

ALEXANDER IN BABYLON.
A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

BY H. A.

PERSONAE:

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.
HEPHAESTION, Alexander's favorite and Poet.
NEARCHUS, Alexander's Admiral.
CRATERUS, Captain of Alexander's bodyguard.
PTOLEMY, a General.
PROMACHUS, a Soldier.
ONESICRITUS, a Cynic Philosopher.
CASSANDER, son of Antipater, the regent of Macedon.
IOLAUS, Alexander's Cupbearer and Cassander's brother.
ARISTANDER, a Greek Diviner.
KIDINNU, a Chaldean Astrologer.
CALANUS, a Gymnosophist.
SISIMITHRES, a Magian.
ROXANA, a Medic princess, wife of Alexander.
STATIRA, daughter of Darius Codomannus.
RACHEL, a Jewish slave, servant to Roxana.
Orientals, Bacchanals, Greek Soldiers, Dancers, Singers, Servants,
Persian Youths of Alexander's bodyguard.

ACT I.

SCENE: A Street in Babylon. On either hand are flat-topped houses with balconied windows, the parapets of the houses and the balconies gay with the carpets of Babylon. Beneath the balconies, lining the street, are the party-colored shops of Oriental merchants. In the background is a temple wall, bright with encaustic tiling—brilliant rosettes and mythic monsters; while beyond the wall rise the seven stages of a pyramidal temple, each stage of a different color, with a golden *sikkurat* shining at the top.

People are to be seen everywhere, shopkeepers, women at the balconies, crowding street and parapet—Babylonian Semites in gorgeously woven and fringed robes, hair and beard curled; Medes with baggy trousers, pointed shoes and gay vests; Persians in long tunics, with bright sashes and

conical turbans; men of the desert in brown camel's hair robes; Ethiopians in leopard skin, and Hindus in linen; Greeks in light tunics with chaplets of flowers on their heads or with helmet and cuirass, sword and spear. The street is filled with the murmur of the multitudinous gaiety of the world's greatest city.

Cymbals and tambours are heard, and into view there sweeps a rout of Bacchanals, youths and maidens, crowned with the vine, thyrsus wands in their hands; some with the skin of a fawn about them, some Satyr-like in goatskins. To their wild music they leap and cry in mad exaltation, chanting the dithyramb of the god:

BACCHANALS (*singing*): Evoë! Evoë! Evoë! Evoë!

Oh, the tyrannous flute and the ivy vine,
And the whirl of the dance and the madness of wine.
And thou art mine and I am thine—
Io Pæan! Dionyse!

Bacchus! Bacchus! Nysa's son,
Babe and man and god in one,
Harken to thy Bacchanals!

Bacchus! Bacchus! Leopard Lord,
Smite us with thy vinèd sword—
Let our blood with thine be poured!

Bacchus! Bacchus! Out of Ind
Thou dost sweep us like a wind,
Singing loud, thy Bacchanals!

Evoë! Evoë! Evoë! Evoë!
Oh, the flute of the god is a tyrant flute.
And none can stay and none be mute
While timbrel clash and sounding lute
Sing Pæan! Dionyse!

Flagons of wine are handed down from balcony and shop to the dancers, as they sweep onward, to the clamorous applause of the crowd, many of whom follow them. As the Bacchanals pass, from another direction Nearchus, the admiral, browned from the southern seas, and Cassander, dressed in the simplest Macedonian style, enter together. They look for a moment after the vanishing Bacchanals.

CASSANDER: By Heracles, Nearchus, am I blind?

Gone sight-bewitched? Are these our conquering Greeks?
At home I've seen their kind, weak-witted fools.
Alike unsteady o' the heel and head.

Out with their Thracian women. But soldiers—never!
 Oh, for a fall of Macedonian snow
 To clear my blood of this sense-blistering heat!
 Show me a soldier.

NEARCHUS: I am but fresh from the sea
 As you from Macedon, my good Cassander,
 And my wits, too, be dazzled. Yet I think
 That yonder comes your hero, scarred with wounds
 Of twenty battles, and drunk as Silenus.

