

A HISTORIAN IN CICERO:
AD FAMILIARES – P. LICINIUS (?)
APOLLONIUS

In xiii. 16 Cicero commends to Caesar this Apollonius, a freedman of P. Crassus who died at Carrhae. Cicero had first met him in Cilicia and this makes it likely that he had accompanied his patron (or perhaps then his master, if his manumission was by testament) to the East for the Parthian campaign. Subsequently, he seems to have remained in the East for a time, attaching himself to Caesar during the Alexandrian war. In Italy in 45, he planned to join Caesar in Spain, in order to write in Greek a history of his achievements ('res tuae'). This was not his first historical work ('habet usum, iam pridem in eo genere studi litterarumque versatur').

It would be surprising if Crassus' Parthian campaign was not one of the historical topics attempted by Apollonius. It would have been an appropriate act of *pietas* for a man whose *fides* Cicero noted (§ 2). Now, about half of Plutarch's life of Crassus is devoted to this campaign and the vivid and circumstantial account suggests a good source close to the events related. In this the arrival of P. Crassus with 1,000 picked cavalry from Caesar in Gaul is picked out as one of the reasons for M. Crassus' delay in invading Parthia (xvii. 7). Later, the ardour of P. Crassus and his cavalry is said to have induced his father to join battle overhastily (xxiii. 6-7). During the battle of Carrhae P. Crassus is given a special assignment to prevent the Parthian encirclement of the Romans (xxv); he is ambushed and his forces are destroyed in what is, nevertheless, an *aristeia* both on his part and that of his Gallic cavalry (xxv. 7-9); wounded and offered rescue by Hieronymus and Nicomachus of Carrhae, he prefers to die with those he has led to their death and commits suicide (xxv. 12-14). Both the manner of his defeat and his sentiments at the end resemble those of Curio in Africa, as related by Caesar (*BC.* ii. 41-2, esp. 42. 3-4).

The noble portrait of young Crassus and the praise of his Gallic soldiers suggest the ultimate authorship of his freedman, who was also Caesar's friend. M. Crassus is a somewhat pathetic figure, while Cassius is given the credit for shrewd criticisms of Crassus' strategy (xviii. 4; xx. 4; xxiii. 3) and, with the legate Octavius, for the orderly withdrawal of the remnants of the army (xxvii. 7; xxix. 4-5). If Apollonius had been with Crassus' army, he probably owed his escape to Cassius.

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