

To play responsive to the silvery tones,
Whose music thrills the heart.

LYSIMACHUS.

It is, Oh king !
Fond jealousy for thy unsullied fame,
That prompts my fears. Still would I see it linked
With conquest, with renown, with gracious acts,
Worthy thy godlike birth—with high disdain
Of epicurean joys, and loose delights,
With stern self-government, which teaches kings
How with a noble art to govern realms.

ALEXANDER.

So hath it been, and still shall be. Look back
And read the past. Who in imperial Persia,
Barbarous Parthia, and the forests drear
Of far Hyrcania, led a life of toil,
Such as beseeemed the lowliest soldier
In his iron bands, rather than him
Whose path was over thrones ? Who steeled his
heart

To beauty, though it plead with looks divine,
And uttered stern rebuke, by stern example
Still enforced, to those effeminate lords,
Who laved in perfumes, and from Egypt brought
Its consecrated earth, to lend each limb
A suppleness, their less luxurious king
Won from the active sports of noble games—
The chariot race,—leaping at its wild speed,
Swift to the earth—the pointed javelin,
Hurled with desperate force—the fierce encounter
With ferocious beasts, bristling with rage,
To be resisted with such strength and skill,
As pleasure's pampered minions never knew.

LYSIMACHUS.

I know it all—nor chide I thee, my king ;
I'd guard thee only from approach of ill,
That like a covert foe, steals on the soul
When bright temptation, with her syren song,
Its virtue lulls to sleep. It was my highest boast,
My pride to be, the guide of thy fair youth ;
It is my glory, that, in riper years,
Thou still dost come, in my experience hoar,
To seek for wisdom ; and with earnest word,
With love indulgent, bid me in thine ear,
Pour out the garnered knowledge of my age.

ALEXANDER.

And thou wouldst say—— ?

LYSIMACHUS.

But this, with gracious leave,
And pardon for free speech,—that e'en *thy* soul,
Oh, king, may from its high empyrean
Sink to earth, if once the fetters
Of a slavish love enchain its nobler powers.
On yestereve, thou can'st not, as thy wont,
To offer incense at the sacrifice,
And smiles went round, wreathing contemptuous
lips,

At the low whisper, that, subdued, thou knelt
Within thy palace, hidden from all eyes,—
Thou Persia's conqueror, Jupiter's high son,
A humble suppliant for a woman's love !
And she, a slave !

ALEXANDER.

Now, by the gods, 'tis false !
Won by her beauty, I o'erlooked the hour
Of evening sacrifice, but never yet
This knee hath kissed the earth, save in meek
homage

To the immortal gods. Yet she is beautiful,
This matchless creature, whom thou so contemnest,
And none can tell, none know but she may be
Some beauteous incarnation from yon heaven,
Fraught with its purity, and fair as her
Who sprang from ocean's foam, and zephyrs wafted
On their silken wings to green Cythera's Isle.
She moves me greatly,—and the more perchance,
That I have failed to touch, high as I stand,
A heart that seems too chaste for such light love,
Though proffered by a king.

LYSIMACHUS.

The secret may be told
Of this rare iciness,—'tis said she loves another—

ALEXANDER (*with emotion.*)

Say'st thou so ?
Prithee his name ? He knows not what he dares,
Who rashly intermeddles with our claim,
Or baulks our fancy in its roving flights—
He'll find it dangerous sport !

LYSIMACHUS.

It may be false,
Yet I have heard, my king, that young Apelles
Much affects this maid, and therefore lingers,
With enamoured touch, over the canvass,
Where, by thy command, his art portrays
Her lovely lineaments.

ALEXANDER (*thoughtfully.*)

'Tis doubtless so !
Yes, thou art right—and this, aye, this is why
The picture lingers thus—why, stroke by stroke
Is added,—then effaced, and still it seems,
Though there he sits forever at the task,
No nearer its completion, than when first
It met my eye, the loveliest semblance !
But yet immature.

LYSIMACHUS.

Yield her to him, Oh king !
He is a mate, this youthful rover,
From the Cyclades, fitting her low degree.
Thou can'st find nobler game ; and, since before,
Ne'er saw I thee so earnest in pursuit
Of a frail toy, I tremble lest, if won,
It work thee ill.