

CHAPTER V

SELEUCIDS AND PTOLEMIES

ANTIOCHUS AND THE GALLIC INVASIONS

When Seleucus was killed by Ptolemy Ceraunus his field force passed over to his murderer, but there is no evidence that he had brought any of his elephants across the Hellespont into Europe for his attack on Lysimacheia. Loyalty to his cause did not collapse in Asia Minor, and his son Antiochus, who was far off in the East, sent troops to enforce his own authority in Asia Minor. Before long he reached an agreement with Ceraunus. Both kings were soon faced by a common danger in widespread incursions by Gallic tribes, but their personal fates were very different: Antiochus owed his victory over them to his elephants, while Ceraunus lost his life when his elephant was wounded in battle.

Bands of Celtic or Gallic tribes (or 'Galatians' as the Greeks called them) had long been moving about on the northern frontiers of the Balkans, and the storm broke in 279 when three war-bands invaded Macedon and Thrace, plundering the countryside and terrifying the inhabitants. Ceraunus, the Thunderbolt, did not wait to muster all his troops from their winter quarters but rushed to meet the invaders. The result was defeat. Memnon, a local historian of Heraclea, adds a vivid detail: 'Ceraunus was captured alive when the elephant on which he was riding was wounded and threw him.' Justin adds the grisly information that he was decapitated and the Gauls paraded his head on the point of a spear.⁶¹ The Gauls continued to plunder far and wide, leaving Macedon without an effective king for the next two years. A second column was led by Brennus, who demanded danegeld from Gonatas. According to a story in Justin (xxv, 1), Gonatas entertained the envoys regally in order to impress them with his wealth and displayed his elephants in order to frighten them; however, the result was only to sharpen their lust for plunder. In the event, the Gauls penetrated as far south as Delphi, but were ultimately driven out of Greece.

A third Gallic band invaded Thrace and part of it crossed over into Asia Minor which had to endure widespread pillage that reached its peak in 277. But before he could check it, Antiochus, now king of Syria, had other troubles of his own to face. These included a revolt in the Seleucis, the heart of the Seleucid empire on the Orontes, where rebels seized Apamea.⁶² This city, named after Seleucus' wife, was a military base where the Seleucids kept their elephants. As we have seen (p. 98 and n. 48), we really have no clear idea how many they may have had (true, Strabo, xvi, 10, says that Seleucus had 500 at Apamea, but this may derive from the tradition of his '500', and not from an independent source). If Seleucus had only 130 at Ipsus (Tarn's guess) and then captured some of Antigonos' 75 in the battle, a natural wastage (not to mention war casualties) might have reduced this total to less than 100 in the twenty-five years or so since the battle.⁶³ This is pure speculation, since if the '500' elephants which Seleucus had in 301 were anywhere near that figure, then the force that his son Antiochus had at Apamea must have been considerably larger. However, an extraordinary situation develops: this massive force simply disappears from history, since (as will be seen shortly) Antiochus had hastily to summon a mere 20 elephants from Babylon to help him against the Gauls. What happened to it can be only guess-work. The rebels at Apamea seem scarcely likely to have killed them all off. It is possible that in fact some were not at Apamea at all but had been withdrawn to Babylon. Later evidence for the herds of the Seleucids does not help much. Antiochus III had few: he used 10 against the rebel Molon and then apparently got more from India: he had 102 at Raphia in 217 BC (p. 139) and 150 during his eastern expedition, but by his day, some fifty years later, the elephants of Antiochus I would all have died in any case. Nevertheless, whatever the fate of the elephants from Ipsus, Antiochus soon managed to crush the rebellion and regained Seleucis. He then wintered in Sardes, doubtless hoping to deal with the Gauls in the next spring, but he first had to face another trouble: an invasion of Coele-Syria and Damascus by Ptolemy's troops in 276. Leaving his son Seleucus to try to protect Asia Minor, he crossed back over the Taurus mountains and successfully expelled the invaders. Then at last he could deal with the Gauls. A Babylonian Chronicle, which tells of his exploits, records that in the month of Adar (Feb.-Mar.) 275 he received supplies which he had ordered from his satrap in Baby-

lon: these included 20 elephants.⁶⁴ He was now ready to recross the Taurus and face the Gauls.

Battle was joined at an unknown site. The only surviving source to provide any details of it is an unlikely one, the sophist Lucian (*Zeuxis*, 8–11), with the result that there is a tendency among some historians to depreciate his account. But in fact it may go back to a good source (possibly even to Hieronymus), since it contains an item whose authenticity is guaranteed by another reliable source: it records that Antiochus had 16 elephants in the battle, and this modest figure accords well with that given by the Babylonian Chronicle, allowing the loss of four perhaps from fatigue due to the long trek from Babylon. Thus, although not all Lucian's details may be acceptable, his outline of the battle may well have a good pedigree. On the flanks of a phalanx, which was hardly as professionally Macedonian-like as Lucian describes it, the Gauls placed their cavalry, while behind their centre they had a great force of chariots which included 80 scythed-vehicles. Against this Antiochus was lightly armed in view of his hasty preparations, but a skilled tactician, Theodotas of Rhodes, advised him on the placing of his 16 elephants: four on each wing were to engage the Gallic cavalry when it attacked, and the other eight were in front of the centre to deal with the chariots. Neither the Gauls nor, more important, their horses had ever seen elephants: terrified by their trumpeting, by their white tusks gleaming against their dark bodies, and by their trunks which towered over them like hooks, the Gauls and their horses fled even before getting within bowshot and many even tore into their own infantry ranks. The elephants pressed on, trampling, goring and tossing up all who stood in their way. Victory was complete and the Macedonians crowded round Antiochus, hailing him as Kallinikos, glorious in victory, but the king is said to have wept and called out, 'Shame, my men, whose salvation came through these sixteen beasts. If the novelty of their appearance had not struck the enemy with panic, where should we have been?' Antiochus then ordered that the trophy should be engraved with nothing but the figure of an elephant.

This 'elephant victory' as it is usually called did not completely end the Gallic menace in Asia Minor, but it was decisive enough for many cities to honour Antiochus as Saviour (Soter), a title which later became his cult name. It was celebrated in an epic composed by a certain Simonides of Magnesia (*Suda*, s.v.) which

possibly had some influence on Lucian's account of the battle. The battle, and probably the trophy in particular, also furnished themes for sculpture. A well-known terra-cotta statuette from Myrina (pl. VIIb) shows an elephant, with a large mahout on its neck and an empty tower on its back, trampling on a warrior who has a sword in his hand and is recognizable as a Gaul from his oblong shield. An engraved stone, now in the Cabinet of France, shows a similar scene, though here the tower contains two men, while the elephant holds his victim in its trunk. Further, we hear (from Stephanus Byz., s.v. Boura) that an artist named Pytheas of Boura in Achaia painted an elephant on a mural at Pergamum which was later cut away and added to the picture gallery of the kings of Pergamum; this may well have had reference to the battle. Such were some of the smaller memorials to a victory which began to force the Gauls back into the centre of Phrygia where later many settled and became known to us as the Galatians.⁶⁵

