

ALEXANDER IN BABYLON.

BY H. A.

ACT IV.

SCENE: The Hanging Gardens. The time is early morning and from the summits of the temple pyramids in the near distance rise lazy wisps of smoke into the sunny air.

Enter Cassander and Iolaus.

CASSANDER: Thou art new come from attendance on the King,
My brother?

IOLAUS: Yes—if attendance it be called.
To keep in eye his hourly changing mood
Is more pursuit than service.

CASSANDER: What is his state?

IOLAUS: No state at all—his soul is like a wind,
Now chasing laughing Dryads mid spun leaves,
Now hurtling clouds 'gainst granite mountain peaks.

CASSANDER: Why, who would guess? My brother grown fantastic!
This windy soul hath caught thee in its breeze!

IOLAUS: Who waits on Alexander reads his mood
And mirrors back its image—safety 's there,
Hadst thou the wit for this thy bones would be
Securer of their flesh.

CASSANDER: Aye, craft is thine,
As bluntness mine. Antipater did well
To hostage thee, not me, to Alexander.
But keep thy craft sharp-whet.—Who comes here?

ONESICRITUS:

Wise, wise!

That same stiff neck is none too soundly jointed!

Enter, from the stair, Alexander surrounded by a body of Persian youths gorgeously robed and armed with curved swords. Alexander is in the flowing robes of the god Dionysus, thyrsus in hand.

ALEXANDER: The smoke is in my nostrils and the fires
Of sacrifice within my body burn!
Sweet-savored blood! How many battlefields
Have been mine altars and what hecatombs
Have burning cities offered up to me!
Was ever such a god in high Olympus?
Zeus, Zeus himself is jealous of my might
And rocks uneasy on his cloudy throne!
Ha! Bow, ye Immortals, to your conqueror! . . .

(He sees the generals.)

What men be these, that stand them thus unbent
In Alexander's presence? Down, slaves, down!
Ere in my spirit's burning ye be caught!
(The generals bow down to Alexander. His manner changes.)
Good men, good men they are—wise generals:
This one is Ptolemy, Craterus this one 's called,
And old Nearchus who held me on his knee—
The rime sea-salt had grizzled all his beard
There where I plucked it—good men, good men all,
And priests that on many a bloody day
Slaked my desire with blood! Farewell, my friends;
I go to receive the homage of the Sun:
He'll kiss my hand, and I shall bid him bear
The image of my glory zenith high!

(Exit Alexander, with Persians.)

CRATERUS: Now Zeus defend King Alexander!

ONESICRITUS:

Tst!

I pray defense for us from Father Zeus!
There is a maxim of the Delphian god,
"Nothing too much"; here 's much too much a king
With much too much divinity conjoined
To spell our safety.

PTOLEMY (*thoughtfully*): Such a thing is ambition?
How ghastly is its image in another!

NEARCHUS: He remembers still how these old arms did lift
His slim boy's body from his father's courts
And bear him out into the natural hills
To greet the breeze incoming from the sea. . . .
Oh, I did fear this madness when we stopped
Mid those Nysæan witches who lured the King
To myrtled Meros, there to sacrifice
Unto the vagrant god. Ye do recall
How many madmen there took up the cry,
"Evoë, evoë," as if they were god-seized?

PTOLEMY: I have heard say that Philip to his fear
One morning found his bride Olympias couched
With a bright golden serpent. On that day
The babe that was to be King Alexander
By his mother was conceived.

ONESICRITUS: Not gods that are
Nor kings that deem them gods are made to be
Mere men's companions. I am for the camp.

PTOLEMY: And I!

CRATERUS: And I!

NEARCHUS: The old man, too, will go.
These Eastern palaces were not meant for me;
I long for Macedonia and the sea.

(Exeunt.)

IOLAUS: 'Tis so the noon winds blow! Their loyalty
Melts thin with the rising sun! For me 'tis well
To keep a kingward eye—though mad, he's royal.

(Exit.)