Enter Promachus, in full armor, but carrying a golden Oriental drinking-flagon in place of weapon. He moves along sturdily drunk. Beside him is Onesicritus, in gorgeous Oriental robe, much wine-stained.

CASSANDER: Promachus, as I live!

PROMACHUS: Who calls Promachus?

(To a wine merchant:)

Here, fill me up this flagon with red juice
 Till I recharge the veins that India's suns
 Have sucked and dry-sucked.

(He drinks.)

I'll thicken my blood with red.

ONESICRITUS: And thicker thicken thine o'erthickened tongue
 Until it match thine ever thicker head.

PROMACHUS: Who calls Promachus?

CASSANDER: It is I, Cassander,
 New from Macedon: and right glad I am
 To greet a comrade whose bright wounds do tell
 Better than words the tale that all the world
 Is loud with.

ONESICRITUS: The world, is 't? and what know you
 Of the thing the Sophists call the world? Not you,
 Nor I, nor he, the King, can know the world!
 The world, indeed!

NEARCHUS: Nay, not so blank, Cassander,
 'Tis but another kind of madman—pup
 Of the dog Diogenes, who loved the sun

More than Alexander. Since the sire dog's dead,
The King hath brought this cur to sun himself
In the sun's own pot. 'Tis Onesicritus.

ONESICRITUS: Nearchus sweats, not Onesicritus.
Observe, Cassander.

CASSANDER: But what of the King?
Promachus, tell me of the King?

PROMACHUS: There is no King—
There is a god that rides out of the East—
By Bacchus, yes!—and his name is Alexander.

(He sings:)

“Bacchus, Bacchus! Out of Ind
“Thou dost sweep us like a wind. . . .”

(Exit, drunkenly.)

ONESICRITUS: In Athens, know, Cassander, Cynics wear
The rags of freemen. Here Onesicritus,
The Cynic, wears the silks of Persian slaves.
Greece bore as king whom Asia bears as god—
Twy-born, like him that made Olympus drunk.
And e'en Cassander, come to Babylon,
Would bid farewell to stony Macedon—
Were his head no thicker than Promachus' head,
Whose heels I follow. Fare ye well.

(Follows Promachus.)

CASSANDER: What dogs—
These riddle-mongering philosophers!
I'd pluck their beards!

NEARCHUS: But Alexander loves them,
As he loves Chaldæans, Magi and the black
Gymnosophists he brings from Ganges' bank,
Naked of wisdom as of covering.

Enter Craterus with a company of soldiers, clearing the streets as they advance.

NEARCHUS: Ho, Craterus! Well met, comrade, well met!
And here's Cassander, thirsty for the news
As we for water when we crossed the desert.

CRATERUS: Aye, so we went, Nearchus—not so returned.

While you were skirting the Erythrean coasts
 With sail and oar, we passed Gedrosia:
 And seven days through broad Carmania
 Journeyed like gods. In chariots bright with gold,
 O'er flower-strewn paths were dancing mænads sang
 To pipe and timbrel, on we came: our gear,
 Flagon and goblet and Thericlean cup
 For wine, wine, wine, outpoured in red libation!
 The soldier's battered tools, targe, helm and spear,
 Were flung aside; fair hands wove chaplets fair,
 And like a king was every warrior crowned.
 The King himself was liker to a god,
 High on a shining car, by coursers drawn,
 Each second only to Bucephalus.
 He bore an ivied scepter in his hand,
 And smiled his pleasure when Hephæstion,
 His best-beloved, sang with immortal grace.
 Oh, all the world bent willing head and knees
 Before the majesty of Alexander! . . .
 So came the King from India; so comes here.

Blare of trumpets is heard from a distance. Enter Kidinnu and Aristander, who set up their divining-stalls before the temple wall, Kidinnu an astrologer's sand-box, in which he draws the houses of the heavens, Aristander, in purple, a tripod for incense.

CRATERUS (*in a loud voice*):

Way for the King! 'Tis Alexander comes!

