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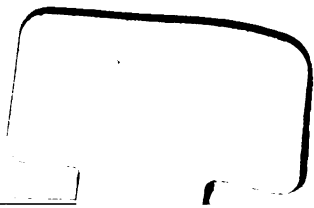
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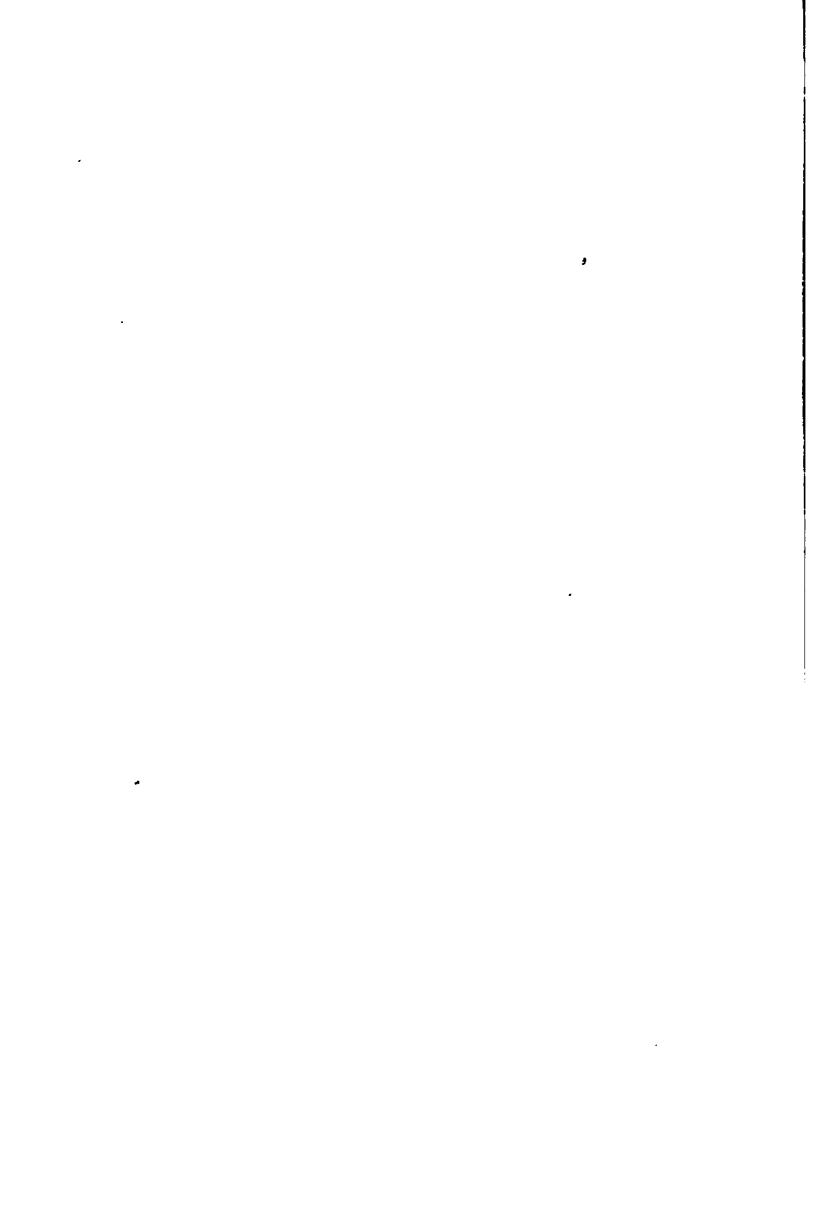
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Matthew Arnold.

Heath's English Classics

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S
SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

J. HAMILTON CASTLEMAN, A.M. (INDIANA)

TEACHER OF ENGLISH AT THE MCKINLEY HIGH SCHOOL
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"Give ear unto the combat of Sohrab against Rostum,
though it be a tale replete with tears." — *The Epic of Kings*.

BOSTON, U.S.A.

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1905

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TO

LAWRENCE CAMERON HULL

WHOSE KINDLY INTEREST HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF GREAT HELP
TO ME IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS TEXT

184462

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Austere, sedate, the chisel in his hand,
He carved his statue from a flawless stone,
That faultless verse, whose earnest undertone
Echoes the music of his Grecian land.
Like Sophocles on that Ægean strand
He walked by night, and watched life's sea alone,
Amid a temperate, not the tropic zone,
Girt round by cool waves and a crystal sand.
And yet the world's heart in his pulses stirred;
He looked abroad across life's wind-swept plain,
And many a wandering mariner has heard
His warning hail, and as the blasts increase,
Has listened, till he passed the reefs again,
And floated safely in his port of Peace.

WILLIAM P. ANDREWS.