Enter Roxana and Rachel, an aged Jewish slave, her attendant. Roxana picks up an ivy leaf fallen from Alexander's garlands.

ROXANA: He's wreathed with ivy. For a little while
Its leaves are green, and then they fall and fade
And scatter in his path, and are forgotten. . . .
I'll keep thee in my bosom, withered leaf—
Oh, thou didst crown his temples for an hour! . . .
Rachel, hast thou seen Statira?

RACHEL: Aye, daughter.

ROXANA: She is not happy—though she be his queen;
And all the jewels of her father's throne
Shine cold and shrill upon her. Oh, 'tis the heart,
And not the crown, that makes a woman queen!
Yes, I do pity her—proud, proud Statira—
Who is not loved, and loves not—or yet loves
Another. What an empty heart is hers
Beneath her hollow state! . . . And yet, this state—
Oh, she is haughty, daughter of a king,
And tall and upright in her will to stand
Up to her father's stature. . . . Then how shall I—
I and my son, how measured be against her?
Nay, pity is too dear! There is not space
For her and me in one king's lordly shadow. . . .
Rachel, what is the hour?

RACHEL : The prayers are said
Within the temple at Jerusalem:
The priests descend from the altar; I have prayed
My daily prayer with Israel. Noon is near.

ROXANA: The appointed hour! Sisimithres should be come.
(Enter Sisimithres, cautiously.)

ROXANA: Sisimithres!

SISIMITHRES: He. Roxana's servant ever.

ROXANA: Thou bring'st . . .

SISIMITHRES : The potion, in this ass's hoof.
Its nature is so chill no other vase
Will bear its strength, unbroken. I do give,
Roxana, into thy hands its fusèd strength—
For like this world, whereof it is quintessence,
It doth commingle in so deep a brew
The good and evil principles, that none—
Save Auramazda shining in his skies—
Can say if he who drinks of this chill draught
Will wake to love and life or whiten in death.

ROXANA (*gazing into the vessel*):
How colorless it is—like mine own life,
No light reflected in it. This shall be
The blade whose sheath 's my heart!
(*She puts it into her bosom.*)

Oh, kings shall learn
 That when they storm the craggy citadels
 That harbor women's souls, not they alone
 For love risk life—risk life, and all, and all! . . .
 Sisimithres!

SISIMITHRES: Princess.

ROXANA: There is yet Statira.

SISIMITHRES: Begrudge her not, O daughter of Oxyartes,
 Her hour of queenship. It will be but brief.

ROXANA: How mean you?

SISIMITHRES: Royal through Darius, queen
 Through Alexander, she should die royally.

ROXANA: Aye, aye; thou speak'st with a Magian's riddling tongue.

SISIMITHRES: We Magi know full well the nether stones
 That bear this cumbrous palace up from earth.
 In the depths there is a silent crypt where lie
 The regal dead whom kings could not endure
 To share their day with. Royally they lie,
 Each stark and gorgeous in his jeweled robe:
 A couch is there befitting proud Statira.

ROXANA: How wilt thou bring her thither?

SISIMITHRES: Love such as I
 Do bear the fair Roxana in device
 Is rich. When others sleep the noontide out,
 Statira's restless soul leads her astray
 Through shadowy halls. Old palaces are full
 Of devious ways. To-day, for the love I bear
 Roxana I will keep the noon in vigil.

ROXANA: Ah, thou art gracious to me!

SISIMITHRES: Love is glad
 To serve its day, waiting for love's reward.

(Sisimithres departs; Iolaus enters.)

ROXANA: The King's cupbearer! . . . Iolaus!

IOLAUS: Who calls?
Ah, Princess Roxana!

ROXANA: I would speak with thee:
How is it with the King?

IOLAUS: Why now, 'tis thus:
Having mounted to the terraced garden's top
And sat there on a golden burnished throne
Flashing his challenge to the sun, he now
Descends again into the shade. Meanwhile I'm sent
To summon here Statira; he has thought o' her.

