

**THE PLAYS OF
SHAKSPEARE: IN
FOURTEEN VOLUMES.
VOL. XII, PP. 1-194**

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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IN FOURTEEN VOLUMES.

VOL. XII.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

CYMBELINE.

LONDON:
L. A. LEWIS, 125, FLEET STREET.
MDCCKLI.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

1944-4 - Henry N. Paul '86

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HISTORICAL NOTICE
OF
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

The composition of this tragedy is assigned by Malone to the date of 1606, although no publication of it has been hitherto discovered anterior to the folio edition of 1623. Some of its incidents are supposed to have been borrowed from a production of Daniel, called 'The Tragedie of Cleopatra,' which was entered on the books of the Stationers' Company in the year 1593. The materials used by Shakspeare were derived from North's translation of Plutarch; and he appears to have been desirous of introducing every incident and person which he found recorded; for when the historian mentions his grandfather Lamprias as his authority for his account of the entertainments of Antony at Alexandria;—in the old copy of this play, in a stage direction, in act i. scene 2. Lamprias, Rannius, and Lucilius enter with the rest, but sustain no share in the dialogue. Of the three plays founded by our author on the history of Plutarch this is the one in which he has least indulged his fancy. His adherence to his authority is minute, and he bestowed little pains in the adaptation of the history to the purposes of the drama, beyond an ingenious, and frequently elegant metrical arrangement of the humble prose of North. The action comprises the events of ten years, com-

mencing with the death of Fulvia, B. C. 40. and terminating with the final overthrow of the Ptolemean dynasty, B. C. 30.

'This play,' says Dr. Johnson, 'keeps curiosity always busy, and the passions always interested. The continual hurry of the action, the variety of incidents, and the quick succession of one personage to another, call the mind forward without intermission from the first act to the last: but the power of delighting is derived principally from the frequent changes of the scene; for except the feminine arts, some of which are too low, which distinguish Cleopatra, no character is very strongly discriminated. Upton, who did not easily miss what he desired to find, has discovered that the language of Antony is, with great skill and learning, made pompous and superb, according to his real practice; but I think his diction not distinguishable from that of others: the most tumid speech in the play is that which Cæsar makes to Octavia. The events, of which the principal are described according to history, are produced without any art of connexion or care of disposition.'

A R G U M E N T .

The government of the eastern provinces, awarded to Antony in the threefold partition of the Roman empire, enables him to indulge without restraint his natural taste for prodigality and dissipation: and the duties of his high office are sacrificed at the shrine of Cleopatra, whose influence is suspended by the maritime superiority of Sextus Pompeius, which recalls her admirer to the capital. A family alliance is here contracted with Octavia, the sister of Cæsar, who becomes the wife of Antony, and accompanies her husband to his seat of government, after the seeming restoration of public tranquillity. The success of Cæsar, who soon after defeats the forces of Pompey, and deprives Lepidus of his share in the triumvirate, at length alarms the effeminate Antony, who provokes the resentment of his powerful rival by his desertion of the amiable Octavia, and his renewed subjugation to the charms of the Egyptian queen. The hostile fleets encounter near the promontory of Actium, where the fortunes of Cæsar prevail, in consequence of the perfidy of Cleopatra, who betakes herself to flight in the midst of the action; and the infatuated Antony, following her example, is compelled to avoid impending captivity by resorting to the alternative of a voluntary death; while Cleopatra is reserved to grace the triumph of her conqueror, whose vigilance she contrives to elude by depriving herself of life by the poison of asps, secretly conveyed to her in a basket of figs.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

M. ANTONY,	}	triumvirs.
OCTAVIUS CÆSAR,		
M. ÆMIL. LEPIDUS,		
SEXTUS POMPEIUS.	}	friends of Antony.
DOMITIUS ENOBARRUS,		
VENTIDIUS,		
EROS,		
SCARUS,		
DECRETAS,		
DEMETRIUS,		
PHILO,		
MECENAS,	}	friends to Cæsar.
AGRIPPA,		
DOLABELLA,		
PROCLERIUS,		
THYREUS.		
GALLUS,	}	friends of Pompey.
MENAS,		
MENECRATES,		
VARRIUS,		
TAURES, lieutenant-general to Cæsar.		
CANIDIUS, lieutenant-general to Antony.		
SILIUS, an officer in Ventidius's army.		
EUPHRONIUS, an ambassador from Antony to Cæsar.		
ALEXAS, MARDIAN, SELEUCUS, and DIOMEDES; attendants on Cleopatra.		
SOOTHSAYER. CLOWN.		
CLEOPATRA, queen of Egypt.		
OCTAVIA, sister to Cæsar, and wife to Antony.		
CHARMIAN,	}	attendants on Cleopatra.
IRAS,		

Officers, Soldiers, Messengers, and other Attendants.

SCENE, dispersed, in several parts of the Roman empire.