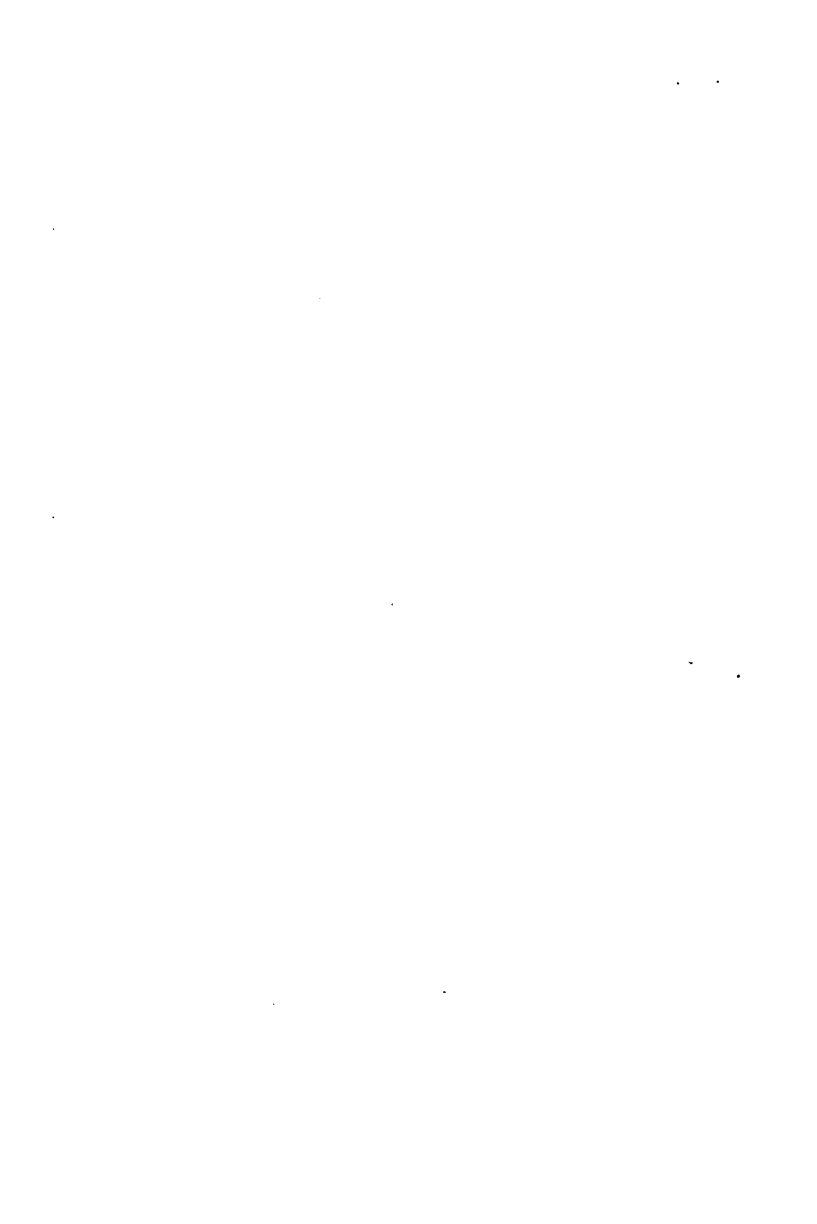
PREFACE

It is the editor's aim, in offering this little volume to the public for high school use, to present Matthew Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum" in a simple yet comprehensible form. With this end in view, he has included such information and suggestions in the introduction and notes as he feels are necessary to a thorough understanding of the poem, but may not be readily accessible to the pupil.

His thanks are due to Mr. W. A. Alexander, Assistant Librarian of Indiana University, for his assistance in furnishing data; to Messrs. P. M. Buck and Milton Frye, his colleagues, for valuable criticisms; and to Mr. L. C. Hull, of the Michigan Military Academy, for his sympathetic advice.

J. H. C.

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA,
August, 1905.



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INTRODUCTION

MATTHEW ARNOLD

MATTHEW ARNOLD, son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous Head Master of Rugby, was born at Laleham, Middlesex County, England, December 24, 1822. After attending school at Laleham, Winchester, and Rugby, he entered Balliol College, Oxford, where he attracted attention by his brilliant scholarship and poetical proclivities. In 1843 he won the Newdigate prize offered for the best poem by an undergraduate, and in 1845, the year after his graduation, was chosen to a fellowship at Oriel,—a much-coveted distinction. After taking his degree, he taught classics for a short time at Rugby, leaving there in 1847 to become private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, then President of the Council. Four years later he was appointed to an inspectorship of schools—a position which he was to occupy for thirty-five years.

His career as a poet began in 1849, when he published a slender book of verse under the title of *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*. This was followed in 1852 by a second volume, entitled *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*. These works were quietly received by the public at first, but gradually won their way into favor. Among the poems they contained were many of recognized merit, such as "The Forsaken Merman," "Resignation," "Tristram and Iseult," and "Isolation."