THE PTOLEMIES' INDIAN ELEPHANTS

By 275 BC the turmoil stirred up by attempts to win or partition Alexander's empire was dying down and more stable conditions might be expected with the emergence of the three great monarchies of Macedon, Syria and Egypt. The Ptolemies controlled Egypt, Palestine, Cyrene and Cyprus, while the Seleucids held northern Syria, much of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Persia, but one issue continued to keep them at loggerheads, namely control of southern Syria, or Coele-Syria, which was valuable for its maritime potentialities and for its position at the end of the great trade routes to the East. The legal claims of the two dynasts to it may have been fairly equal, and Seleucus and Ptolemy I managed to avoid open conflict on the issue, but on Seleucus' death Ptolemy II took advantage of the embarrassments of the new Syrian king, Antiochus, to extend his influence in Asia Minor and, as we have seen, to advance as far as Damascus, although he was soon driven back. This campaign was the first of a long series of Syrian Wars. Thus in 274 while Magas, Ptolemy's half-brother and viceroy of Cyrenaica, revolted against him, Antiochus took the chance to attack Coele-Syria, but was pushed back by attacks at different points by Ptolemy's fleet. In 272 he made a peace under which he kept Damascus but left all the Phoenician coast to Ptolemy.

It was against this background of wars with the Seleucids, present and to come, that Ptolemy II Philadelphus reviewed his military needs and he clearly gave elephants a high priority, since he began to send out hunting expeditions to the south to obtain beasts which he could use against the Indian elephants of the Seleucids. But before we turn to this theme, we should consider what elephants he already had and how he displayed them in a famous Procession (Pompe) in Alexandria in the 270s.

In 312 Ptolemy I had captured some 43 Indian elephants at Gaza (p. 95) and he conceivably might have increased his stock as a result of the bargaining that had followed Ipsus, but however that may be, he clearly had a moderate number of Indian elephants. This herd presumably declined, since political conditions may have prevented him from obtaining many more from the East to make up for natural losses. Contacts existed between his successor Philadelphus and Asoka, but Alexandrine trade with India was probably not very extensive,⁶⁶ and in any case the transport of elephants by land could have been controlled by the intervening powers. Ptolemy I's original captives may have contained a few females, so that breeding might have added a little to the declining herd, though not in sufficient numbers to make it of use for war purposes. If we allow for loss by death and a few replacements during thirty years, then Philadelphus will have inherited a small number of animals.

Elephants took part in the Procession of extraordinary splendour and wealth which Ptolemy II staged in Alexandria and which was described in detail by the Rhodian historian Callixeinus who wrote a work on Alexandria probably in the later part of the third century: a long extract from it on the Pompe is preserved by Athenaeus (v, 197–208). Often regarded as one of the early celebrations of the festival of the Ptolemaea founded by Philadelphus in honour of his father, it may rather have been a special parade of the Alexandrian Pantheon, staged early in his reign.⁶⁷ Among a vast variety of items a representation of Dionysus returning from India was followed by a long line of various animals, led by 24 chariots drawn by elephants. Later on in the procession came a gold statue of Alexander, flanked by Victory and Athene, carried in a chariot drawn by 'real elephants (*ἀληθινῶν*)'. Are we to understand by this cryptic remark that the first group of elephants were models? (if so, their motive power could have been provided by concealed

camels, as in the case of the story about Semiramis: see p. 35). Such a solution would be acceptable only if Ptolemy had virtually no elephants, but since he apparently did have some it would have been both ludicrous and unnecessary to put such models at the head of an imposing array of live animals (which included lions, leopards, panthers, camels, antelopes, wild asses, ostriches, a bear, a giraffe and a rhinoceros). The contrast made by the use of the word 'real', 'live', 'true' may be with the gold statue of Alexander which the elephants were drawing, or perhaps with the model of an elephant earlier in the procession: this was a figure on a cart on whose back reclined a figure of Dionysus which measured 18 ft and on whose neck sat a $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft Satyr (though Athenaeus does not specifically call this elephant a model, it can hardly have been a live one). Thus on balance the elephants drawing the 24 chariots are likely to have been living animals. But how many to each chariot? Two seems ruled out since the animals that followed are specifically described as being in pairs (*συνωρίδες*), e.g. eight pairs of ostriches. The answer, therefore, seems to be either one or four. One seems more probable in view of what we can surmise about Ptolemy's supply of elephants: if he had 96, he must have imported very many more than we suspect. Further, the statue of Alexander was drawn by elephants (in the plural) and a gold coin, minted in Cyrene between 305 and 285 by Ptolemy I, shows on its reverse a chariot drawn by four elephants, which are clearly Indian (pl. XVc). Thus in the Pompe the gold statue of Alexander was probably accorded the honour of a quadriga, while the 24 chariots had one animal apiece. Chronology suggests that these, like those on the slightly earlier coin, must have been Indians. As we shall see, Ptolemais Theron, the southern port for hunting African elephants, was probably not founded before 270 so that it is unlikely that any African elephants from there would have been available for the Procession. In any case it is perhaps unlikely that they could have been trained sufficiently, at any rate in a short time, to allow them with safety to be paraded through Alexandria. The more teachable Indian elephant must have been the beast used.⁶⁸

HUNTING THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Although the earlier Pharaohs had extended their influence far up the Nile valley, in the Ptolemaic period Egyptian power did not extend further south than around Aswan where lay the semi-Hellenized kingdom of Meroe. The Ptolemies began to cast their eyes towards this region which was rich in gold, iron and elephants. The elephant played an important part in the Meroitic kingdom, as is shown by the frequency with which it is portrayed in sculpture and reliefs. One relief from Musaw-warat es-Sofra shows a king riding on an elephant and a servant kneeling down and apparently holding the end of its trunk; it is noteworthy that in relation to the two humans the figure of the elephant is reasonably small, which seems to confirm that these elephants were the smaller Forest race (see p. 62). At Musaw-warat there is a great complex of buildings, including a temple and colonnade and ramps; it has been suggested that the large enclosures were designed to herd elephants in and the ramps would be easier than steps for them to negotiate. This particular building may be somewhat later, but inscriptions in the adjacent Lion Temple suggest that the temple is early Ptolemaic in date. What matters here is the importance of the elephant in Meroitic culture and that we have representations of it.⁶⁹ (Pl. VIIIa.)