The Soldiers clear the way, while the Orientals crowd behind them. Trumpets are heard again, and again the song of the Bacchanals.

BACCHANALS: Evoë! Evoë! Evoë! Evoë!

Oh, the tyrannous flute and the ivy vine,
 And the whirl of the dance and the madness of wine,
 And thou art mine and I am thine!
 Io Pæan! Dionyse!

The rout of Bacchanals sweep by once more, singing and dancing. Following them comes Hephæstion, in a long party-colored tunic, garlanded with flowers and bearing an ivied thyrsus wand in his hand. He moves as with inspired grace.

HEPHAESTION (*as in adoration*):

Thou gracious Sun, who givest us the grape

To burst in wine red-ripe upon the tongue,
 O give us ruddied life's divinest measure!
 Till all the world shall be a brimming cup
 Fulfilled with light, as daily thou fill'st up
 Earth's mountain-walled bowl with sunny treasure!

Hephæstion turns from an attitude of adoration to the sun toward the direction from whence he came, as if transferring his praise from the ruler of the heavens to the earthly ruler who approaches. Women enter spreading Eastern carpets; trumpeters and soldiers, then Alexander, mounted upon Bucephalus.

HEPHAESTION: The Sun is king, the King is all my sun:
 One lights the world which by the other's won!

The Orientals prostrate themselves; the Greeks lift their plumed helmets on their spears, and flash shield and sword, while the trumpets sound once more. Alexander comes to the side of Hephæstion, whom he regards with a whimsically gracious smile, while the latter kisses the King's foot.

ALEXANDER: Nay, nay, Hephæstion mine, divinely mad
 As every poet is! Were I to drink
 Thy praise, as thou hast drunk the soul of Bacchus,
 I, too, would be a madman—and a god!
 But who more heedless than the coursing Sun
 Of Alexander's course? Forefend us Heaven,
 Lest sin of pride poison our pulsing glory!

HEPHAESTION: To-day, to-day, the Bacchus in my veins
 Fills me with mantic fire! No more I see
 The King—but Alexander, earth's divinity!

ALEXANDER (*smiling, as he turns to Nearchus and Cassander*):
 Mine eyes are better visioned; I see men.
 Nearchus, my stout admiral, is it thou,
 Safe from the southern seas? And here, indeed,
 Is one that's welcome, son of Antipater—
 Tell me the news, Cassander. Do the winds
 Blow as of yore in hilly Macedon?

CASSANDER: First, that the world hath heard of Macedon:
 Gauls and Iberians, proud Tyrrhenian kings
 Send from the distant West their richest gifts
 To mix with Egypt's gold and India's gems

In tribute to the King—and to his men,
 Those men of Macedonia who have made
 Their name and his the noise of all the world.
 Second, the quarrels of women. Olympias,
 Thy royal mother, conspired with Cleopatra,
 Rebel against my father and divide
 Thy natal kingdom, whereof Olympias takes
 Epirus, while to Cleopatra falls
 All Macedon. 'Gainst these my father asks—
 Since thou didst make him governor in thy right—
 Full royal satisfaction, word and power.

ALEXANDER: By Philip's soul, Hephæstion, here indeed
 Is a man whose king is but the lesser man!
 No Bacchus in his veins, and in his speech
 No soft demand! . . . Cassander, for thy second—
 Since 'tis thy second most nearly touches me—
 Olympias did give me nine months' rent
 The year she bore me, and shall his mother's son
 Deny to her what rent Epirus gives?
 Which, by wise Zeus, she hath wisely chosen, too!
 For Macedon would never be content
 To suffer woman's rule—as witness thee
 Thy woman-father, now by its women ousted.
 And for thy first, temper thy chilly tongue
 To Asia's warmer glow and softer speech.—
 Nay, I forgive thee, man; thou art new come.—
 Nearchus, tell me of the southern seas.

