China, which had recorded 2,000 years of history before Rome was born? And of India? And of those undreamed of continents that would one day be America—were civilized people living there? Or were they like the semi-savages of Britain who painted themselves blue? And what of the rest of Europe—the people in the deep forests of Germany and along the rivers of France—what were their customs and their gods?

And of all the beliefs and customs and superstitions of that ancient world—which ones have we discarded, like that of offering burnt animals to God? Which pleasant ones, like using lights and holly at the Christmas season do we still observe?

And above all, what thoughts and beliefs were there in that old world that will be forever new, and forever will be true, as they have always been true, no matter in what century or in what land or by what race of people they have been spoken?

The answer to some of these questions may be found in this book. For this is not merely a record of events. It tells also what was thought and believed by people everywhere, in that world of Augustus Caesar.

FROM 44 B.C.

TO 14 A.D.



OCTAVIUS



#### UNDER A LUCKY STAR

**O**UT OVER THE GRAYING waters of the Adriatic, a single bright star, the planet Venus, shone in a pale pink evening sky. Inside a house, whose windows faced the sea, young Octavius was curiously but cautiously following his friend Agrippa up a flight of dusty, winding stairs that led to the studio of a Greek astrologer.

It was a winter day, one of the first in that year now known to us as 44 B.C. Octavius was eighteen, and, like most of the other young Roman students there in the Greek college town of Apollonia, he had become interested in astrology.

Study of the stars he felt was the most scientific way of foretelling

the future and discovering the divine will of the gods. Not even examining the liver of an animal, though it united with the soul of the god to whom it had been sacrificed, could compare with astrology.

Octavius and his best friend Agrippa, eager to know what was written for them in the stars, had thus decided to consult the celebrated astrologer. But now, as Octavius climbed the stairs, he hesitated, somewhat fearful of finding out what the future held for him lest it prove to be dismal and discouraging.

How little he knew then, this slim, pale, eighteen-year-old Octavius, that before he had lived another eighteen years, he would be ruler of the Roman empire, the great Augustus Caesar! How preposterous, at this time, that would have sounded.

In 44 B.C. there was no Roman emperor. Rome was a Republic.

And this boy, this future emperor, was not a Caesar. Although he was the grand-nephew of Julius Caesar, the most powerful Roman of the day, his own family name was not Caesar, but Octavius.

As for Augustus! That was not a name at all. It was an adjective, used to describe the holiness of some sacred shrine, or the majesty of Jupiter himself, but never a human being.

So Octavius, being naturally cautious, and likewise fearful that he had not been born under a lucky star, entered rather doubtfully into the presence of the gray-haired astrologer.

In a high room, where he could see the sky, the old man was found squinting over a table of figures, completely surrounded by maps and charts and diagrams. He looked up as the two young Romans entered, the one, sturdy and brown; the other, slim and pale, with delicate, clear-cut, very regular features. Both were dressed, he noted, in expensive togas of the very finest, pure, white wool.

Though scarcely anyone in Apollonia would have failed to recognize Octavius as the favorite nephew of Rome's foremost citizen, if the astrologer knew him, he shrewdly gave no indication of it. Instead, he followed the boy's sharp, keen eyes to a certain map, which he saw had attracted his attention.

It was a map of the universe, believed to be correct. On it, the earth was pictured as standing motionless in the center, while the sun, moon, and five planets revolved about it, all underneath a dome-like heaven, upon which the more distant stars were fixed.

As the astrologer explained the map, he spoke in Greek, the one language, beside their own, which all educated Romans also spoke. Just where the sun, moon and planets were, he continued, at the very hour when a man was born, determined his character and his future.

And was that not reasonable? he argued. Did not the sun have its effect upon the earth? Did not the seasons change as sun, moon and planets moved about the sky? Why, then, should not people also be affected by the heavenly bodies?

"Indeed," said the astrologer, with professional pride, "for centuries people have been guided by this old Chaldean wisdom."

To speak of astrology as "Chaldean wisdom," Octavius knew, came from the fact that it had originated among the Chaldeans or native priests of ancient Babylon. From them, centuries later, the Greeks had learned it, and had now passed it on to the Romans.