The Ptolemies began to investigate. Either Soter late in his reign or Philadelphus early in his sent an expedition under a man called Philon as far as Meroe. Philon wrote an account of his journey, as did many subsequent Ptolemaic explorers and these accounts survived, to be used by later writers such as Strabo and Pliny. Another source by which first-hand knowledge has survived was the work of Agatharchides *On the Red Sea* which is widely reflected in Diodorus and Strabo (p. 59). Thus we are well informed about many matters, but unfortunately we know no more than the bare fact, recorded by Diodorus (I, 37.5), that Philadelphus led a military expedition into Ethiopia; it probably resulted in his winning the gold mines of Lower Nubia. His interests also embraced the other coast of the Red Sea and trade with Arabia. On the African side, on the coast of the land of the Trogodytes, he established a number of settlements, harbours and stations. About 270 B.C. he sent Satyrus 'to investigate about hunting elephants' and to establish a settlement called Philotera about 100 miles south of Suez. Other foundations crept down to coast as far as Bab el-Mandeb (opposite Aden),

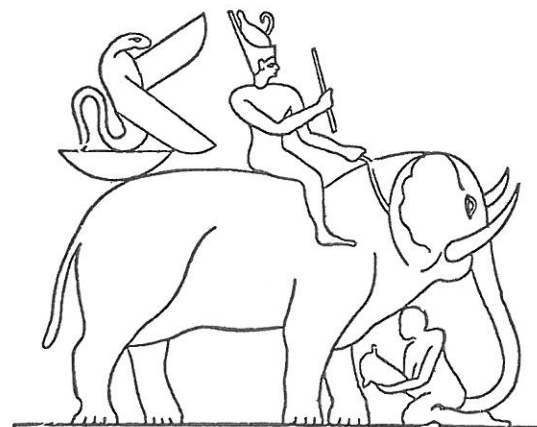


Fig. 11. Relief of a king riding on an elephant from Meroe (Musaw-warat es-Sofra) (P. L. Shinnie, *Meroe*, 1967, fig. 27)

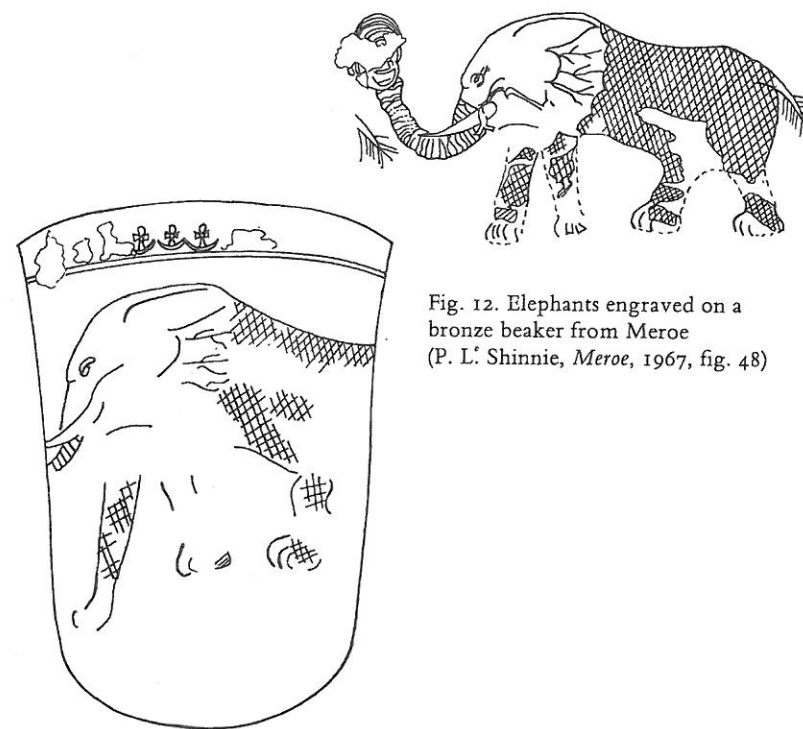


Fig. 12. Elephants engraved on a bronze beaker from Meroe (P. L. Shinnie, *Meroe*, 1967, fig. 48)

many bearing dynastic names: they include Arsinoe 'of the Trogodytes', Berenice, and especially Ptolemais 'of the Elephant Hunts'. This last was founded by a certain Eumedes: an inscription from Pithom records his progress down the Red Sea: 'he built a great city to the king with the illustrious name of the king . . . he made there fields and cultivated them with ploughs and cattle; no such thing took place there from the beginning. He caught elephants in great numbers for the king, and he brought them as marvels to the king, on his transports on the sea.' The leaders of other expeditions are reflected in the names of harbours, promontories and islands in the Red Sea, which are recorded by Strabo: the Harbours of Antiphilus, the Island of Straton, the Altars of Conon, the Look-out Post of Demetrius. We know from a papyrus of c. 255 BC that Demetrius, an official, was in charge of elephant expeditions, so that all these settlements may well be as early as the reign of Philadelphus. They bear vivid witness to the scale of the interest of the early Ptolemies in this area.⁷⁰

Not only had expeditions to be planned and bases established, but elephants also had to be hunted and caught. Diodorus (Agatharchides) preserves a dramatic account of how the native Ethiopians, known as Elephant fighters (Elephantomachoi) went about their hunting. In thickly grown parts of the forest they watched from the tallest trees where the elephants were accustomed to gather and then picked out an isolated individual for a daring attack. When the beast passed under the tree in which the watcher was hiding, he 'seizes its tail with his hands and plants his feet against its left flank; he has hanging from his shoulders an axe, light enough so that a blow may be struck with one hand and yet very sharp, and grasping this in his right hand he hamstringing the elephant's right leg, raining blows upon it and maintaining the position of his own body with his left hand. They bring an astonishing swiftness to bear upon the task, since it is a contest between the two of them for their very lives.' The hamstrung beast then often collapsed on the spot, 'causing the death of the Ethiopian along with his own; sometimes squeezing the man against a rock or tree it crushes him with its weight until it kills him. Sometimes, however, the elephant in its extreme suffering, far from turning on its attacker, flees across the plain, until the man who has set his feet upon it, striking on the same place with his axe, has severed the tendons and paralyzed the beast. And as soon as the beast has fallen

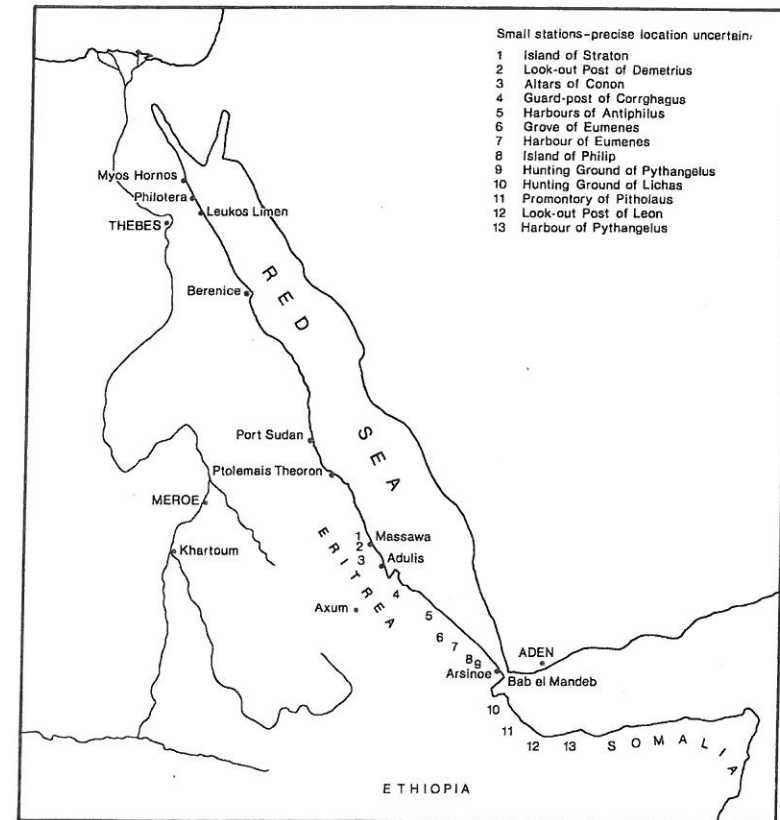


Fig. 13. Elephant hunting stations

they run together in companies, and cutting the flesh off the hind-quarters of the elephant while it is still alive they hold a feast.' This account of hamstringing is perfectly acceptable. Dr Sikes (*op. cit.* p. 307) gives an account of a similar practice used in this area in later times: 'Two or more horsemen armed with sabres would separate an elephant from its herd, riding it off and annoying it. One rider would distract it by attempting to slash off the tip of its trunk while the most skilful of the group would ride to its rear, slip from his horse (sometimes jumping on to the elephant's haunches, sliding down the tail), quickly slashing the tendons of the hind legs. . . . Variations of this technique have been described.'