Poems, First Series, appeared in 1853; and *Poems, Second Series*, in 1855. The first was of special importance, as it included Arnold's masterpiece, "Sohrab and Rustum," with several other classics, among which were "The Scholar Gipsy," "The Church of Brou," and the inimitable little elegy, "Requiescat." The one addition of consequence in the second series was "Balder Dead."

Arnold was now regarded as one of the leading poets of the age, and in 1857 was honored by being elected to the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford. This led to the composition of the tragedy, "Merope," which came out in 1858. The play, although brilliant in design, added but little to his fame.

New Poems, his last volume of verse, was published in 1869. Besides the well-known monody, "Thyrsis," it contained a number of other poems which have come to rank high, among which are "Dover Beach," "The Last Word," "Rugby Chapel," and "Saint Branden." He continued to write occasional verses up to the time of his death, but they were few in number, and, with the exception of "Westminster Abbey," do not have a place among his greatest works.

Meanwhile he had begun to give much attention to prose. In 1859 he published a political essay entitled *England and the Italian Question*; which was followed in 1861 by *Popular Education in France*, an educational treatise; and *Last Words*, a series of lectures on translating Homer. Then came *A French Eton*, a pamphlet resulting from a visit to the continent in his official capacity of school inspector, in 1864; and *Essays in Criticism*, his masterpiece in prose, in which he teaches the art of criticism, in 1865. *Schools and Universities on the Continent*, dealing with education in France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, appeared in 1868; and *Culture and Anarchy*, an essay in political and social criticism, in 1869. Other papers followed rap-

idly. *St. Paul and Protestantism* came out in 1870; *Friendship's Garland*, in 1871; *Literature and Dogma*, in 1873; *God and the Bible*, in 1875; *Last Essays on the Church and Religion*, in 1877; *Mixed Essays*, in 1879; and *Irish Essays*, in 1882. Journeys through the United States resulted in *Discourses in America*, in 1885; and *Civilization in the United States*, in 1888; The list of his literary achievements closes with *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*, in 1888.

In 1886, he resigned his position as Inspector of Schools to devote his remaining years to literary work. But the time accorded him was brief. On April 15, 1888, while on a visit to Liverpool, he was stricken with heart failure and died almost instantly. He was buried in his native village, Laleham.

Arnold's permanence in literature, both as a poet and a critic, is assured. As a poet he ranks with Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, and Byron, and as a critic with Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge, and Pater. His poetry has been pronounced more classical in form than that of any other English poet except Milton. It has a refined and delicate beauty, an artistic finish, and above all, a totality of impression, which is found elsewhere only among the ancient writers. But while his poetry is classical in form, it is not so in spirit. Infused into its quiet, stately lines are the thoughts and emotions of a modern mind, and problems of the nineteenth century compose the theme for almost every verse.

As a critic, his strength lies in a clear insight into his subject joined with a concise, yet entertaining way of telling the results of his observations. He has done much to stimulate interest in criticism by advancing certain helpful principles of literary judgment, and has increased the breadth of view of his readers by constant insistence upon the study of "the best that has been thought and said in the world." His earnest efforts to awaken the English people from their intellectual apathy have been fre-

quently misunderstood, and as a result, he has been subjected to much unjust censure. But to-day his purposes are understood, and he is now recognized as one of the great reformers of his time.

Herbert W. Paul says of him: "Of all modern poets except Goethe, Arnold was the best critic. Of all modern critics, with the same exception, he was the best poet."

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Source of the Plot

THE original story of Sohrab and Rustum is found in the "Shah Nameh," or Book of Kings, the great Persian epic written by Firdausi in 976-1010 A.D. The work, in brief, is a chronicle history of the Iranian or Persian Empire, celebrating the achievements of kings and heroes from the time when the half-mythical Kainmers first sat upon the throne of Persia "and was master of the world," down through the glorious reign of the Kayaman dynasty, to the Mohammedan conquest in 641 A.D. Interspersed with the legendary stories are a great many tales drawn from historical sources.

The epic is of great length, containing no less than sixty thousand couplets, — more than Homer's Iliad and Odyssey combined. It was originally brought out in three hundred volumes, but was ordered shortened to eighty by King Bajazet II, to whom it was dedicated. It is written in pure Persian, and unlike most literature of the Orient, has a comparatively simple and direct style. The episode of Sohrab and Rustum is probably its best-known part.

Translations of the work occur in English, German, French, and Italian. The first English version, and the one from which Arnold perhaps drew the material for his poem, was published by James Atkinson in 1832, under the title of "Shah Nameh." A later and more inviting translation, by Helen Zimmern, appeared in London in 1883 under the name of "The Epic of Kings."

The German version, a running paraphrase by Görres, known as the "Heldenbuch von Iran," came out in 1820; the French, a prose translation by Jules Mohl, "Le Livre des Rois," in 1876-1878; and the Italian, also in prose, by Italo Pizzi, "Firdusi, II Libro dei Re," in 1886-1889.