Agrippa, having heard enough about the system, was now impatient to see how it worked, so he boldly gave the year, month, day and hour of his birth, whereupon the astrologer named the sign of the zodiac under which Agrippa had been born. Then he started on another rather lengthy explanation.

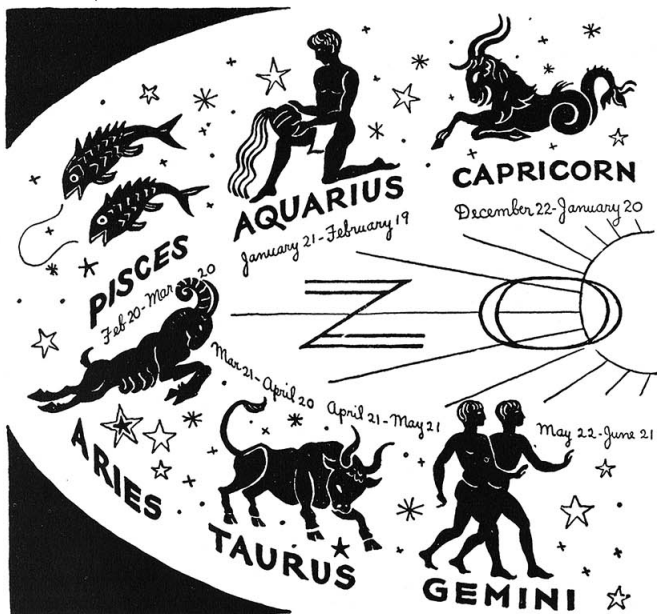
The zodiac, he pointed out, was a band or circular pathway of twelve star patterns, marked out around the heavens, in front of which the sun, moon and planets were continually passing, like stations along the way. Since most of the star patterns had been named for animals, they were all referred to, he said, as the zodiac, or "little animal." It took the sun exactly twelve months to make the round trip through all the twelve star signs, he added in conclusion. Then he turned back to his charts and tables, and having busied himself for some time, predicted for the active young Agrippa a brilliantly successful career.

Though pleased at his friend's good fortune, Octavius's heart sank.

Surely, by comparison, his own future would seem dull indeed. Reluctantly, he gave the necessary dates.

Suddenly, to his amazement, the astrologer looked up with an exclamation of awe and surprise. Then, dropping to his knees, without a word, he threw himself at the feet of Octavius, as before a mighty ruler of the east.

The boy was speechless with astonishment, and, although he did not show it, was still trembling with excitement as he and Agrippa