NEARCHUS: My Lord and King, in youth I sailed the seas
 That roll between the pillars of the world
 Out to the empty West—a waste of waves
 Bounded by night and silence. Yet the spume
 Of gray Atlantic was tonic to my blood,
 And her ranging winds, singing amid the ropes,
 Were sweeter in my ears than harps Æolian.
 Oft on these southern seas, poisoned by day
 With boiling reds and greens, and through the night
 Gilded by fiery combs of gods that ride
 Beaked monsters whose huge eyes shine nightly up
 From watery dens—oft on these seas I longed
 To catch in my beard the frosts and on my cheek

The chill keen blasts whet by the western Ocean.
 From the island of Scillustis where is set
 The pillar writ with curse on king who dare
 Outventure Alexander, east we came—
 Past dead and desert shores whose only folk
 Are naked Ichthyophagi, more foul
 Than the rank fish they smell of; southward yet
 We circled by the Island of the Sun,
 Where Siren Nereids dwell, and mariners
 Who draw their boats to land are known no more.
 There is the world's black end, for to the south
 The shadows change at midday, and at night
 Strange stars arise o'er wastes of stranger waters.
 O my King, eastward and westward of the lands
 Thy birth and sword have brought thee there is nought:
 My keels have cut the waters of all seas
 That circle the round world—which world is thine!

ALEXANDER: Then nought 's to win? The world is Alexander's?
 My world? And is 't so small a thing? My world!

Meantime Cassander has slipped away to the stand of Aristander, who has
 been offering a sacrifice and is examining the omens.

CASSANDER: How read you for the King?

ARISTANDER: Black, black. All's empty.

Enter Ptolemy, Seleucus, Perdicas and others. They approach Alexander
 deferentially.

ALEXANDER: Ah, here my generals, splendors of my world!—
 Hail, soldiers mine, our toils at last are ended;
 Nearchus sets their bound; the world is mine—
 Nay, yours and mine. Here at its heart and throne
 We celebrate our conquests, reap reward
 For pains endured, and measure out the feud
 Which Europe had of Asia when Paris stole
 Fair Helen from Menelaus. May the sun
 Shine bright to-morrow, for that sun shall see,
 In the rich palaces of Babylon's old kings,
 The daughter of Darius made the bride
 Of Alexander; and Alexander's men,

Each in his rank, shall take them Persian brides,
 The fairest and the noblest of the land.
 So shall our rule be settled in the heart
 Of the ancient East, so Helen's rape avenged.
 Hephæstion, command yon dark Chaldæan,
 If that he read the ruling of the stars
 On my desire, I'd know his wise prognostic.

HEPHAESTION (*to Kidinnu, who has been casting a horoscope*):

Wise one, the soul of Bacchus, which the Sun,
 Our glorious father, genders in the grape,
 I drink, till I am filled with the Sun's own fire
 And brightened with his radiant prophecy.
 Thou drink'st the wisdom of the starry gods
 That circle mænad-like o'er the broad floor
 Of the nightly heavens. Outprophesy me now—
 Sun against stars, Greek against Chaldee! Oh!
 Ye spirits of bright glory, god meets god
 When Alexander questions Destiny!

KIDINNU (*with salaams*):

May the Lord of Day, Bel-Shamash the most high,
 Preserve the King and thee in the light of wisdom
 Such as now is thine; and may Bel-Marduk bring,
 And Ishtar, his great spouse, the Queen of Life,
 Fulfilment of your days in Babylon!
 I am Kidinnu, servant of the stars,
 I keep their watches, and I chart
 Their courses through the houses of the night,
 Seeking to spell their riddles. When the King,
 Divine among the Greeks, first saw the light,
 The Destiny that rules from Throne and Pole
 Of heaven had spun the circle of the zone
 Girdling the Universe with glittering signs
 Until the Dragon reigned; into whose house,
 The selfsame hour wherein your King was born,
 The star of Marduk came, serene and bright,
 In right ascension to the zenith: there
 He ruled in splendor, emperor of the skies,
 Whilst answering in splendor, Ishtar came,
 The burning goddess in her burning car,
 To greet his mounting glory. Here I read

Fair omens for the nuptials that shall be
 To-morrow when the daughter of a king,
 Great in his day, this greater king shall wed.