RUSTEM AND SOHRAB

The following version of the Sohrab and Rustum episode is drawn from "The Epic of Kings," a translation by Helen Zimmermann, published by T. Fisher Unwin of London, England, in 1883: —

It came about that on a certain day Rustem arose from his couch, and his mind was filled with forebodings. He bethought him therefore to go out to the chase. So he saddled Rakush and made ready his quiver with arrows. Then he turned him unto the wilds that lie near Turan, even in the direction of the city of Samengan. And when he was come nigh unto it, he started a herd of asses and made sport among them till that he was weary of the hunt. Then he caught one and slew it and roasted it for his meal, and when he had eaten it and broken the bones for the marrow, he laid himself down to slumber, and Rakush cropped the pasture beside him.

Now while the hero was sleeping there passed by seven knights of Turan, and they beheld Rakush and coveted him. So they threw their cords at him to ensnare him. But Rakush, when he beheld their design, pawed the ground in anger, and fell upon them as he had fallen upon the lion; but they were too many. So they ensnared him and led him to the city, thinking in their hearts, "Verily a goodly capture have we made." But Rustem when he awoke from his slumbers was downcast and sore grieved when he saw not his steed, and said unto himself: —

“How can I stand against the Turks, and how can I traverse the desert alone?”

And his heart was full of trouble. Then he sought for the traces of the horse's hoofs, and he followed them, and they led him even unto the gates of the city. Now when those within beheld Rustem, and that he came before them on foot, the king and the nobles came forth to greet him, and inquired of him how this was come about. Then Rustem told them how Rakush was vanished while he slumbered, and how he had followed his track even unto these gates. And he swore a great oath, and vowed that if his courser were not restored unto him, many heads should quit their trunks. Then the King of Samengan, when he saw that Rustem was beside himself with anger, spoke words of soothing, and said that none of his people should do wrong unto the hero; and he begged him that he would enter into his house and abide with him until that search had been made, saying:—

“Surely Rakush cannot be hid.”

And Rustem was satisfied at these words, and cast suspicion from his spirit, and entered the house of the King, and feasted with him, and beguiled the hours with wine. And the King rejoiced in his guest, and encompassed him with sweet singers and all honour. And when the night was fallen, the King himself led Rustem unto a couch perfumed with musk and roses, and he bade him slumber sweetly until the morning. And he declared to him yet again that all was well for him and for his steed.

Now when a portion of the night was spent, and the star of the morning stood high in the arch of heaven, the door of Rustem's chamber was opened, and a murmur of soft voices came in from the threshold. And there stepped within a slave bearing a lamp perfumed with amber, and a woman whose beauty was veiled came after her. And he was amazed when he saw them. And when he had roused him somewhat, he spake and said:—

“Who art thou, and what is thy name?”

Then the Peri-faced answered him, saying, “I am Tahmineh, the daughter of the King of Samengan, of the race of the leopard and

the lion, and none of the princes of this earth are worthy of my hand, neither hath any man seen me unveiled. But my heart is torn with anguish, and my spirit is tossed with desire, for I have heard of thy deeds of prowess, and how thou fearest neither Deev nor lion, neither leopard nor crocodile, and how thy hand is swift to strike, and how thou didst venture alone into Mazinderan, and how wild asses are devoured of thee, and how the earth groaneth under the tread of thy feet, and how men perish at thy blows, and how even the eagle dareth not swoop down upon her prey when she beholdeth thy sword. These things and more have they told unto me, and my eyes have yearned to look upon thy face. And now hath God brought thee within the gates of my father, and I am come to say that I am thine if thou wilt hear me, and if thou wilt not, none other will I espouse. And if thou wilt listen unto me, I will lead forth before thee Rakush thy steed, and I will place under thy feet the land of Samengan."

Now while this moon of beauty was yet speaking, Rustem regarded her. And he saw that she was fair, and that wisdom abode in her mind; and when he heard of Rakush, his spirit was decided within him, and he held that this adventure could not end save gloriously. So he sent a Mubid unto the king and demanded the hand of Tahmineh from her father. And the King, when he heard the news, was rejoiced, and gave his daughter unto Pehliva, and they concluded an alliance according to custom and the rites. And all men, young and old, within the house and city of the King were glad at this alliance, and called down blessings upon Rustem.

Now Rustem, when he was alone with the Peri-faced, took from his arm an onyx that was known unto all the world. And he gave it to her, and said:—

"Cherish this jewel, and if Heaven cause thee to give birth unto a daughter, fasten it within her locks, and it will shield her from evil; but if it be granted unto thee to bring forth a son, fasten it upon his arm, that he may wear it like his father. And he shall be strong as Keriman, of stature like unto Saum, the son of Neriman, and of grace of speech like unto Zal, my father."