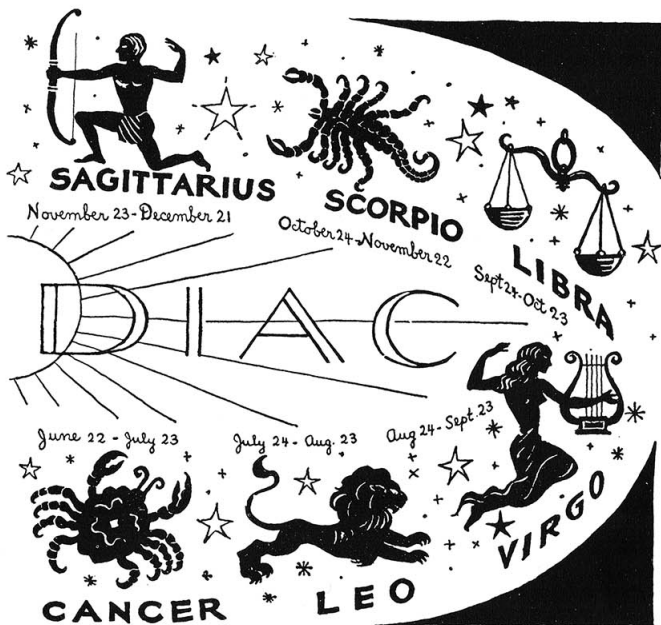


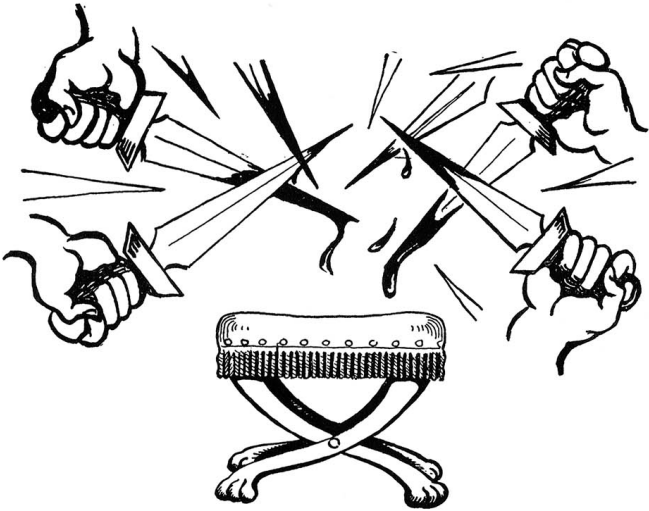


made their way down the winding stairs again, and out under a sky now bright with stars.

What could be the glorious destiny, thought Octavius, that was written for him in those stars? What had the gods in store for him? What did the future hold?

Of one thing only he felt certain: whatever he might become depended upon the tremendous and far-reaching plans of his great-uncle, Julius Caesar.





#### THE IDES OF MARCH

THE IDES OF MARCH HAD COME! Spring was almost here! Octavius was looking for a letter. Each day he was expecting to hear from Julius Caesar that he had left Rome and was on his way to Apollonia. The soldiers, too, waiting on the outskirts of the city, were growing bored with idleness. As soon as the great general arrived, they were ready to break camp, leave Greece behind, and be off to the east on a fierce campaign against Parthia, Rome's last unconquered enemy.

All winter, Octavius had been counting the days ahead. This was to be his first real experience in a foreign war. Now, as the time approached, he was almost as excited as on that proud day in Rome, two

years ago, when he, out of all his young kinsmen, had been chosen by Caesar to ride beside him in his African Triumph.

From that glorious day on, Octavius had looked upon Julius Caesar as his guardian and protector, and had dared to hope that, someday, Caesar might make him his adopted son.

Of his own father, Octavius had but the haziest memory. His stepfather, though a Senator, was not an outstanding man.

But this great-uncle Julius! Never could he remember when his grandmother's bold, brilliant, fascinating brother had not been his hero! As a small boy, long before he had ever seen him, he knew how Caesar had conquered Gaul, invaded Britain, built the big bridges over the Rhine, and fought back the wild Germans. How later he had dared to cross the Rubicon River with an army, though as Governor of Gaul he was forbidden to do so. How he had then marched against his enemies, defeated them all, and become the most powerful man in Rome.

Then, before Octavius had seen him, Caesar was gone again, this time to spend the winter with the Queen of Egypt. But the next year, when he was fourteen, the boy had finally met his hero.

Caesar had come dashing back to Rome from a brief campaign in Asia Minor. With three short words he had summed up his lightning victory "Veni, vidi, vici." "I came, I saw, I conquered," he had told them in his tense, exciting voice.

Two months later, he was off for Africa and another victory. Octavius was ill, and to his great disgust had to be left behind. But after the African Triumph Octavius had followed Caesar into Spain. And now, in this spring of 44 B.C., he was waiting here in Greece, to go east on what he was sure would be his great-uncle's most magnificent and spectacular campaign.

Then, on a day before the end of March, came the shocking news: There would be no campaign.

**JULIUS CAESAR WAS DEAD!**

A message from his mother brought Octavius word of the tragedy. Her letter had been written on the Ides of March, the very day that

us Caesar had been killed. "Killed by his enemies" were her words.

But how, thought Octavius, could such words possibly be true? Yet here they were in his mother's familiar writing.

And there, too, before him in the open courtyard was the dust-covered messenger who had made the trip from Rome in record time. Freedman, he was, a former slave in their family. At first sight of his familiar face, Octavius had felt that he brought dreadful news. This was dreadful beyond belief, beyond imagination.