HEPHAESTION (*to Alexander*):

Hail, King! Hail, King! Chaldæan stars and Greek
 Alike proclaim thee master of the world!
 Now Aphrodite bless thee! Here I crown
 Imperial temples with a lover's wreath
 Whose white and crimson flowers such fillet make
 As grace love's victim with felicity!
 Hail, King! Hail, God! Hail, Man, who's fall'n to Love!

Hephæstion places a wreath over the royal tiara that crowns Alexander's head.

ALEXANDER: My sweet Hephæstion! . . . Soldiers, till the dawn
 Let Dionysus and the goddess reign—
 Red wine and Persian women, under Love!

The song of the Bacchanals approaching is heard again. Alexander turns with a smile and a gesture of welcome. He goes out accompanied by his generals, the soldiers and other Greeks. The Bacchic rout follow, singing.

BACCHANALS: Evoë! Evoë! Evoë! Evoë!
 Oh, the flute of the god is a tyrant flute,
 And none can stay and none be mute
 While timbrel clash and sounding lute
 Sing Pæan! Dionyse!

As they sweep forth, Kidinnu leaps from his stall, trembling with eager hatred.

KIDINNU: Ha, ha, ha, ha!
 Oh, Babylon has seen the like ere now,
 Strange kings and proud come riding through her gates
 Like deathless gods, who on the morrow pass
 Outward as mummied clay! Ye blissful stars,
 I thank ye for the night that darks your counsels,
 And for the fate hid here—hid here—hid here!

[CURTAIN.]

ACT II.

SCENE: The Hanging Gardens, at night. On either side and in the background are carven and enameled pots and jars, overgrown with vines which run riot on the tiled floor of the garden, while from them spring palms and olives and other tropical trees and plants. Between and beyond the foliage is seen the low silhouette of the city, with here and there the glittering lights of distant altar fires on the temple pyramids. Above, the night sky is clear and brilliant, spangled with stars. Lanterns are hidden in the garden foliage, forming little islands of colored and screened light. To the right is a vine-covered wall, containing a gate opening to the palace interior. A stair, clinging to this wall, leads above.

A silvery sound of laughter is heard, and amid the trees and shrubbery Mænads appear, like wood-nymphs, darting from shade to shade and from light to light, now and again pausing to call to one another in mocking song. Music accompanies all.

MAENAD 1: Io Hymen Hymenæe io!

MAENAD 2: Io Hymen Hymenæe!

MAENAD 3: Follow, follow!

MAENAD 4: Follow, follow!

MAENAD 5: Where the god is, I would be
Lapt in his wild divinity!

MAENAD 6: Where the god is, love and light
In one glamorous flame unite!

MAENAD 7: Time is fleet, but joy is fleetier!
Life is sweet, but love is sweeter!

MAENAD 8: Io Hymen Hymenæe io!

MAENAD 9: Io Hymen Hymenæe!

MAENADS ALL: Follow, follow! Follow, follow!

The Mænads join hands and advance in a mad circling dance, a few with torches running within the circle, to and fro, round and round. As they dance, Hephæstion appears upon the stair; he is still wreathed and garlanded, like a sylvan god.

HEPHAESTION: Ah, here ye gather, wild ones! Daughters of joy!
And here ye bring your ivied minstrelsy!
O Dionysus, god of all most blest,

May these be thine forever, thine and mine—
 Fleet music and the motion of white limbs! . . .
 Ho, Mænads mine! Hephæstion is your god,
 Whose blood is bright with Bacchus' holy fire!
 Sing Pæan, Pæan, to the thyrsus rod!
 Sing Pæan, Pæan, to a god's desire!

He comes down the stairway impetuously. The dancing Mænads scurry away in fright, with laughing and mocking cries; but almost immediately they form chorus-like amid the shrubbery, singing and applauding while one of their number engages in a nymphan dance, tantalizing and taunting, which Hephæstion follows rapt.

MAENAD SONG:

Forth he came from the mountain's womb—
 Child of the welded wonders!
 When Earth was bride and Heaven was groom
 And the passion of life was the lightning's bloom
 And the hills were big with the high god's thunders!