ROXANA: He speaks of her?

IOLAUS: He speaks of many souls.
Some live, as she; some are new dead.

ROXANA: Of me?

IOLAUS: Nay, not of thee.

ROXANA: 'Tis thou dost bear him wine.
Is he not often hot—often athirst?

IOLAUS: Aye, often; and calls for cooling snows. He dreams,
I vow, of honest Macedonian ice.

ROXANA: I, too, was born amid the mountain cold,
And fever i' the heat. Iolaus, I have here
A liquid of a principle so cold
That but a single drop will cool the life
In the most parchèd body. When the King
Doth call thee for his draught do thou call me.

IOLEUS: The gods plan shrewdly! Out in yonder camp
There 's muttering of men and knavish thoughts
Popping in heated helmets; here at home
The once queen finds a potent draught
To calm the ardors of the new-wed King!
Shrewd be the gods, and grim!

ROXANA: Thy meaning 's hid.

IOLAUS: 'Tis naught—save that I choose to wear
 Iolaus' skin rather than royal purple.
 Were I the King I should stay far from camp
 Until the season 's settled, and were I King
 I'd drink no drink. Farewell, mine errand calls.

(Exit.)

ROXANA: The camp against the King! Can treason threat
 So fair adorned head? Nay, where he walks
 No evil thing can stand! . . . But yet, I fear. . . .

(Re-enter Alexander, with attendants.)

ALEXANDER: Hephæstion. . . Hephæstion. . . I'd speak with Hephæstion.
 Was ever poet kinder to a king
 Than Hephæstion is to me? Castor and Pollux
 Are not more like, triumphant mid their stars.
 His sire is Poesy, mine ruddy War,
 But, ah, our common mother is bright Love—
 Queen over all the gods!

(He sees Roxana.)

What maid is this?

Why, such a form I've seen mid Bactrian snows
 Sun-glinted—alabaster-white she was,
 But with a ruby soul that flashed its flame
 Relentless into my soul! Beautiful
 She was, and she was named Roxana. Maiden,
 For the sake of one whom Alexander loved
 Thou shalt be queen of Bactria and shalt hold
 High court amid the snows, by eagles guarded.
 Thou art so like her. . . .

Where is Hephæstion?

He is dead—oh, I know well that he is dead.
 And they that caused it, they shall feel the edge
 Of Alexander's wrath! He was my brother. . . .
 I'll crucify physicians till there be
 No more an art of medicine, and none
 Be saved to live within this charnel world
 Whence sweet Hephæstion 's gone. . . .

Hephæstion!

The worms will eat thee; thou wilt rot unknown,
 And the poor eloquence of thine epitaph
 Will rouse the laughter and the ribald noise

Of puny mortals, through their transient day
 Swarming like the ants above the sunny ground
 Ere the dark earth receive them. Thou shalt lie
 In cold composure couched, whilst loathed decay
 Kisses away thy lips and steals thine eyes
 From out their sightless sockets. . . .

Ah, we men,
 In what reek of blood we live, to foul with death
 The beauties of the world! I've slain men, too,
 And seen thick blood gathering on the spear,
 Red, red, and gory. . . .

Is Statira come?
 I have commanded it. There is a thing
 That she must answer for—aye, though a queen
 And daughter of Darius!

(Enter Statira, with attendant.)

Ha, 'tis she! . . .

STATIRA: My lord, thou didst command me. I am come.

ALEXANDER: I'd look into thine eyes, for they do say
 That when a murder's done, the murderer
 Doth leave his image printed in the eyes
 Of him that's slain. Thou hast been murdered;
 I'd look into thine eyes! . . . So . . . so . . . and so . . .
 How many eyes bear Alexander's image!
 In thine I thought to find Hephæstion's,
 For he hath murdered thee with love. . . . Go, go!
 Prepare thee for thy funeral. . . . Go, go!
 It shall befit the daughter of Darius,
 King Alexander's queen, Hephæstion's love!