The Peri-faced, when she had heard these words, was glad in his presence. But when the day was passed, there came in unto them the king, her father, and he told Rustem how that tidings of Rakush were come unto his ears, and how that the courser would shortly be within the gates. And Rustem, when he heard it, was filled with longing after his steed, and when he knew that he was come, he hastened forth to caress him. And with his own hands he fastened the saddle, and gave thanks unto Ormuzd, who had restored his joy between his hands. Then he knew that the time to depart was come. And he opened his arms and took unto his heart Tahmineh, the fair of face, and he bathed her cheek with his tears and covered her hair with kisses. Then he flung him upon Rakush, and the swift-footed bare him quickly out of her sight. And Tahmineh was sorrowful exceedingly, and Rustem too was filled with thoughts as he turned him back unto Zaboulistan. And he pondered his adventure in his heart, but to no man did he speak of what he had seen or done.

Now when nine moons had run their course, there was born unto Tahmineh a son in the likeness of his father, a babe whose mouth was filled with smiles, wherefore men called him Sohrab. And when he numbered but one month, he was like unto a child of twelve, and when he numbered five years, he was skilled in arms and all the arts of war, and when ten years were rolled above his head, there was none in the land that could resist him in the games of strength. Then he came before his mother and spake words of daring. And he said:—

“Since I am taller and stouter than my peers, teach unto me my race and lineage, and what I shall say when men ask me the name of my sire.”

When Tahmineh beheld the ardour of her son, she smiled in her spirit because that his fire was like to that of his father. And she opened her mouth and said:—

“Hear my words, O my son, and be glad in thine heart, neither give way in thy spirit to anger. For thou art the offspring of Rustem, thou art descended from the seed of Saum and Zal, and Neriman was

thy forefather. And since God made the world it hath held none like unto Rustem, thy sire."

Then she showed to him a letter written by the Pehliva, and gave him the gold and jewels Rustem had sent at his birth. And she spake and said:—

"Cherish these gifts with gratitude, for it is thy father who hath sent them. Yet remember, O my son, that thou close thy lips concerning these things; for Turan groaneth under the hand of Afrasiyab, and he is foe unto Rustem the glorious. If, therefore, he should learn of thee, he would seek to destroy the son for hatred of the sire. Moreover, O my boy, if Rustem learned that thou wert become a mountain of valour, perchance he would demand thee at my hands, and the sorrow of thy loss would crush the heart of thy mother."¹

But Sohrab replied, "Nought can be hidden upon earth for aye. To all men are known the deeds of Rustem, and since my birth be thus noble, wherefore hast thou kept it dark from me so long? I will go forth with an army of brave Turks and lead them unto Iran. I will cast Kai Kaous from off his throne. I will give to Rustem the crown of the Kaianides, and together we will subdue the land of Turan, and Afrasiyab shall be slain by my hands. Then will I mount the throne in his stead. But thou shalt be called the Queen of Iran, for since Rustem is my father and I am his son, no other kings shall rule in this world, for to us alone behoveth it to wear the crowns of might. And I pant in longing after the battlefield, and I desire that the world should behold my prowess. But a horse is needful unto me, for it beseemeth me not to go on foot before mine enemies."

Now Tahmineh, when she had heard the words of this boy, rejoiced in her soul at his courage. So she bade the guardians of the flocks lead out the horses before Sohrab, her son. And they did as she had bidden, and Sohrab surveyed the steeds, and tested their strength like his

¹ Some versions of the story have it that Tahmineh sent word to Rustum that the child born to them was a girl lest Rustum should demand him of her to make a warrior of him. Arnold follows these versions on this point.

father had done before him of old, and he bowed them under his hand, and he could not be satisfied. And thus for many days did he seek a worthy steed. Then came one before him and told of a foal sprung from Rakush, the swift of foot. When Sohrab heard the tidings, he smiled, and bade that the foal be led before him. And he testéd it and found it to be strong. So he saddled it and sprang upon its back, and cried, saying:—

“Now that I own a horse like thee, the world shall be dark to many.”

Then he made ready for war against Iran, and the nobles and warriors flocked around him.

* * * * *

Meantime a certain man brought news unto Afrasiyab that Sohrab was making ready an army to fall upon Iran, and to cast Kai Kaous from off his throne. And he told Afrasiyab how the courage and valour of Sohrab exceeded words. And Afrasiyab, when he heard this, hid not his contentment, and he called before him Human and Barman, the doughty. Then he bade them gather together an army and join the ranks of Sohrab, and he confided to them his secret purpose, but he enjoined them to tell no man thereof. For he said:—

“Into our hands hath it been given to settle the course of the world. For it is known unto me that Sohrab is sprung from Rustem, the Pehliva, but from Rustem must it be hidden who it is that goeth out against him, then peradventure he will perish by the hands of this young lion, and Iran, devoid of Rustem, will fall a prey into my hands. Then will we subdue Sohrab also, and all the world will be ours. But if it be written that Sohrab fall under the hand of Tehemten, then the grief he shall endure when he shall learn that he has slain his son will bring him to the grave for sorrow.”