How the wilderness was glorified
 When he burst the nether portals!
 And the world was gay with lovers' pride
 Where all were wooed and none were denied
 And immortal lusts were begot in mortals!

Oh, the wine of life is a drunken wine,
 And red are the lips that have drunken!
 And the spirit of god is this spirit of mine
 Who have nourished and suckled a babe divine
 Till his flame in my soul is sunken!

As the song is finished the dancing Mænad pauses with arms outstretched as if challenging her pursuer.

HEPHAESTION:

The god, the god, the god is in thine eyes,
 And all his wildness in thy streaming hair!
 Oh, let thy touch Hephæstion baptize,
 And draw him, draw him to thy bosom bare
 To stain thy reddened lips with kisses red,
 With kisses wreath thy blossom-wreathed head!

He leaps forward, but the Mænad, with all her chorus, scatter through the shrubbery, laughing and calling.

MAENADS: Io Hymen Hymenæe io! Io Hymen Hymenæe!...
 Follow, follow!.. Follow, follow!...

HEPHAESTION (*in exaltation*):

O blessed brotherhood of dancing stars
 Weaving the riddles of our spangled days!
 O swift celestial coursers whose bright cars
 Like racers' torches through the heavens blaze!
 Make me a sharer in your revelry,
 Lift me unto your brotherhood of light!
 My spirit, too, would find felicity
 Nigh to the hornèd goddess of the night—
 Mother of wingèd Love, eternal Queen
 Who ruleth man and god, serene, serene!

As Hephæstion pauses, Statira enters, descending the stairs. She is magnificent in a jeweled robe, and is accompanied by waiting-women and slaves. To him she seems a glorious apparition.

HEPHAESTION: 'Tis Aphrodite's self!... Art thou not she
 The white-limbed Love sprung from the foamy sea
 When all the world brimmed o'er with cecstasy?

STATIRA: Who mocks me here? Is this my conqueror?
 I am Statira, daughter of a king,
 And Alexander's slave, by whose command
 I stand here—in my father's palace, thrall.

HEPHAESTION: If thou be not immortal Aphrodite,
 Thou art some goddess lovelier than Love!

STATIRA: I am Statira, daughter of the great
 And dead Darius—mortal, as was he.

HEPHAESTION: Statira? Persia's daughter?

STATIRA: I am she.

HEPHAESTION: Ah, thou 'rt no less a goddess!—soon to be
 Matched with a matchless god, King Alexander.
 The soul of Alexander, not his flesh,
 Thou seest in me—which soul doth prophesy,
 When Greece again meets Persia in the field

And Love darts forth his arrows from thine eyes,
Victory shall crown the vanquished victor!

From a distance is heard the call of the Mænads. Alexander has entered unobserved from the doorway.

HEPHAESTION: Hark! . . .

I hear a summons ne'er to be denied—
The music of my Mænads praising Love!
Farewell, farewell, O thou unconquered one—
I kiss thy hand, whose lips shall kiss the Sun!

STATIRA: Oh, prescient heart! If Alexander's form
Match not his soul, I am a queen undone!

ALEXANDER (*advancing with Iolaus in attendance*):

Which form you see, O daughter of Darius.
I am the King. Hephæstion is my poet,
Twice-born in madness—mad first with poesy
And madder for the god within his veins:
What kings forgive, all others must forget.
To-day I stand the master of a world,
Not one, but two: half Asia and half Europe.
I'd make them one in heart as one in crown.
To-morrow in the hall of Persia's throne
My Macédonians take them Persian wives
From Persia's princely women. Statira, thou
Shalt be the bride of Alexander, be a queen
In thine own land, o'er thine own folk. And so
The wars our fathers waged shall find an end,
And Asia, one with Europe, be at peace.
What destiny the gods may bring, accept:
'Tis thine to be my queen, and thine it is
With Alexander to receive a world.