Diodorus fails to recount a second method of hunting which Agatharchides describes, namely by poisoned arrows. Of a team of three men one held the bow, partly with his foot, while the two others drew the string and aimed at the middle of the elephant's side. The bow with one end resting on the ground must have been very large and powerful. The target is vague. Today the two main shots are the brain shot and the heart shot: the latter is aimed at the side at a point below the ear and near the top of the front leg. Unlike Diodorus, Strabo repeats this method, but assigns two men to the bow and one to the string. Pliny (*NH.* VIII, 8) is vague about the number of men to each bow which was fixed in the ground, but adds that hunting-spears were used instead of arrows and that the wounded beasts were then followed up by the tracks of blood. Agatharchides, Strabo and Diodorus all give a third method of killing, Diodorus at greatest length. Since it was thought that the animals could not lie down to sleep but rested against trees, hunters would note such trees and then nearly saw them through, so that when the animals next leant against them they would fall down; they could then easily kill their quarry since the elephant, it was thought, had a jointless leg and could not get up again. This of course is nonsense (Julius Caesar tells a similar story of how the Germans captured elks in the Hercynian forest), but it could easily have arisen from the fact that elephants often do rub, rest and even sleep against trees; thus hunters would know where to locate their prey.

However, what the Ptolemies wanted was not dead elephants but fighting-fit elephants, as Agatharchides points out when he says that 'Ptolemy urged the hunters to refrain from killing elephants in order that he might have them alive . . . not only did he not persuade them but they said that they would not change their way of life in exchange for the whole kingdom of Egypt': an early cry against the inroads of civilization. We must suppose, therefore, that Ptolemy had to organize his own hunting parties. He might have obtained expert help from the kingdom of Meroë, where the elephant was domesticated and hunting techniques must have been devised. Presumably the corral method of trapping must have been used, as in India and described in some detail by Megasthenes (p. 56). But capture must be followed by breaking in and training, and here we get a hint from a pleasant story in Aelian (*xi*, 25): 'Ptolemy II Philadelphus was presented with a young elephant; it was

brought up where the Greek language was used, and understood those that spoke to it. Up to the time of this particular animal it was believed that elephants only understood the language used by Indians.' This anecdote strongly supports the view that Indian mahouts were imported to help in the training (the men could reach Egypt from India, even though it might be impossible to bring elephants all the way by sea thither). This idea is confirmed by the fact that riders in the course of time came to be called 'Indians', irrespective of origin, and the name remained even when the natives of Africa gained sufficient skill to replace any true Indians. Such a change in riders is shown by later evidence, e.g. a coin and a terracotta vase reveal that the Carthaginians were using some negro drivers in Hannibal's time (pl. XXIIb, & Xa; p. 172 f). The situation can be paralleled from modern times. At the beginning of their experiments to tame the African elephant the Belgians in the Congo obtained Indian mahouts, and the Azande natives learnt the job very competently from these professionals, including the sort of sing-song 'elephant talk' to which Aelian (*xi*, 14) makes reference.⁷¹ As to the age of the quarry, the hunters may of course have gone first for young or immature animals, but if Ptolemy wanted a fighting force soon, some larger beasts would have to be included.

But even when the elephants had been caught and received basic training one more hazard remained: they had to be transported from Eritrea all the way to Alexandria. For this purpose special transport vessels must have been built. Diodorus (*iii*, 40.3) describes how the sea is shallow and greenish from the masses of seaweed under the surface; this was all right for boats which were rowed, but 'the ships which carry the elephants, being of deep draft because of their weight and heavy by reason of their equipment, involve their crews in great and terrible dangers. Since they run under full sail and often are driven before the force of the winds during the night, sometimes they strike the rocks and are wrecked, at other times they run aground on slightly submerged spits. The sailors cannot go over the sides of the ships because the water is deeper than a man's height, and, when in their efforts to rescue their vessel by means of their punt-poles they accomplish nothing, they jettison everything except their provisions.' Thus perhaps some elephant bones were to be found among the carcasses of the ships which Ptolemy specifically ordered should be left, like cenotaphs, as a

Fig. 14. Ornament of an elephant wearing a saddle-cloth from Ptolemaic Alexandria (Bienkowski, *Les Celtes dans les arts mineurs greco-romains*, 1928, fig. 217)

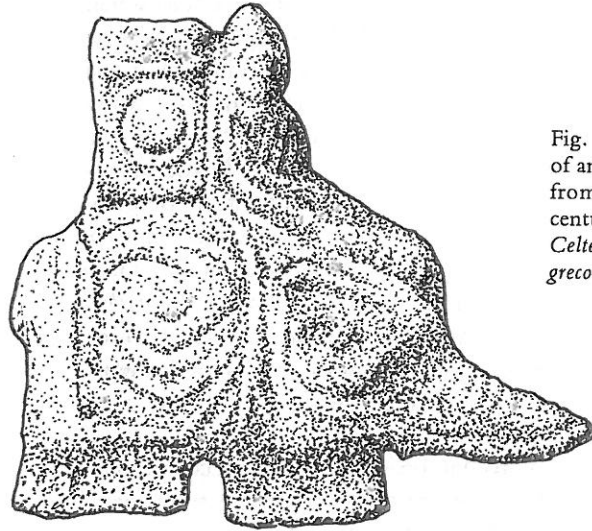
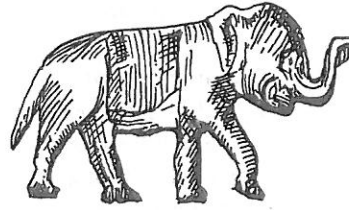


Fig. 15. Clay lamp in the form of an elephant with mahout from Egypt; probably 2nd century BC (Bienkowski, *Les Celtes dans les arts mineurs greco-romains*, 1928, fig. 222)

memorial to their crews and a warning to other sailors. The dangers are reflected in a letter of slightly later date (224 BC) which was sent by some Egyptians in Berenice to their fellows in a station further south.⁷² It tells us that elephant-transport usually took on a return cargo of corn for the outlying stations. In this case the transport had sunk on its journey south, and the letter was written to reassure the men, reporting to them that a new elephant-transport was nearly completed in Berenice and would soon be on its way to them with supplies of corn.