**JULIUS CAESAR** could not be **DEAD**!

The boy's throat grew tight. Shivering, as a damp breeze whipped the folds of his toga against his thin bare legs, he beckoned to Agrippa. Unable to say a word, he held out the letter and watched his friend scan the message rapidly, angry color mounting on his neck.

"You should go to Rome at once," Agrippa said. His quick mind mapped out a positive course of action. "Take command of these legions that are here, march on Rome and wipe out those enemies of Caesar, all of them, whoever and wherever they may be."

Many of the officers gave the same advice. The loyal soldiers also stood for revenge. As soon as the news spread, as it did, like fire, through the town and camp, they were ready to hunt down and kill with their own hands those cowards who had murdered their great commander.

Octavius kept a cool head. Cautious and not given to rash moves, he was inclined to agree with those who advised him to go slowly, spy on his enemies first, find out who and where they were, and then have them tried for murder according to the law.

Night found the group of young Romans still discussing various suggestions. One of them, as he spoke or listened, kept watching the light from the boat-shaped lamp about which they were gathered play through the huge emerald in his ring.

That was Maecenas, the young art collector. Like Agrippa, he was a special friend of Octavius, and about the same age, though possibly he had been wearing the toga of manhood a few years longer.



"It is highly probable," said Maecenas in his smooth, tactful manner, "that in his will Julius Caesar has named you his heir. If so, you'll want to return quickly to claim your inheritance. However, if you go about it too quickly, you may lose both your inheritance and your head. Who knows what further plan the enemies may have? All relatives of Caesar may well be in danger."

Octavius nodded. He was determined to avenge his great-uncle's death; he intended to claim his inheritance. But at the same time he also wanted to remain alive.

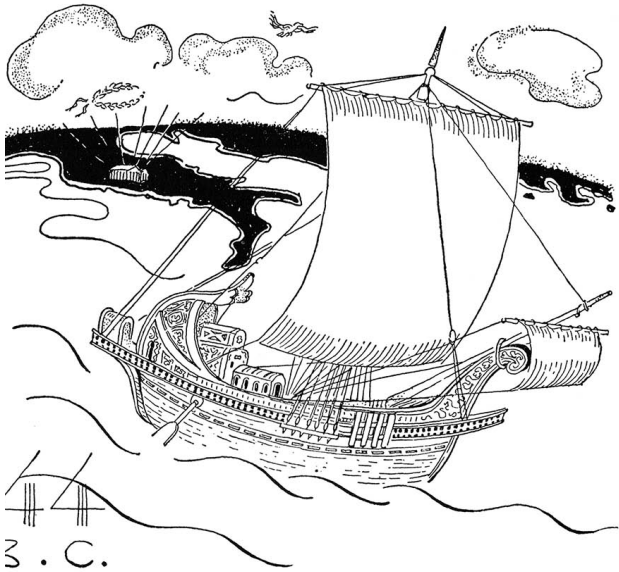
And how should he go about it? That was the bewildering question which he faced.

Toward morning, still awake and tossing on his couch, Octavius thought again of the great destiny that the gods were supposed to have in store for him. Unbelievable as it seemed now, he yet had faith that somehow or other the Divine plan would be carried out and he would be protected.

That faith gave him the courage that he needed.

Early in April he set the day for his departure. First, however, he took great pains to make sure that it was not a date considered dis-astrous (contrary to the stars) to embark upon a journey.