STATIRA: My lord, my father's conqueror, and mine,
When the great Darius—oh, the dead are great
In hearts that bear their portraits!—heard the word
Of what befell my mother in thy hands,
Statira, his dear queen, untouched, though captive—
He prayed to Auramazda, Persia's god,
That none save thou, were the day of fate befall'n,

Should hold the throne of Cyrus. Darius willed—
And 'tis a woman's part to bear the will of men,
Kings dead and living.

ALEXANDER: Thy father was a man
Too noble for the jealous gods. Do thou—
Who art his softer image—pray they deal
With us more kindly. Fare thee well—till to-morrow.

STATIRA: The words of the King, I hear; his will, obey. . . .
But liefer to my heart is love than royalty!
(Exit, with attendants.)

ALEXANDER: Iolaus, go and to Roxana say
That Alexander waits her in the gardens.
(Exit Iolaus.)
Statira must be queen, as I am king:
But for the man who wears the royal mask
There's but one woman and one cherished love.
My sweet Roxana. . . .
(Enter Roxana.)
Ah, 'tis she, 'tis she!

ROXANA: My lord, my love—thou bad'st me; I am come.

ALEXANDER: Roxana! Now Cypris bless thee, whose soft doves
Make nests of loveliness these eyes, these cheeks,
This brow, this mouth—formed for caresses! . . . So! . . .
And hast thou missed thy love, gone into India?

ROXANA: Oh, my King! How many, many nights I've lain
Watching the changing stars that kept with me
The vigil of the night! How many days
I've counted out the hours, and every hour
Seen sharper peril striking at thy form—
This royal head, this heart! And oh, my King,
'Twas then I looked into thy glorious eyes
And knew that none could conquer such as thou!
Mithras and Auramazd' guard thee—so I prayed. . . .
And now my prayers are answered; thou art here.

ALEXANDER: E'en as I went—the very same in love,

ALEXANDER: A son to thee and me!
 And such a son! Roxana, my dear love! . . .
 A poet of the Greeks there is, who saith,
 "Fainer were I to enter battle thrice
 "Than bear one child." Thou hast outheroed me,
 And brought us twain a richer realm than India!

ROXANA: Which one day shall be his, shall 't not, my King?
 When he hath grown to share his father's rule,
 And be of all the princes of the world
 The princeliest heir!

ALEXANDER: The world. . . . There is a world.

ROXANA: And he shall be its king, one day?

ALEXANDER: Roxana!

ROXANA: What is 't, my lord?

ALEXANDER: The world thou speak'st of. . . .
 We kings are more than other men, and less:
 More in our power to make or shatter nations,
 Less in the right to rule our own desires:
 Not e'en the offspring of a royal love
 Is fated by the king—for he is not
 A father but as other men are fathers,
 Not free as they. Dost understand?

ROXANA: I hear.

ALEXANDER: To-morrow in the hall where stands the throne
 Of Cyrus and Darius, I must wed
 The Great King's princess. Statira is to be
 Queen o'er her father's subjects, binding them
 In loyalty to me. This is no will,
 Roxana, this is no will—thou know'st it well—
 Of Alexander's love. It is the fate
 That kings must bow to when they make them kings.

ROXANA: My lord, I was most happy; I am now
 Obedient.

ALEXANDER: Nay, nay, Roxana! Nay!
 Forget not that I love thee. More than all
 This world that I have conquered, thou art dear!

ROXANA: Oh, were kings but men, or wert thou no king,
I should have been most happy!

ALEXANDER: Happy be
In the part of Alexander that 's a man:
'Tis thine, 'tis thine!

ROXANA: Our son is crying for me,
For his mother.

ALEXANDER: Go, and bring him smiling joy.
I'll join thee, later. . . .Blest Roxana, mine!

As Roxana departs, Alexander turns thoughtfully back into the garden. Almost immediately he hears the sound of a singing voice, the singer approaching.

SONG: Thou gazest on the stars, my Star?
Oh, gladly would I be
Yon starry skies
With myriad eyes
To gaze on thee, on thee!