STATIRA: My lord, I hear thy will, dimly and afar
 As all things are that sound against my heart.
 God's winds blow strangely. Here there's nought to say—
 Save only that I pity, pity thee.

ALEXANDER: Nay, do not go! For I have need of pity—
 I am a king, but I have need of pity!

(Enter Kidinnu, who prostrates himself before the King.)

ALEXANDER: Who is 't comes here? The seer of the stars!
 Oh, is there grace, Kidinnu, in the stars
 And prophecy for such a king as I?

KIDINNU: May Anu, Bel and Ea, Marduk lord,
 Bestow the light of wisdom on the King!
 I come with message from the Indian sage,
 Calanus, whom you brought from Ganges' bank.
 "Greeting," he saith, "from king to king, I send—
 "From Calanus, whose empire is the world
 "Of spirit spirit-conquered, to the king
 "Who rules the dust and ashes of illusion.
 "This night, beyond the walls of Babylon,
 "I light the pyre whereon my body burns
 "Quick to its glory—whence my Phoenix soul
 "Shall fly triumphant. To-morrow I shall sit
 "By Gunga's changeless pool and contemplate
 "The day of Alexander, long fordone!"
 This say, he did command, as king to king.

ALEXANDER: Why, here is challenge! Is there such a soul
 In this wide world as durst do more than I?
 Nay, royally shall burn this royal Calanus!
 Tinctures and incense and aromatic oils
 On gilded cedar shall build him such a pyre
 As shall outblaze rich Sardanapalus!
 No soul so like to mine hath this earth bred
 Since living Heracles did mount to his doom
 In shirt of Nessus! My soul, too, is flame,
 And it shall leap to greet its element
 High in th' empyreal husk that rings the world
 Which feeds it with combustion! . . . Ho, men! Ho!
 Bring me Bucephalus, for I would be
 Guest of this kindred flame! Too long, too long
 The walls of Babel have imprisoned me!

ROXANA (*throwing herself at his feet*):

My lord, my sweet, sweet lord! Go not! Go not!
 There is such peril as thou dost not know
 Beyond the city's gates! Stay! Stay! With me—
 I am Roxana—and thou hast a son!
 Stay, stay! My lord—my sweet, sweet lord!

ALEXANDER: 'Tis the princess of the snows—ah, snow and flame,
Like love and war, do mutually destroy
Each other's beauty! I kiss thee, Snow!
'Tis I am fire: I did consume the world:
Now to its starry crest I would be whirled!

(Alexander goes out with Kidinnu and attendants.)

STATIRA: 'Tis so thou lovest him? . . . Ah, such are hearts
That beat in women's breasts! We still must love,
Though they we love be mad, and love be madness. . . .
Thou art Roxana? and a princess once?
And a king came, and wooed thee. . . . Now, but a woman. . . .
I was a princess, too, and am woman, now. . . .
We all are women only, when we love;
And when our loves are gone are something less—
Are something less, than woman.

ROXANA (*rising*): Thou art queen

STATIRA: Queen! This palace is not more hugely empty
Of the sweet gift of happiness, than am I
Of all things that can make my queenship queenly! . . .
Oh, let them make their wars, these bloody men,
But give us women just the little right
To love our loved ones for a sunny hour
There where the scented gardens wear their glow!

ROXANA: Thou dost sleep—in the garden?

STATIRA: Sleep! 'Tis such a bliss
As queens dispense with! Nay, I walk the noon.

ROXANA: Thou shalt not walk to-day.

STATIRA: How else, to-day?
Is 't thou would'st have me sleep, better to watch
Thy king's return? Nay, he 's not thine, but mine!
Oh, I am grateful for this king of mine—
This bloody, bloody king! Nay, I shall walk.

Statira goes out. Roxana starts as if to follow her. Then she turns slowly back.