Man and beast alike were no doubt relieved when the sea journey ended and they could land at 'Berenice of the Trogodytes' and then march through the Eastern Desert along the caravan route which Philadelphus developed to Coptos. Here perhaps 'the superin-

tendent of the supply of elephants' took over, at any rate later on, as the organization grew. They were housed in a temporary depot in the Thebaid and had their chief stable at Memphis (*Pap. Petrie*, II, n. 20). Some will have been taken to Alexandria for display in the zoo which Philadelphus established. Not only was 'he passionately fond of the hunting of elephants . . . expending great sums of money on this . . . but he also brought to the knowledge of the Greeks other kinds of animal which had never been seen' (Diod. III, 36.3).

THE ELEPHANTS OF PTOLEMY III AND SELEUCUS II

No detailed continuous narrative of either the Second Syrian War (260–255) or of the Third (246–241) survives: their stories have to be pieced together from scraps of information. The Second War was brought on by the accession of Antiochus II to the Syrian throne and was fought mainly in Asia Minor. With some help from Antigonus Gonatas and from Rhodes, he secured terms in 255 by which Ptolemy restored to him the Phoenician coast. We do not know how many, if any, elephants he used, nor how many Ptolemy opposed to him. In view of the strenuous efforts Ptolemy had been making to build up an elephant-corps, he is likely to have made some use of them in these campaigns, but the figures which survive for his total force inspire little confidence. St Jerome in a passage of his Commentary on the book of Daniel, which derives from the polymath Porphyry, attributes a force of 400 elephants to Philadelphus, while Appian (*Proem.* 10) assigns him 300. It would be interesting to know the earlier derivation of these figures, but they must clearly be rejected: Ptolemy's hunts cannot have been on *that* scale, though the figures testify to the belief that he had a strong corps.⁷³

Fresh trouble broke out when two new kings succeeded to the two kingdoms in 246: Ptolemy III, later called Euergetes, and Seleucus II. It was provoked by the murderous intrigues of Laodice, the repudiated wife of Antiochus II. Ptolemy promptly led an army into Syria in a campaign which ended in one of the greatest military triumphs of his dynasty. This is referred to in Daniel (xi, 7–9): 'But out of a branch of her root [i.e. from the stock of the murdered Berenice of Egypt, who became queen of Syria] shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an

army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north [i.e. of Syria], and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: and shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and their precious vessels of silver and of gold.' Neither Daniel nor Jerome, his commentator, who had previously referred to Philadelphus' alleged 400 beasts, mentions elephants on either side, but this omission is very adequately compensated for by a fascinating inscription which was set up at Adulis (some 30 miles south of Massawa) by one of the officers sent by Ptolemy on elephant-hunts in this area. The original is lost: what we have is the manuscript copy of a transcription made by the monk Cosmas in the sixth century A.D. It runs: 'The Great King, Ptolemy . . . having inherited from his father the kingdom of Egypt and Libya and Syria [i.e. Coele-Syria] and Phoenicia and Cyprus and Lycia and Caria and the Cyclades, set out on a campaign into Asia with infantry and cavalry forces and a naval armament and elephants both Trogodyte and Ethiopic, which his father and he himself first captured from these places, and, bringing them to Egypt, trained them to military use. But having become master of all the country this side of the Euphrates and of Cilicia and Pamphylia and Ionia and the Hellespont and Thrace, and of all the military forces in these countries and of Indian elephants [i.e. of Seleucus], and having made the local dynasts in all these regions his vassals, he crossed the river Euphrates, and having brought under him Mesopotamia and Babylonia and Susiana and Persis and Media, and all the rest as far as Bactria, and having sought out whatever sacred things had been carried off by the Persians from Egypt, and having brought them back with the other treasure from these countries to Egypt, he sent forces through the canals . . .'. Here the inscription, as seen by Cosmas, broke off.⁷⁴

The inscription exaggerates the extent of Ptolemy's territorial advances in the East: he probably advanced to Seleucia on the Tigris and won the support of the eastern satrapies, but not to Bactria.⁷⁵ However, what is said about elephants is likely to be reliable: the fact that the inscription was set up in a town whose inhabitants must have known much about elephants would make falsification less probable. The distinction between Ptolemy's Trogodytic and Ethiopic elephants is interesting and emphasizes local involvement: the Ethiopic elephants presumably were from the inland area of Meroe, while the Trogodytic came from the country nearer the coast and Adulis. Unfortunately, no hint is given

of the number of Seleucus' animals, nor how many Ptolemy got hold of, nor whether he won them by capture in battle, by surrender terms or even seized them in the royal stables at Apamea if any were still there. Two points, however, are very clear: Seleucus must have inherited a considerable force which his grandfather and father presumably had built up after the 'elephant-victory' over the Galatians (unless at that time a large herd had been kept back in Babylon) while Ptolemy, by obtaining them, henceforth had a mixed force of his own African and the acquired Indians.

Satisfied with his victory, or perhaps anxious about conditions in Egypt, Ptolemy hurried home, thus allowing Seleucus to counter-attack in 245 and expel the Egyptian garrisons that had been left behind. Thus Ptolemy's Asiatic empire crumbled and two years later Seleucus invaded Coele-Syria but only to meet defeat by land and sea. By 241 he was ready to accept a peace offer by which Ptolemy received the Syrian coast as far as Seleucia-ad-Orontem. One long-term result of this war was that the Seleucids lost control of the Far East: Diodotus, the satrap of Bactria-Sogdiana asserted his independence, and Bactria became gradually a separate Hellenistic kingdom. Another independent power arose, that of the Parthians, whose era traditionally began in 247. These great movements had their repercussions on the future of elephant warfare: they lay athwart the land supply-lines to India, the source of supply for the Seleucid empire.

Despite the African and Indian elephants that he now possessed Ptolemy Euergetes was not satisfied but continued to send out further expeditions to the South. Diodorus (III, 18.4) expressly records that he was very keen on the hunts and that he sent one of his official Friends named Simmias to reconnoitre the land of the Ichthyophagoi (fish-eaters). Simmias perhaps founded Berenice Panchrysus. Other leaders left their names enshrined in The Island of Philip and The Elephant-hunting Ground (*κυνήγιον*) of Pythangelus, both well north of Bab el-Mandeb; also The Elephant-hunting Ground (*θήρα*) of Lichas, The Promontory of Peitholaus, the Look-out Post of Leon, and The Harbour of Pythangelus, all on the stretch of coast from Bab el-Mandeb to the tip at Ras Guardafui.⁷⁶ Peitholaus and Pythangelus appear to have been sent out under Euergetes, others by his son Philopator who succeeded him in 221; both Pythangelus and his son Ptolemaeus are mentioned as troop-commanders in a papyrus concerning hunts.