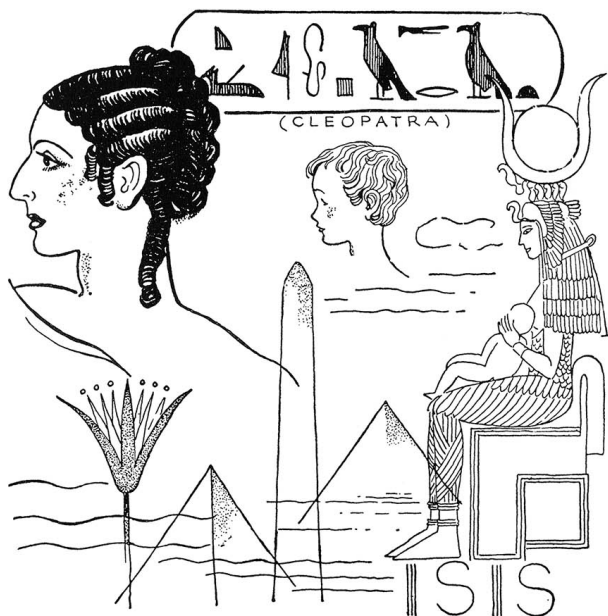
Then, finding the auspices favorable, and bearing the good wishes of his friends, Octavius boarded a ship and set out alone for Italy.



#### CLEOPATRA AND HER SON

**O**N ONE OF THOSE same early April days, as Octavius was nearing Italy, a royal Egyptian galley was leaving the harbor of Rome. On board ship, with a retinue of slaves, guards and attendants, was a beautiful young queen. "The siren of the Nile" people often called her, for she was the enchanting, glamorous, young queen of Egypt, CLEOPATRA.

As her ship pulled out into the bay, one might have seen her standing in the stern, with a tiny boy beside her, taking a last look at Italy.



For a year and a half, Cleopatra had been living there, making her home in Julius Caesar's lovely villa and gardens overlooking the Tiber River. With Caesar dead, and no reason to stay longer, she had now left Rome, and was taking her small son back to Egypt where he had been born. A half sigh escaped her lips as she watched the receding shoreline, and she clasped tighter the small warm hand in hers. Overhead, the sky was bright and high; blue water sparkled in the sun, but for Cleopatra it was no shining day.

Julius Caesar was dead. And with him had died all their dreams—all their plans for a great world empire, to be shared by them together, and inherited by their son. Julius Caesar was dead; he had not lived to found an empire.

"Little Caesar," his son and hers, would never become king of all the earth, though he was now too little to know or care.

Cleopatra smiled down at him. How much he looked like Caesar. Strange that a child of barely three could so resemble a man of fifty-eight! Yet even his walk, as he trudged off with his nurse across the sunny deck, was like his father's. There seemed to be no Ptolemy in him—none of her family in his make-up. He was all Julius Caesar's son. Seated now among the cushions of a golden couch, she watched him play, reliving in memory the summer he was born.

How delighted Julius Caesar had been to have a son! How he had paced about the palace halls in Alexandria, unwilling to leave for Rome until the baby was born—doubting, yet daring to hope that it would be a boy. Four times he had been married before, and his only child had been a daughter. Now, at last, there in Egypt, in that summer of 47, he had had a son. And what a son! Cleopatra smiled to think of Caesar's pride in him, that son who was both royal and divine.

No one of Caesar's Roman wives, she thought, though they might call themselves patricians, could have given Caesar a son of royal blood, for there was no royalty in Rome. Those four wives, the two divorced, the one dead, and the one still married to him, were common mortals, all of them, while she, Cleopatra, had been born into the world's most royal family, the Greek Ptolemies of Egypt.

Her son would rule Egypt as his Greek ancestors had ruled over the native Egyptians, for more than three hundred years. For it was from Alexander the Great, who had conquered Egypt and founded Alexandria, that the first Ptolemy had inherited the throne.

And he would also be hailed, that son of hers, as a Pharaoh, and wear the ten times more ancient crown of the native Pharaohs whose ruined Capitol and gigantic pyramid tombs had been standing years



before Alexander and his general, the first Ptolemy, had come to Egypt.

The gentle motion of the ship, gliding through the blue water, reminded Cleopatra of the houseboat on which she and Caesar had once journeyed leisurely southward up the Nile, to see the remains of that marvelous old civilization. There, falling on their faces before her, the poor native Egyptian fellahins or farmers had greeted Cleopatra, just as their forefathers had hailed the ancient Pharaohs. She remembered the envy on Caesar's face as he saw such homage paid to her as had never been accorded him, the most brilliant, powerful and foremost citizen of Rome.