So spoke Afrasiyab in his guile, and when he had done unveiling his black heart, he bade the warriors depart unto Samengan. And they bare with them gifts of great price to pour before the face of Sohrab. And they bare also a letter filled with soft words. And in

the letter Afrasiyab lauded Sohrab for his resolve, and told him how that if Iran be subdued the world would henceforth know peace, for upon his own head should he place the crown of the Kaianides; and Turan, Iran, and Samengan should be as one land.

When Sohrab had read this letter, and saw the gifts and the aid sent out to him, he rejoiced aloud, for he deemed that now none could withstand his might. So he caused the cymbals of departure to be clashed, and the army made them ready to go forth. Then Sohrab led them into the land of Iran. And their track was marked by desolation and destruction, for they spared nothing as they passed.

* * * * *

In the meantime Gustahem, father of Gurdafrid, a maiden knight, whom Sohrab had overcome, called before him a scribe, and bade him write unto Kai Kaous all that was come about, and how an army was come forth from Turan, at whose head rode a chief that was a child in years, a lion in strength and stature.

* * * * *

Now when Kai Kaous had gotten the writing of Gustahem, he was sore afflicted and much afraid, and he called about him his nobles and asked their counsels. And he said:—

“Who shall stand against this Turk? For Gustahem doth liken him in power unto Rustem, and saith he resembleth the seed of Neriman.”

Then the warriors cried with one accord, “Unto Rustem alone can we look in this danger!”

And Kai Kaous hearkened to their voice, and he called for a scribe and dictated unto him a letter. And he wrote unto his Pehliva, and invoked the blessings of Heaven upon his head, and he told him all that was come to pass, and how new dangers threatened Iran, and how to Rustem alone could he look for help in his trouble. And he recalled unto Tehemten all that he had done for him in the days that were gone by, and he entreated him once again to be his refuge. And he said,—

“When thou shalt receive this letter, stay not to speak the word that

hangeth upon thy lips ; and if thou bearest roses in thy hands, stop not to smell them, but haste thee to help us in our need."

Then Kai Kaous sent forth Gew with this writing unto Zaboulistan, and bade him neither rest nor tarry until he should stand before the face of Rustem. And he said, —

"When thou hast done my behest, turn thee again unto me ; neither abide within the courts of the Pehliva, nor linger by the roadside."

And Gew did as the Shah commanded, and took neither food nor rest till he set foot within the gates of Rustem. And Rustem greeted him kindly, and asked him of his mission ; and when he had read the writing of the Shah, he questioned Gew concerning Sohrab. For he said : —

"I should not marvel if such an hero arose in Iran, but that a warrior of renown should come forth from the Turks, I cannot believe it. But thou sayest none knoweth whence cometh this knight. I have myself a son in Samengan, but he is yet an infant, and his mother writeth me that he rejoiceth in the sports of his age, and though he be like to become a hero among men, his time is not yet come to lead forth an army. And that which thou sayest hath been done, surely it is not the work of a babe. But enter, I pray thee, into my house, and we will confer together concerning this adventure."

Then Rustem bade his cooks make ready a banquet, and he feasted Gew, and troubled his head with wine, and caused him to forget cares and time. But when morn was come, Gew remembered the commands of the Shah that he tarry not, but return with all speed, and he spake thereof to Rustem, and prayed him to make known his resolve. But Rustem spake, saying : —

"Disquiet not thyself, for death will surely fall upon these men of Turan. Stay with me yet another day and rest, and water thy lips that are parched. For though this Sohrab be a hero like to Saum and Zal and Neriman, verily he shall fall by my hands."

And he made ready yet another banquet, and three days they caroused without ceasing. But on the fourth Gew arose with resolve, and came before Rustem girt for departure. And said : —

“It behoveth me to return, O Pehliva, for I bethink me how Kai Kaous is a man hard and choleric, and the fear of Sohrab weigheth upon his heart, and his soul burneth with impatience, and he hath lost sleep, and hath hunger and thirst on this account. And he will be wroth against us if we delay yet longer to do his behest.”

Then Rustem said, “Fear not, for none on earth dare be angered with me.”

But he did as Gew desired, and made ready his army, and saddled Rakush, and set forth from Zaboulistan, and a great train followed after him.

Now when they came nigh unto the courts of the Shah, the nobles came forth to meet them, and do homage before Rustem. And when they were come in, Rustem gat him from Rakush and hastened into the presence of his lord. But Kai Kaous, when he beheld him, was angry, and spake not, and his brows were knit with fury; and when Rustem had done obeisance before him, he unlocked the doors of his mouth, and words of folly escaped his lips. And he said:—

“Who is Rustem, that he defieth my power and disregardeth my commands? If I had a sword within my grasp, I would split his head like an orange. Seize him, I command, and hang him upon the nearest gallows, and let his name be never spoken in my presence.”

