

coastlands² will oppose him, and he will lose heart." These words are a prediction of one of the most dramatic events in ancient history. Antiochus had followed his previous line of attack. With Pelusium as a base, he entered Egypt somewhat to the south of Alexandria, where his two nephews were busily making preparations for resistance preparations that appeared doomed to failure. All Egypt lay before him and could be overrun fairly easily.

At this juncture Antiochus heard that his camp was being approached by an embassy from Rome. The incident that followed was one that many Romans liked to remember.

The embassy was led by Gaius Popillius Laenas, with whom Antiochus had been on friendly terms when both were young men in Rome. Antiochus went out to meet Laenas, expecting to revive the former comradeship. But Laenas greeted him coldly, with no sign of friendship or affability, and handed him a tablet saying: "I have a message for you from the Roman senate." Antiochus said: "Let's have dinner and talk over old times, and then I will read the message." Laenas answered: "The message must be read immediately." Antiochus looked at the tablet and found that it contained a demand by the Roman senate that he immediately withdraw all his troops from Egypt, He said: "I will have to consider this and discuss it with some of my friends."

Laenas immediately drew a circle around Antiochus with a vinestick and said: "You may consider as long as you remain in this circle."

Seeing the determination of the Roman envoy and remembering the terrible disasters that had befallen his father when he opposed Rome Antiochus immediately said: "Well, that's different. Of course I'll do what the Roman senate asks." Immediately Laenas' whole manner changed. He now greeted Antiochus as an old friend.

Antiochus tried to conceal his irritation. He gave a banquet in honor of the Roman envoys and ordered his troops to leave Egypt at once. Soon he sent to the Romans and to heads of all the eastern nations invitations to be his guests at a series of great festivals in Syria.