ROXANA: Aye, let her walk. . . . We all do walk most strangely. . .
The King's gone to the camp, where treason waits:

I'll follow him! I'll follow, follow on—
And whether life or death shall be the lot
The gods have sorted out, I'll share it with him.

[CURTAIN.]

ACT V.

SCENE: The Desert beyond the walls of Babylon. The time is night and the unclouded sky is brilliant with glittering stars. To the right are the shadowy tents of the King's quarters in the Greek encampment. In the center the plain stretches away to Babylon, which is revealed low and black in distant silhouette. A group of palms, to the left, marks the course of the Euphrates, in the middle distance. From the direction of the palms, flaring and dying away, is seen the declining glare of the funeral pyre of Calanus, falling to ashes beside the river bank.

Enter Alexander, Kidinnu, Iolaus and the Persian guards. The King's walk shows him to be weary and depressed. He pauses and gazes back toward the red glow of the dying fire.

ALEXANDER: Farewell. . . . Thou spirit, Calanus, farewell. . . .
May winds and waters bear thy scattered ash
Back to thy native East. . . . Ash unto ash—
Oh, what a crumbling dust man's flesh is made of!
But souls be made of fire—yes, thou hast shown
What will of man can do, rist conqueror
Over the body's sodden elements. . . .
Kidinnu!

KIDINNU: Lord and King, thy servant hears.

ALEXANDER: Kidinnu, had he so much as moved a limb,
Trembled, or twitched a muscle, when the flames
Came swiftly licking o'er him, thou hadst seen?

KIDINNU: He moved not once, but gave his body up
Freely to the flames. His eyes were on the stars.

ALEXANDER: Oh, were but mine composure like to that!
For I, I too, do burn upon a pyre—
I was begot by flame, and it doth tent
The heart of me with fierce tormenting dreams,
Driving me on and on to wrack this world
With bloody conquest! Oh, this fire in me

Doth deeply hate the dark material stuff
 'Tis prisoned in, and it would burn such path—
 Such blaze of freedom, as should lift my soul
 To empery of its kindred in the skies!
 Thou know'st the stars?

KIDINNU; My years have long been told
With nightly observations of their course.

ALEXANDER: Perchance these stars are worlds? I'll conquer them!
 I'll conquer all the stars and be the king
 Who rules the far empyrean, and fires
 The circling spheres in holocaust!
 Kidinnu, thou art wise in Eastern lore—
 The Greeks do say the world—this world of mine—
 Did rise from ancient burnings, and will burn
 Again and yet again as æons count
 The slow revolving wheel of Destiny.
 Is this thy wisdom, too?

KIDNNU: Most potent lord
And high, in this thy Greeks are wise with us
And wise with India's sages. We of Babylon,
By the grace of shining gods, have read the change
That measures out the world from fire to fire.
Shamash and Sin and Ishtar, rulers of the signs,
And those four planets that mark the mighty gyre
Upon whose spiral swings the yearly sun—
Marduk of the morn, Nebo the counselor,
Ninib of war, and Nergal lord of night—
Count out the Change of Ages. It shall be
When æons twelve, each two millennia
And centuries two, are passed since the ancient Flood.
The rulers and the planets shall conjoin
Their glittering powers within the starry Crab.
Then Earth shall burn once more, as Earth hath burned
In countless numbers past, as it will burn
All times to come, by this conjuncture marked.

ALEXANDER: Why, 'tis a cinder, then—this world of mine!
Dead ashes and black crusts! Our Calanus—
Oh, he was wise to burn away the flesh
And free the lambent substance of the soul!

Ash unto ash and mounting flame to flame. . . .
 How dry it crumbles in mine hand! How dross. . . .
 This gritty earth he leaves me! . . . Nay, I would sleep.
 There 's less than fiery god within me now—
 There 's weight of weary man. . . . Sleep kindly, too.
 My friends—beneath the healing stars, sleep kindly.

Alexander enters his tent, accompanied by Iolaus. The Persians disperse among the tents. Kidinnu, alone, raises exultant arms.