When he heard these words, Gew trembled in his heart, but he said, “Dost thou put forth thy hand against Rustem?”

And the Shah when he heard it was beside himself, and he cried with a loud voice that Gew be hanged together with the other; and he bade Tus lead them forth. And Tus would have led them out, for he hoped the anger of the Shah would be appeased; but Rustem broke from his grasp and stood before Kai Kaous, and the nobles were filled with fear when they saw his anger. And he flung reproaches at Kai Kaous, and he recalled to him his follies, and the march into Mazinderan and Hamaveran, and his flight into Heaven; and he reminded him how that but for Rustem he would not now be seated upon the throne of light. And he bade him threaten Sohrab with the gallows, and he said:—

“I am a free man and no slave, and am servant alone unto God; and without Rustem Kai Kaous is as nothing. And the world is subject unto me, and Rakush is my throne, and my sword is my seal, and my helmet my crown. And but for me, who called forth Kai Kobad, thine eyes had never looked upon this throne. And had I desired it I could have sat upon its seat. But now am I weary of thy follies, and I will turn me away from Iran, and when this Turk shall have put you under his yoke I shall not learn thereof.”

Then he turned him, and strode from out the presence chamber. And he sprang upon Rakush, who waited without, and he vanished from before their eyes ere yet the nobles had rallied from their astonishment. And they were downcast and oppressed with boding cares, and they held counsel among themselves what to do; for Rustem was their mainstay, and they knew that bereft of his arm and counsel they could not stand against this Turk. And they blamed Kai Kaous, and counted over the good deeds that Rustem had done for him, and they pondered and spake long. And in the end they resolved to send a messenger unto Kai Kaous, and they chose from their midst Gudarz the aged, and bade him stand before the Shah. And Gudarz did as they desired, and he spake long and without fear, and he counted over each deed that had been done by Rustem; and he reproached the Shah with his ingratitude, and he said how Rustem was the shepherd, and how the flock could not be led without its leader. And Kai Kaous heard him unto the end, and he knew that his words were the words of reason and truth, and he was ashamed of that which he had done, and confounded when he beheld his acts thus naked before him. And he humbled himself before Gudarz, and said,—

“That which thou sayest, surely it is right.”

And he entreated Gudarz to go forth and seek Rustem, and bid him forget the evil words of his Shah, and bring him back to the succour of Iran. And Gudarz hastened forth to do as Kai Kaous desired, and he told the nobles of his mission, and they joined themselves unto him, and all the chiefs of Iran went forth in quest of Rustem. And when they had found him, they prostrated themselves in the dust before him,

and Gudarz told him of his mission, and he prayed him to remember that Kai Kaous was a man devoid of understanding, whose thoughts flowed over like to new wine that fermenteth. And he said:—

“Though Rustem be angered against the King, yet hath the land of Iran done no wrong that it should perish at his hands. Yet, if Rustem save it not, surely it will fall under this Turk.”

But Rustem said, “My patience hath an end, and I fear none but God. What is this Kai Kaous that he should anger me? and what am I that I have need of him? I have not deserved the evil words that he spakè unto me, but now will I think of them no longer, but cast aside all thoughts of Iran.”

When the nobles heard these words, they grew pale, and fear took hold on their hearts. But Gudarz, full of wisdom, opened his mouth and said —

“O Pehliva! the land, when it shall learn of this, will deem that Rustem is fled before the face of this Turk; and when men shall believe that Tehemten is afraid, they will cease to combat, and Iran will be duntrodden at his hands. Turn thee not, therefore, at this hour from thy allegiance to the Shah, and tarnish not thy glory by this retreat, neither suffer that the downfall of Iran rest upon thy head. Put from thee, therefore, the words that Kai Kaous spake against you in his anger, and lead us forth to battle against this Turk. For it must not be spoken that Rustem feared to fight a beardless boy.”

And Rustem listened and pondered these words in his heart, and knew that they were good. But he said:—

“Fear hath never been known of me, neither hath Rustem shunned the din of arms, and I depart not because of Sohrab, but because that scorn and insult have been my recompense.”

Yet when he had pondered a while longer, he saw that he must return to the Shah. So he did that which he knew to be right, and he rode till he came unto the gates of Kai Kaous, and he strode with a proud step into his presence.

Now when the Shah beheld Rustem from afar, he stepped down from off his throne and came before his Pehliva, and craved his pardon

for that which was come about. And he said how he had been angered because Rustem had tarried in his coming, and how haste was his birthright, and how he had forgotten himself in his vexation. But now was his mouth filled with the dust of repentance. And Rustem said:—

“The world is the Shah's, and it behoveth thee to do as beseemeth thee best with thy servants. And until old age shall my loins be girt in fealty unto thee. And may power and majesty be thine for ever!”

And Kai Kaous answered and said, “O my Pehliva, may thy days be blessed unto the end!”