ALEXANDER: Hephæstion's voice. . . .Hephæstion. . . .Aye, aye.
The mother of Statira was the height
Of Asia's women: her daughter is her like
In queenly beauty. 'Tis not well, not well
That those who circle kings should come too near
The royal state in their ambitious dreams. . . .
But yet I love Hephæstion. . . .Hephæstion!

HEPHAESTION (*entering distraught*):
Oh, beauteous women are pains unto mine eyes.
And love 's a burning fever in my veins!
I will be bled for 't! Deem thee not, deem not,
Thou tyrant Eros, that thou hast me vanquished!
I'll have no tyrants, be they kings or gods.
Over my soldier soul keep mastership!. . . .
Ha, 'tis Alexander! Hail, comrade King!
Thou rul'st a world; I rule no lesser thing—
Hephæstion's rebel soul!

ALEXANDER: Aye, rule it, rule,
Hephæstion mine; and let thy scepter be
Of tempered steel, keen as thine edgèd sword—

Forgetting not that thou must also rule
 The tongue that speaks thy soul. The wisely mad
 Utter their oracles darkly. Do thou learn
 From cryptic Pythia the speech of wisdom.

HEPHAESTION: Such bows as Scythian archers bend
 Over their fleeting horses are her brows,
 And her two eyes are citadels of light
 More terrible than war! She is a Queen
 Of Amazons, whose carnage is the rout
 Of beating blood, whose conquest soldiers' hearts! . . .
 "O Love, who lordest over gods and men,
 "But dark our eyne to Beauty yet again
 "Or give us strength to bear thy loveliness—
 "Lest love, through awe of Love, lose power to bless!" . . .
 Soul of Euripides, thou who didst know
 The lover's needy soul, I pray thy prayer!
 Oh, bring me waters of forgetfulness:
 I've o'erdrunk of wine.

(Seats himself wearily.)

ALEXANDER: Dry wisdom is the best—
 So Aristotle quoted some old sage:
 The juice of the grape hath softened my poor poet.

HEPHAESTION (*drowsily*):
 Thou art a god, King Alexander. I—
 Thy frail Hephæstion—am but a man,
 And somewhat of a lover. Yesterday—
 Or was 't to-day?—I, too, was as a god
 Inspired with glory. But thou hast drained me dry,
 As th' Indian sun draws up the strength of men
 Into his own increased divinity.

ALEXANDER: And am I, then, no man? Or is a king
 A thing of gifts and gold unto his friends,
 Taunted with his rule and trusted never?
 A god, indeed! When the Mallian arrow struck
 Me broadly to the bone, it was no ichor,
 Such as immortal gods are wont to shed,
 Besmeared my body—'twas a soldier's blood.

HEPHAESTION: Blood is thy wine; great Bacchus' gift is mine.
 The god in thee is War; the god in me
 Is Dionysus, whose drowsy son is come
 With welcome sleep—soft Morpheus, I must sleep....
 (Hephaestion falls asleep in the midst of the vines.)

ALEXANDER: Such are the friends of kings.... None loved I more
 Than mine Hephæstion. He sleeps; I watch,
 And bear the charge of states that I must mould
 Into one empire. This disordered world
 Is mine alone to order, while my friends
 Play lovers' games and sleep their ivied sleep.
 There are no lands to conquer; I am the high
 And solitary master of the world.
 Oh, 'twas an easy thing, in my hot youth,
 To throw the gauge of war to great Darius,
 To match the might of Europe 'gainst his power
 In a war of Asia's choosing. Easy 'twere
 To follow on and on the flash of arms
 And thrust with Philip's phalanx against the walls
 Of men embattled. But the world is mine;
 And youth is past; and now I must upbear
 Like pillared Atlas all its mighty weight....
 Sleep, my Hephæstion—for men can sleep
 While friendless kings hold converse with the night.
 Mapping the treacherous currents of their lives....
 O ancient Babel, 'neath thy ancient stars,
 Grant me the hoary wisdom of the East
 To read dark Fate and govern Destiny!
 Upon thine altars I have laid my youth
 And all the glowing genius of the West
 In bright piaculum: bring thou to me
 Th' immortal crown of thy serenity!

[CURTAIN.]

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]