Philopator thus continued the policy of his father and grandfather, and it has recently been suggested that he introduced greater organization into a system which had been somewhat casual.⁷⁷ This he is thought to have done because of the elephants he lost in the battle of Raphia in 217, but as we shall see his losses there were not serious and he gained many of his opponent's Indian elephants (p. 142). Nevertheless he pressed on with his hunts which were now entrusted to officials who enjoyed the rank of general (*στρατηγός*). Two of these receive mention. An Acarnanian named Lichas, who left his record in The Elephant-hunting Ground of Lichas and The Altars of Lichas, served at least twice, since in two dedications he refers to himself as 'sent out as general in charge of the elephant-hunts for the second time'. The dedications, which were offered between 215/214 and 209 BC, were made, one to Philopator and his wife Arsinoe and to Serapis and Isis (OGIS, 82), the second to the king and queen and to Dionysus and perhaps to Isis. A second commander was Charimortus, probably an Aetolian. Two of his subordinates are also known, one from a letter to an Aristoboulus named on an ostrakon from the Thebaid; the second (dated after 209 BC; OGIS, 86) is a dedication on behalf of Philopator and Arsinoe and their son to Ares Nikephoros Euagros, the God of War, who gives victory and good hunting, by a man who was 'sent out as second-in-command to Charimortus, the general in charge of the elephant-hunt'. A few graffiti are found scratched on the statues at Abu Simbel by elephant-hunters, e.g. 'Craterus, son of Leucarus, came for elephant-hunting'. As a result of all this activity Philopator must by the end of his reign (203) have possessed a very considerable herd of elephants indeed, but there is little evidence that his successors kept up this pursuit.

These hunters were soldiers, but their precise status is uncertain. Before the time of the battle of Raphia in 217 BC, the army in Egypt consisted of 'Macedonians' and mercenaries; a third class, comprising native Egyptians, was added to meet the threat of Antiochus which culminated at Raphia (p. 139). The 'Macedonians' were the military settlers, the cleruchs, of Graeco-Macedonian origin, who had received grants of land in return for liability for military service when required. They formed the 'regular' army and the phalanx in battle, but they were not adequate alone, especially after years of peace (241-221). They were supplemented by hiring mercenaries: thus at Raphia, where native Egyptians had been recruited

to strengthen the phalanx, the mercenaries formed over one-quarter of the infantry and two-fifths of the cavalry.⁷⁸ Beside the permanent army stationed at Alexandria, garrisons were posted at important points throughout the empire, not least on the Red Sea coast; no doubt the further away from Alexandria they were, the greater would be the use of mercenaries. We have already met the Acarnanian Lichas and Charimortus who was probably an Aetolian. The latter makes a brief but lurid appearance in later history, as the friend and accomplice of the Aetolian Scopas who became very influential in Alexandria and 'aided by the savagery and drunken violence of Charimortus had utterly pillaged the kingdom' (Polybius, XVIII, 55.2). His career culminated in an unsuccessful *coup d'état* in 196 and it is interesting to note that when the king, Ptolemy V, arrested Scopas, he sent a force of 'soldiers and elephants' to surround his house. Was the duty assigned to the elephants to block the escape routes or perhaps even to batter open the house if need be?

Not all elephant-hunters, however, reached the fame of a Charimortus, who incidentally probably perished with his friend Scopas. We learn something of the lower ranks from a papyrus of 223 BC which refers to a Grammateus of the Kynegoi, a Quartermaster of the Hunters. The document records that the Royal Banker of the Apollonopolis nome (Edfus) had been ordered to transfer to the *grammateus* the wages of 231 huntsmen of the company of Andronicus who were going with Pitholaus to Eritrea, namely 2 talents, 1,860 drachmae for three months, or 4 silver obols per man per day. This is very good pay, equivalent to that of a high-grade scribe. It emphasizes the high cost of mounting these expeditions, since, as has been pointed out, the total of this three months' pay would not be covered by the net tax revenue received by the Royal Treasury from the sale of fish for half a year: from a papyrus of 235 BC we learn that the income from this source was a little over 11 talents, but the expenses were virtually 10 talents. And the pay of the hunters must have formed only a limited part of the whole expense involved in these expeditions.⁷⁹

RAPHIA: AFRICANS VERSUS INDIANS

In the year of Philopator's accession, 221 BC, the history of Polybius begins and we have once more something like a connected

narrative of Hellenistic affairs. At this time there was a sudden change of rulers: the kings of the three great Hellenistic kingdoms died and were replaced by younger men. In 223 B C Antiochus III, later known as the Great and now aged about nineteen, succeeded to the Seleucid realm, while in 221 Ptolemy (IV Philopator), aged about twenty-three, and Philip V, at only seventeen, ascended the thrones of Egypt and Macedon respectively. Antiochus lost no time before reopening hostilities with Ptolemy: in 221 he advanced against the fortresses which barred the route into Coele-Syria. But the barrier did not give way at the first attack and when news reached Antiochus that Molon, his governor of Media, was in revolt he broke off the campaign. With Persia and Babylonia soon in Molon's hands, Antiochus hastened to the East in person, crossed the Tigris and brought the rebel to battle. The order on each side was normal, with cavalry on both wings and the main infantry line in the centre. But Antiochus had ten elephants, which he placed at intervals in front of the line. Molon apparently had no elephants, but he had scythed-chariots and these he placed in front of his line, hoping no doubt that the horses would stand up to the elephants opposite them or perhaps intending to send them in between the gaps against Antiochus' infantry line. But a general engagement was averted: although Molon's right wing vigorously engaged its opposite number, his left wing, which faced Antiochus, deserted him and he committed suicide.⁸⁰ It is noteworthy that Antiochus only used ten elephants, whereas three years later he had no less than 102. The reason for this great difference can only be surmised. He may have judged ten to be sufficient or they may have been all he had; if he had a larger force, perhaps part of it was in Syria and could not be brought to bear upon the enemy in time. His father, Seleucus II, had lost most of his elephants to Ptolemy in 246 (p. 134), but even if he had managed to retain a few, at least half of these would have died in the next twenty-five years. During this period he may have acquired some from India: if military demands were not pressing, the prestige and tradition of his house may well have required him to keep a certain number of elephants. If, however, Seleucus had been content to see his herd run down to only ten, then Antiochus must have done some brisk trading with India to raise his force to 102 within four years; in any case he must have acquired a considerable number in this short period; it is improbable that he can have had anything like it in reserve in 221 B C.

In 219 Antiochus returned to the attack on Egypt in the so-called Fourth Syrian War. He swept down the coast of Palestine as far as Tyre, but Ptolemy's forces managed to hold on to Sidon and some of the interior. Neither in this year nor the next did Antiochus attempt to advance on Egypt; instead he entered into futile negotiations which Ptolemy deliberately prolonged in order to gain time. This he used most effectively in a complete overhaul, reorganization and strengthening of his army, with the help of experts from Greece. Beside hiring numerous mercenaries he even incorporated a large number of *native* Egyptians into the phalanx, which then probably comprised 20,000 natives and 5,000 Graeco-Macedonians (this fresh move incidentally led to new social and political pressures). He now was able to put into the field a total force of some 50,000 infantry, 5,000 horse and 73 elephants (Polybius curiously does not mention the elephants when describing the organization of the army at v. 65, but only when they appear in the subsequent battle). Against this army Antiochus led out a force of 62,000 infantry, 6,000 horse and 102 elephants. After resting at Gaza he advanced to the frontier town of Raphia and here on 22 June 217 was fought the largest battle since Ipsus over eighty years earlier.