KIDINNU: Immortal Lights, what consolation sweet
 Ye bring to me! Fulfilment of those Fates
 Ye have foretold is nigh, is nigh, and here,
 Within, the luxury of hate fulfilled!

(Exit.)

Iolaus comes forth and lies down to sleep at the door of Alexander's tent. Music breaks in—at first, slow, deep, hesitating—the throb of the desert and the distant city. Gradually a misty, supernatural light suffuses the sky and obscures the background. Within the mist moving figures appear faintly. The music takes up the theme of the Bacchanal song with which the play opens—"Evoë! Evoë!"—and the figures are defined as a rout of Bacchanals with Dionysus at their head. But as they pass, in their misty dance, the dancers change from wine-mad mænads to struggling, battling men. The music at the same time becomes grim and brazen. Then grisly death's-head men appear in the vision, and the ghastly note is echoed in the orchestra. Finally, the whole lurid field is strewn with prostrate, writhing bodies, Death and War triumphant in their midst. The moans of the dying and the hoarse discordant triumph of Death and War bring the music to its climax; the vision fades; and the orchestra sinks back to the fateful pulse of the desert and old Babylon. There is a moment of stillness. Then the roar of a lion, returning from his kill, is heard in the distance. Iolaus rouses at the sound, yawns, stretches and slowly rises. The roar is heard once more.

IOLAUS: The lion's bark. . . . The beast should let me sleep—
 Licking his bloody chaps, and howling out
 His maw's inflation! Brutes shed each other's blood
 O' night-times, men o' days—so time goes, redly.
 I'd sleep again—perhaps to-morrow's blood
 Will be king's crimson. . . . Pf! who knows? who knows? . . .
 Ho, ho! What shades are these that dodge o' nights
 Mid lions' walks and thieves'? Women, by my soul!
 Iolaus, hide thee in the crafty gloom
 If ever thou didst love Odysseus' wiles!

Enter Roxana, wrapped in a concealing cloak, and Rachel, her slave.

ROXANA: 'Tis this must be the camp. Ah, could we find
The King's own tent!

RACHEL: Morning will soon be risen.
See, in the East the whiteness of the dawn
Steals upward.

ROXANA: Oh, I dread the day, and long for 't.
What leagues these hours of night do seem in passing,
And when passed, what brief transitions! Rachel mine,
Hast thou borne children?

RACHEL: Aye—to be men's slaves
Beside the waters of Babylon. My sons!

ROXANA: And didst thou love—their father?

RACHEL: Love 's for the free.
I bore my sons in pain less than my tears
In bitterness. Fair boys, to look upon.

ROXANA: Oh, if one loves it is no easy thing
To cease from loving! I do love this king
Who is my loved son's father, with such love
I'll not surrender him—nay, not to Death,
Nor any Lord of Night! Where he goes, I go.

RACHEL: Daughter, I pray for thee—to Zion's God.
Patience through suffering we women learn;
It is His will.

ROXANA: Sh! There is one who sits
Yonder in the shadow—watching. 'Tis Iolaus!—
Iolaus!

IOLAUS: Iolaus 'tis.

ROXANA: Where is the King?

IOLAUS: Where gods take dreamers. He is asleep, within.

ROXANA: The camp—is there noise there?

IOLAUS: Nay, 'tis quiet.

ROXANA: He sleeps—calmly or feverish?

ALEXANDER : What sayest?

There's vast confusion there. I was confused
With images of gods and men that sought
To take god's image—Mænads and Bacchanals,
And friends of kings, and kings. . . . Oh, 'twas a dream!
I was not in Babylon.

ROXANA: My blessed lord,
I do beseech thee come far from the city—
Back, back to Sogdiana with its snows
And the wild sweet winds we loved there, long ago.
We'll roses sow, and laugh at the pricking thorns!