Rome was a Republic. Roman citizens hated kings. They had the idea that they ruled themselves and chose their leaders. A most ridiculous idea! How could a mob of ignorant, common people take the place of a king, when kings were gods on earth!

She, Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, had been born a goddess. She was the earthly form of the holy mother ISIS. And her son, little Caesar, was actually the son of almighty AMEN, the great god of Egypt. So the high priests had announced to the people at his birth. Julius Caesar, they explained, was merely the human form in which the great god had appeared on earth to wed Cleopatra.

As a hardheaded Roman, Julius Caesar could see how much it inspired the people with awe and respect to believe that their rulers were divine and immortal. He adjusted himself quite readily to the new position, and claimed additional proof of his divinity.

"My own Roman clan, the JULIAN," he had told her, "have a divine ancestor. We are descended from Aeneas of Troy, who was the son of VENUS."

Venus, many believed, was but another name for Isis. Later in Rome, Julius Caesar had built a temple to his ancestor Venus, and had placed in it a statue of her, for which she, Cleopatra, had posed. In those last months of his life, she had been happy to see Caesar begin to dress and act the part of a divine king, and prepare to carry out their dream of empire which had now failed so miserably.

And why had it failed, that dream of theirs?

Cleopatra sat up suddenly, clenching her small fists as if some quick action might yet save the day.

Why had Caesar died, and their dream died with him? Why?

Because, for once in his life, he had not been bold and quick enough, she said to herself.

If only he had not waited to take the final step of declaring himself king until after the campaign in the east, he might have swept the people with him, before his enemies had found time to organize.

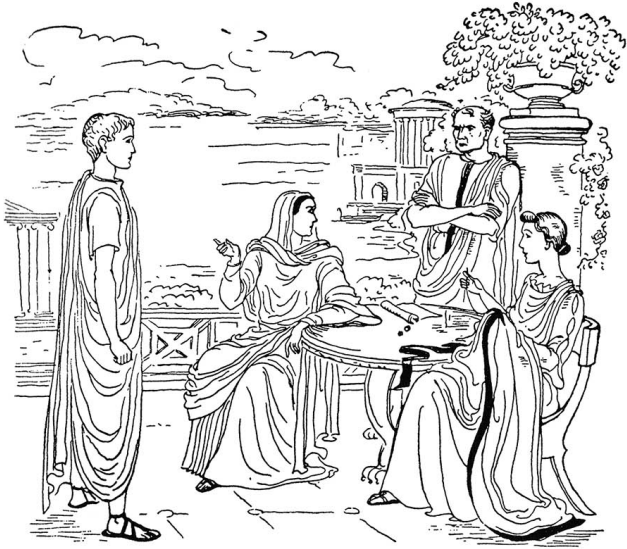
Certainly, if only he had spied out those enemies first, and had them poisoned, as any Ptolemy would have done, he would still be alive. But he had been too generous with his enemies, too ambitious to cover himself with glory in one last victorious campaign, and so now he was dead.

Julius Caesar was dead. And she was on her way back to Egypt with their small son, Caesarion, who had not even been mentioned in his father's will. That Cleopatra understood. Having no empire, Caesar had had nothing to leave his son but money, which, as son also of the richest queen on earth, he did not need.

Caesar had therefore left most of his fortune to his favorite nephew, Octavius. How fond Caesar had been of that boy Octavius! Cleopatra remembered seeing him for the first time, soon after she had come to Rome, riding beside his uncle in the African Triumph. He was a pale-faced young fellow, about six years younger than she was herself. Probably agreeable enough, but he had a nasty complexion and such little mousy teeth! She wondered how he would make out in claiming his inheritance. It would be a dangerous attempt.

To her it looked as if Rome might be in for another civil war. And on this April day, as she sailed for Egypt, it also appeared to Cleopatra that the man most likely to come out on top in the coming struggle was Mark Antony.

It would be wise to keep watch of Antony—he might be of use to her and to Egypt.