The disposition and battle-lines of the two sides is indicated in the accompanying diagram (fig. 16) and therefore details need not be repeated here.⁸¹ Both Ptolemy, who was accompanied by his sister-wife Arsinoe, and Antiochus harangued their troops, especially their phalanxes because 'they placed their greatest hopes on them' and then took up positions facing each other, Ptolemy on his left wing and Antiochus on his right. The whole battle, in which Ptolemy's 73 elephants were heavily outnumbered by the 102 of Antiochus, must first be described before any comments are made. It falls into three distinct engagements, which largely succeeded each other in time. First came the fighting on Ptolemy's left wing, where the main struggle of the elephants took place. Antiochus opened the battle by ordering a charge of the 60 elephants on his right wing against the 40 on Ptolemy's left. Polybius writes: 'only some few of Ptolemy's elephants came to close quarters with their opponents, and the men in the towers on the back of these beasts made a gallant fight of it, lunging with their pikes (sarissas) at close quarters and striking each other, while the elephants themselves fought still more brilliantly, using all their strength in the encounter and pushing against each other, forehead

to forehead. The way in which elephants fight is this. With their tusks firmly interlocked and entangled they push against each other with all their might, each trying to force the other to give ground, until the one who proves the strongest pushes aside the other's trunk, and then, when he has once made him turn, he gores him with his tusks as a bull does with his horns. Now most of Ptolemy's elephants were afraid to join battle, as is the habit of African elephants; for unable to stand the smell and the trumpeting of the Indian elephants, and terrified, I suppose, also by their great size and strength, they immediately run away from them before they get near them. This is what happened on the present occasion; and when Ptolemy's elephants were thus thrown into confusion and driven back on their own lines Ptolemy's Agema [a picked force of 2,000 peltasts] gave way under the pressure of the animals.' Meanwhile Antiochus led his cavalry in a sweeping movement outside the elephants and fell on the cavalry commanded by Polycrates on Ptolemy's left wing. At the same time Antiochus' Greek mercenaries, who had originally stood behind his elephants, charged Ptolemy's peltasts and drove them back since their ranks had already been thrown into confusion by the elephant charge. Thus the whole of Ptolemy's left wing began to retreat.

Ptolemy's right wing fared very differently. Here the commander, Echecrates, waited to see the result of the fighting on his left wing and then, when the Ptolemaic elephants were unwilling to attack those opposite them, he ordered the section of Greek mercenaries under Phoxidas between his own units and the Ptolemaic phalanx to attack the enemy in front of them (these would be Arabs, Cissians and Medes, and others). At the same time he himself advanced with his cavalry and the Gauls and Thracians who had been stationed immediately on his left; avoiding the onset of the elephants he led his men on the right round the enemy's left flank and quickly routed the cavalry opposite him, falling on its flank and rear. Meantime Phoxidas had put to flight the Arabs and Medes. Thus Ptolemy's right wing was successful while his left wing was routed. Unfortunately, the role of the elephants is far from clear since Polybius' writing is somewhat obscure. First, it is not obvious which elephants Echecrates saw were unwilling to attack the enemy beasts: were they those on the left wing or those in front of him on the right wing? If the former, then his own elephants may have made some advance and when Polybius says

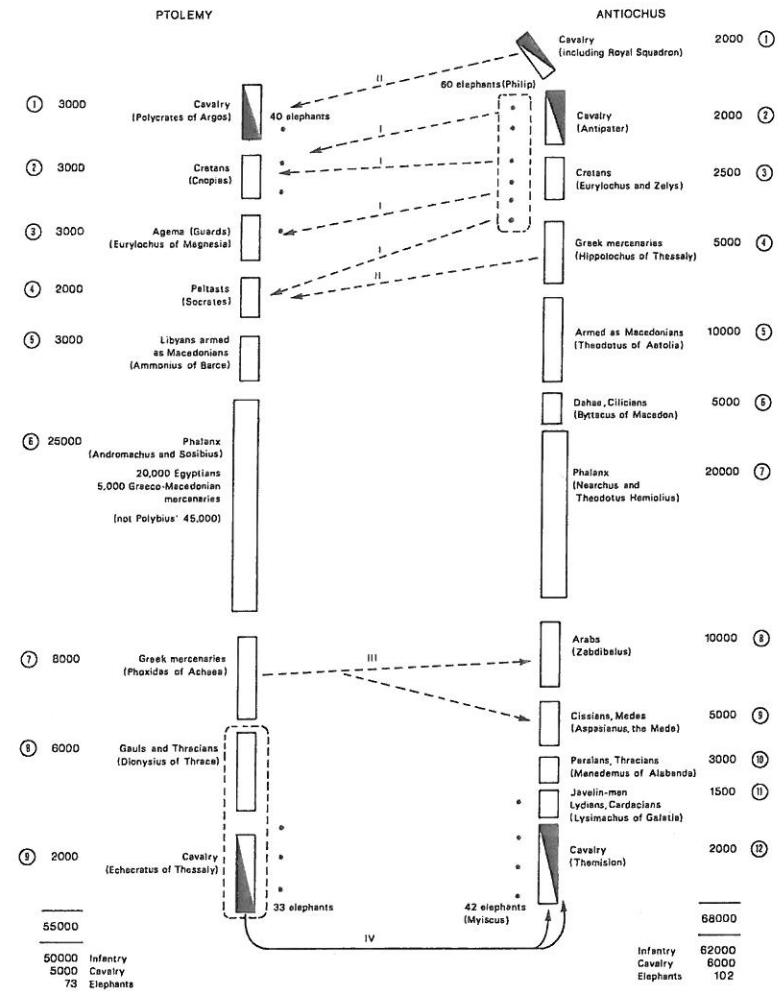


Fig. 16. Battle of Raphia

that his attacking force of cavalry got outside 'the onset' (τῆς ἐφόδου) of the elephants', these would be his own as they advanced. On the other hand, the *ephodos* might mean the line of advance (if they *had* advanced), i.e. his cavalry swept clear to the right and thus avoided the risk of being in the path of either friendly or hostile elephants on this wing. The question is less important because in fact, in the absence of any hint to the contrary, we must suppose that the elephants on this wing did not in fact engage each other.