ALEXANDER (*gazing toward the palms and the Euphrates bank*):
 What are those ashes yonder by the palms?
 Was there a pyre—last night? . . . Where 's Calanus? . . .
 Oh, what a king am I! Hephæstion!
 Hephæstion! . . . Ye gods! ye clamorous gods!
 How roars the world with your relentless sound!
 Hephæstion! Hephæstion!

ROXANA: Sweet lord!
I do beseech thee. . . . Oh, my lord! my love!

ALEXANDER: Roxana, thou didst pray to Auramazda?
Thou didst well to pray. . . . And I, I too, will pray
To him who brings the seasons and their fruits.
My season 's passed, and all its fruits I know. . . .
I'll make libation now. Give me the cup.

(Roxana tremblingly takes the rhyton from Rachel and hands it to him.)

ALEXANDER: Thy hand trembles. . . . and thy lips do move in prayer.
Dost thou love me, Roxana?

ROXANA: My lord, my lord!

ALEXANDER: Why then, 'tis well—and not well. Love me not—
I am a king, and mortal—love me not. . . .
How heavy is this wine—there is no glint
In its dark substance—heavy, like my heart.

(He touches it to his lips; then lowers the cup.)

Roxana, didst thou prepare it?

ROXANA: Yea, my lord.

ALEXANDER: I did deserve it of thee . . . of thy love,
And of Hephæstion's love . . . and I will drink . . .
But what be these who come?

(Enter Cassander, Ptolemy, Craterus, Nearchus.)

My generals!

Ye come betimes to greet me.

CASSANDER: Soldier's hours,
And with a soldier's message. In the camp
Our Macedonians are much at odds
With their condition—meritless demerit,
As it seems to them, with Persians nigh thy body,
Themselves, scarred with the toils of war, now left
To gaze upon thy glory from afar.
They long for home—since thou'st no use for them—
And for the honest quiet of the hearths
That were their fathers'. 'Tis their demand, through us.

ALEXANDER: Demand! Why, 'tis demand less strange, more just,
Than that he who bears it is their messenger.
They bore the toils of war? seek its rewards?
Have I a body that 's less scarred than theirs?
Or has one asked me gift that 's been denied?
I have outmatched desire, as well ye know—
And I have borne what in thought 's unbearable!
But that is nothing here. Nearchus, tell me,
Doth Cassander speak my Macedonians' wish?

NEARCHUS: There are old men among them, like to me,
Who long to see their wooded hills again,
And die at home. My King, thou wert happy there!

ALEXANDER: I have denied them naught. I'll not deny
This new thing that they ask. Say to my men
That Alexander bids them march for home.

NEARCHUS: Oh, they will bless you for it—as I bless!

(Exeunt Generals.)

ALEXANDER: Farewell, my comrades! Farewell, my Macedonians!
Ye were my father's heritage to me—
Born mid the clang of war! Too well I loved ye,

Too well the battle's bloody crest, and all
The high red road to glory! . . . Unchanging Sun,
Who bring'st the light of reason to men's minds
And paint'st thereon the shining form of Truth—
I drink to thee—and to the Day! the Day!

Alexander drains the rhyton; then turns, dizzily, and sinks upon the couch within his tent. Roxana has been watching him with terrified eagerness, coming nearer and nearer as he drinks. Now she rushes forward and throws herself upon the couch, clasping his body.

ROXANA: Dead! Dead! Dead! Dead! . . . Auramazda! . . .

(The shouting of the soldiers, joyous and exultant, is heard from near by.)

SOLDIERS: Home! Home to Macedonia! Home! Home!

Trumpets and drums break in with a lively and bright military march. The Generals enter, at the head of the Soldiers. They rush forward as they approach the King's tent. They see that the King is dead. They doff their helmets, and station themselves beside his couch, the old man Nearchus at the head, Craterus, the King's captain of the bodyguard, at the foot. The march music turns from gay to grim, and as the bent and sorrowing soldiers file past, it descends into a deep-toned dirge. At the last, the pulse of the desert and old Babylon beats and dies away.

[CURTAIN.]

THE END.