#### CAESAR'S ADOPTED SON

**O**CTAVIA WAS MOST unhappy about her brother Octavius. Seated with the family in the garden pergola, where the dappled shade of a rose trellis fell on her brown hair, she was trying to sew. She had hoped that morning to hem the crimson border on a toga she was making for her husband, Marcellus. But she could hardly thread a needle, she was so worried about her brother. He was determined to face the danger.

Nothing they could say seemed to have any effect upon him.

The family had been at Puteoli, their summer villa on the bay of Naples ever since they had hurried out of Rome after the fearful Ides of March. It was now about the twentieth of April.

Octavius had just arrived a day or so before, and had shocked them all with the announcement that he intended to go right on to Rome and carry out the terms of Julius Caesar's will. Though their mother and stepfather kept telling him how dangerous and foolhardy it would be, Octavius remained firm in his purpose. He was determined to claim his inheritance, and to register himself under the new name of Caesar—Julius Caesar Octavian.

The soldiers, he said, were already calling him "Caesar." At the port of Brundisium, the legions waiting to be shipped east on the great campaign had given him a wonderful welcome, and hailed him as their new commander-in-chief, their "imperator."

"Commander-in-chief of Caesar's legions!" exclaimed his mother. "You are too young! You have had almost no military experience."

"Nor any experience in politics," added the stepfather. "You have never held office, and have no power among the people."

"Money buys power," said Octavius. "With my inheritance, I could celebrate Victory Games, in Caesar's honor, and pay the 300 sesterces (\$15.00) which he so generously left in his will to every citizen of Rome. That would certainly give me a following."

At these words spoken so surprisingly like a man, Octavia sent her young brother a swift smile of pride. But her stepfather shook his head in grave misgiving. He said that it would be impossible for Octavius to obtain the money from Mark Antony.

"In his will, Caesar made you his heir and his adopted son, that's true," he said. "But Antony, who was his friend and consul with him this past year, took over Caesar's money the day that he was killed—also all of his papers and records, and since then has been running affairs in Rome with a high hand."

Octavius was listening without a word, so his stepfather went on. "As for the soldiers, Antony is a popular general, the best in Rome, now

that Caesar is dead. Those legions at Brundisium may go over to him, when they find him in Caesar's place."

To this Octavius replied that the legions were loyal to Caesar. They wanted revenge on the men who had murdered him. They would never follow Antony when they found out that he had come to temporary terms with the conspirators and allowed even the ringleaders, Cassius and Brutus, to leave Rome.

"Brutus! That Brutus!" Octavia repeated the name with sadness in her gentle voice. "To think that Brutus, who always seemed so noble and good, should have taken part in that dreadful plot. And Caesar was so fond of him. No wonder he was shocked when Brutus stabbed him. 'Et tu, Brute' was what he said. 'And you, too, Brutus!'"

Octavia sighed, and a tear dropped on the crimson border as she turned back to her sewing. The four fell into silence. Octavius stood beside a marble bench, looking out toward the blue water, in the direction of Pompeii, another Roman summer resort, which a little over a hundred years later the old Volcano Vesuvius was both to ruin and preserve.

"You are determined, then, to go to Rome," said his mother finally, seeing her son's small mouth set in a firm line.

Octavius nodded.

"Then," said his stepfather, "there is nothing further to be said except that it might be well before you leave to see our old friend Cicero. The old gentleman is here now, in Puteoli, at his villa, writing, and giving the two consuls elected for next year lessons in public speaking. It is true that Cicero considered your uncle Julius Caesar a tyrant, and believed that by killing him, Brutus and those others rendered a service to the state. Yet, on the other hand, he loathes and despises Antony. So if he thought it would lessen Antony's power, Cicero might be persuaded to help you."

So, either that day, or the next, Octavius went to call on Cicero, the old Roman orator, who, as it happened, had made his most famous oration the year Octavius was born.



#### CICERO

**C**ICERO HAD NO APPETITE. It was the day after Octavian's visit, and he was a perplexed and baffled man. He took one disinterested peck at the luncheon before him, then nervously took up his pen and scratched off the first words of a letter.