The two phalanxes in the centre were thus deprived of their wings, but Ptolemy himself, after he had been defeated on his left, had managed to get round to the back of his phalanx and now showed himself to them. Thus inspired his phalanx lowered their sarissas, charged and soon routed their opponents. Meantime, Antiochus in his youthful enthusiasm had been pursuing the defeated Ptolemaic left too far until his older officers pointed out to him that the cloud of dust from the phalanx was moving toward his camp. He tried in vain with his Royal Squadron to gallop back to the battlefield, but it was too late: his whole line was in retreat and he was forced to withdraw to Raphia. His casualties amounted to nearly 10,000 infantry, 300 cavalry and 4,000 prisoners. Ptolemy lost 1,500 infantry and 700 cavalry. The number of elephants lost presents some difficulty since Polybius records that Antiochus lost three in action and two by wounds, while Ptolemy had sixteen killed and most of the rest captured. This clearly does not make sense. Antiochus' defeated army could scarcely have captured nearly sixty, especially as the thirty-three on Ptolemy's right seem not to have gone into action. However, a trilingual inscription from Pithom records the precise opposite: it is a resolution of a synod of Egyptian priests at Memphis, passed in November 217 and commemorating the achievements of Ptolemy and his victory at Raphia, after which 'the king took as a prey much people, and all the elephants'. Thus Polybius must be corrected. One can assume that he misunderstood his source and attributed the losses to the wrong side or that the manuscript of Polybius is wrong, some copyist having accidentally transposed the clauses giving the figures (though admittedly such a transposition is not easily explicable).⁸² In any case it is clear that Ptolemy had not only smashed the projected invasion of Egypt, but in the process he had collected a very large number of elephants, in fact the greater part of one hundred, to add to his own stock.

Polybius' description of the fighting of the elephants is vivid and may well reflect the account by an eye-witness. Further, it seems to be accurate, since it is very similar to a passage written by the great hunter Aloysius Horn: 'two bull elephants nearly full grown were having a fight on a sandbank. The two fighters did not charge each other but with head to head pressed each other back. There were great gaps in the sand caused by the weight and pressure of the fighters as they moved slowly in a circle. Now the younger one

was forced head to ground and seemed fagged out and was bleeding from tusk wounds, and the larger elephant taking advantage of his position now forced his head up and jabbed him fiercely several times with his tusks.'⁸³ Polybius' is the best description in the ancient sources of what happened when elephant met elephant in battle, and it would appear that the tactics were for individuals to seek each other out and a series of duels ensued. At Raphia, however, there was an additional feature since the beasts were equipped with towers containing soldiers. As we have seen, there is no decisive evidence for the use of towers before the time of Pyrrhus. Thereafter Antiochus or one of his predecessors apparently adopted the idea. Ptolemy was forced to follow suit, whether or not his smaller African elephants were well adapted to carrying this extra load (on this see p. 243), simply because if he had not done so, his mahouts would have been skewered by the long sarissas of the enemy: he had to try to give his riders some protection. Since a sarissa was 16 ft long, we may imagine that before two beasts actually interlocked for their duel the men in each tower tried to spear the opposing mahout and soldiers in a kind of joust.

One final point remains: Africans versus Indians. If, as now seems established (p. 62), Ptolemy was using Forest elephants, which are smaller than Indians, then Polybius' statement that they were frightened by the greater bulk of the Indians need no longer be doubted. That they were frightened by their smell, however, is less probable; if hitherto unknown, it *might* have been off-putting, but in fact Ptolemy had some Indians as well as Africans and so the Africans are likely before the battle to have met their fellows in more peaceful surroundings and become accustomed to them (in the London zoo both races live happily in the same elephant-house). But not only is Polybius justified in general, but so are Ptolemy's elephants. It is not always remembered that they were heavily outnumbered: 40 against 60 on the left wing, and 33 against 42 on the right. Further, with towers on, height as well as bulk was important: the men on the taller Indians could strike down at those on the lower beasts. Thus the conduct of those that declined battle is understandable, if not praiseworthy. But some fought with great bravery. Though mere speculation, these could have been the Indians which Ptolemy had inherited from his father: they would then be facing their equals. However, perhaps one should not rob a few Africans of the glory which Polybius, who of course did not

suspect that Ptolemy had any Indians, attributes to them.

After the battle a truce was soon arranged and later a treaty by which Ptolemy received Coele-Syria. Both kings were then concerned with their own affairs: Ptolemy with a 'native problem' in Alexandria, Antiochus with a rebel, Achaëus, in Asia Minor. After crushing Achaëus, Antiochus set off in 212 on an Eastern 'Anabasis' to restore his authority in his more distant provinces. He stormed through Armenia and Parthia, and for two years besieged Bactra (Balkh), the capital of Euthydemus' kingdom in Afghanistan. This war was then ended by mutual agreement: in view of threats from the nomads of the steppes Antiochus recognized Euthydemus as king, gave one of his own daughters to his son in marriage, and received his elephants. He then crossed the Hindu Kush into the Cabal valley where he made a treaty of friendship with the Indian rajah Sophagesenus, from whom he received more elephants, which brought his total to 150 (Polybius, XI, 34). He thus re-established his control in the East and returned home in 205; taking the title of 'Great King', he appeared to his subjects as a second Alexander the Great. He now possessed a new force of elephants which was half as large again as that which he had lost at Raphia. Once more, with good cause, he could place the elephant boldly on the Seleucid coinage (pl. XVIe), while Euthydemus probably replenished his own stock of elephants since later his son Demetrius I was depicted on his own coinage conspicuously wearing an elephant-scalp (pl. XVIg).

The death of Ptolemy IV in mysterious circumstances (probably in 204) led to an outburst of intrigue and murder in attempts to gain control over his successor, Ptolemy V Epiphanes, a young boy, while a native rising erupted in the Delta. At the same time Antiochus entered into a secret agreement with Philip V of Macedonia to rob Egypt of its foreign possessions; as will be seen, when the Roman Senate ultimately got wind of this pact, its suspicions before long plunged Rome into Eastern affairs which henceforth became inextricably enmeshed with the Western world. Meanwhile, in 202-201 Antiochus started the Fifth Syrian War by a fresh invasion of Coele-Syria. After some fluctuations of fortune and a siege of Gaza he defeated the Ptolemaic army, led by the Aetolian Scopas, in a battle at Panium near the sources of the Jordan (probably in 200). Ptolemy V accepted defeat and ceded Coele-Syria to Antiochus. In these campaigns elephants played a part, but unfortu-

nately Polybius' account is almost entirely lost. However, he does refer to the historical work of a contemporary, Zeno of Rhodes, which he criticizes very sharply; in fact he wrote to Zeno personally to point out some topographical errors (Pol. XVI, 14ff.). Another of Zeno's alleged failings was to sacrifice factual accuracy to ostentatious writing: Polybius demonstrates this by criticizing his account of the battle of Panium (XVI, 18f.) in which Antiochus put his elephants at intervals in front of his phalanx, with archers and slingers in the gaps. But later in the account the elephants are found behind the phalanx since they received the line when it retreated and then charged the enemy. Further, according to Zeno, the unaccustomed sight of the elephants threw Ptolemy's cavalry into panic, but Polybius asserts that Zeno's disposition of the cavalry did not allow them to face the elephants. It is impossible to try to reconstruct the battle from such pieces of criticism (whose validity we cannot judge), but clearly elephants played an important part, at least on Antiochus' side. The reference to Ptolemy's cavalry might suggest that there were no elephants on his side, but it would be strange if, when he himself had a large force, he did not send part of it against Antiochus' corps which was potentially 150 strong. At any rate the battle of Panium marked a decisive stage in Syro-Egyptian relations and hereafter the Seleucids retained Coele-Syria. After this if either monarch intended to use his elephants as an instrument of foreign policy, he would have to reckon with Rome: indeed within little more than ten years Antiochus was deploying his elephants against Roman legions.