"Oh, my dear Atticus," he wrote, "I fear that the Ides of March have brought me no gain."

He put down the pen again. Resting his forehead in his left hand, he leaned heavily on his elbow, as if his thin neck could no longer support that large cranium of his, now so weighted down with anxiety for the future of Rome.

On the Ides of March, when Caesar had been assassinated, Cicero had believed that the worst was over, that the Roman Republic had been saved, authority would be restored to the Senate, and be back again in the hands of good old conservative republicans.



Alas! Such had not been the case. It seemed that they had rid themselves of one tyrant, only to have another take his place. Every day came fresh word of the outrageous use Mark Antony was making of Caesar's money, and of records forged to further his own ends.

"Wouldn't you think he would have been warned by the fate of Caesar?" Cicero spoke aloud to his accountant reclining on the couch

across the table. At the man's worthless reply, mumbled through a mouthful of asparagus, Cicero, in exasperation, picked up his pen again. Better to talk by letter to his good friend Atticus, he thought.

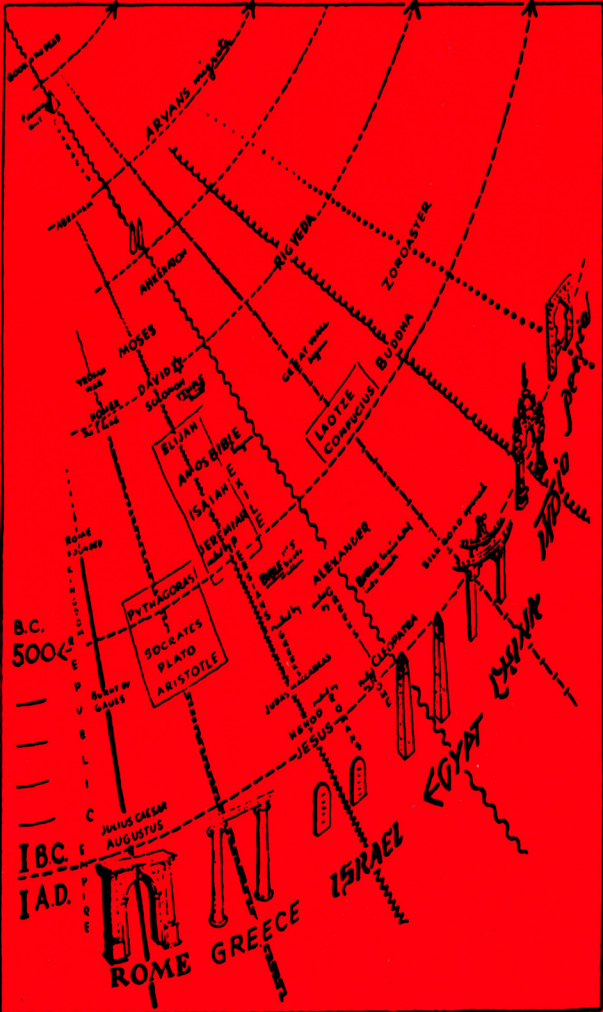
Atticus, besides being his best friend, was also Cicero's publisher. At his thriving establishment in Rome, he kept a large staff of handwriting experts constantly busy turning out copies of Cicero's latest books, for which there was always a great demand. Every few days letters passed between them. After the first paragraph of this letter, which was fairly long, Cicero continued:

"Octavius is here; he is treating me in a very honorable and friendly manner; his followers are saluting him as Caesar; but his stepfather and I refuse to do so. What do you think of that boy going into Rome, where our liberators cannot safely be?"

With a few more sentences, Cicero finished the letter, rolled the sheet of papyrus, tied and sealed it and slipped it into a small tubular case, in which the runner would carry it to Rome.

That done, the old gentleman, laying a napkin over his eyes, settled himself back on his dining couch for a few winks of sleep. But sleep did not come. Anxiety over Rome's uncertain future led to speculation about Octavius, and that brought him back to the subject of a book on which he was at work, *The Nature of the Gods*.

4500 3000 2000 1000 500BC



LOOKING TO THE PAST