Then he invited him to feast with him, and they drank wine till far into the night, and held counsel together how they should act; and slaves poured rich gifts before Rustem, and the nobles rejoiced, and all was well again within the gates of the King.

Then when the sun had risen and clothed the world with love, the clarions of war were sounded throughout the city, and men made them ready to go forth in enmity before the Turks. And the legions of Persia came forth at the behest of their Shah, and their countless thousands hid the earth under their feet, and the air was darkened by their spears. And when they were come unto the plains where stood the fortress of Hujir, they set up their tents as was their manner. So the watchman saw them from the battlements, and set up a great cry. And Sohrab heard the cry, and questioned the man wherefore he shouted; and when he learned that the enemy were come, he rejoiced, and demanded a cup of wine, and drank to their destruction. Then he called forth Human and showed him the army and bade him be of good cheer, for he said that he saw within its ranks no hero of mighty mace who could stand against himself. So he bade his warriors to a banquet of wine, and he said that they would feast until the time came to meet their foes in battle. And they did as Sohrab said.

¹ Now when the morning was come, Sohrab put on his armour, and leaped upon his steed of battle, and he rode till he came unto the camp of the Iranians, and he broke down the barriers with his spear, and

¹ Arnold takes up the story at this point.

fear seized upon all men when they beheld his stalwart form and majesty of mien and action. Then Sohrab opened his mouth, and his voice of thunder was heard even unto the far ends of the camp. And he spake words of pride, and called forth the Shah to do battle with him, and he swore with a loud voice that the blood of Zindah should be avenged. Now when Sohrab's voice had rung throughout the camp, confusion spread within its borders, and none of those who stood about the throne would accept his challenge for the Shah. And with one accord they said that Rustem was their sole support, and that his sword alone could cause the sun to weep. And Tus sped him within the courts of Rustem. And Rustem said:—

“The hardest tasks doth Kai Kaous ever lay upon me.”

But the nobles would not suffer him to linger, neither to waste time in words, and they buckled upon him his armour, and they threw his leopard-skin about him, and they saddled Rakush, and made ready the hero for the strife. And they pushed him forth, and called after him,—

“Haste, haste, for no common combat awaiteth thee, for verily Ahri-man standeth before us.”

Now when Rustem was come before Sohrab, and beheld the youth, brave and strong, with a breast like unto Saum, he said to him,—

“Let us go apart from hence, and step forth from out the lines of the armies.”

For there was a zone between the two camps that none might pass. And Sohrab assented to the demand of Rustem, and they stepped out into it, and made them ready for single combat. But when Sohrab would have fallen upon him, the soul of Rustem melted with compassion, and he desired to save a boy thus fair and valiant. So he said unto him:—

“O young man, the air is warm and soft, but the earth is cold. I have pity upon thee, and would not take from thee the boon of life. Yet if we combat together, surely thou wilt fall by my hands, for none have withstood my power, neither men nor Deevs nor dragons. Desist, therefore, from this enterprise, and quit the ranks of Turan, for Iran hath need of heroes like unto thee.”

Now while Rustem spake thus, the heart of Sohrab went out to him. And he looked wistfully at him, and said :—

“O hero, I am about to put unto thee a question, and I entreat of thee that thou reply to me according to the truth. Tell me thy name, that my heart may rejoice in thy words, for it seemeth unto me that thou art none other than Rustem.”

But Rustem replied, “Thou errest, I am not Rustem; Rustem is a Pehliva, but I, I am a slave, and own neither a crown nor a throne.”

These words spake Rustem that Sohrab might be afraid when he beheld his prowess, and deem that yet greater might was hidden in the camp of his enemy. But Sohrab when he heard these words was sad, and his hopes that were risen so high were shattered, and the day that had looked so bright was made dark unto his eyes. Then he made him ready for the combat, and they fought until their spears were shivered and their swords were hacked like unto saws. And when all their weapons were bent, they betook them unto clubs, and they waged war with these until they were broken. Then they strove until their mail was torn and their horses spent with exhaustion, and even then could not desist, but wrestled with one another with their hands till the sweat and blood ran down from their bodies. And they contended until their throats were parched and their bodies weary, and to neither was given the victory. Then they stayed them a while to rest, and Rustem thought within his mind how all his days he had not coped with such a hero. And it seemed to him that his contest with the White Deev had been as nought to this.

Now when they had rested a while, they fell to again and they fought with arrows, but still none could surpass the other. Then Rustem strove to hurl Sohrab from his steed, but it availed him nought, and he could shake him no more than the mountain can be moved from its seat. So they betook themselves again unto clubs, and Sohrab aimed at Rustem with might and smote him, and Rustem reeled beneath his stroke, and bit his lips in agony. Then Sohrab vaunted his advantage, and bade Rustem go and measure him with his equals; for though his strength be great, he could not stand against a youth. So

they went their ways, and Rustem fell upon the men of Turan, and spread confusion far and wide among their ranks; and Sohrab raged along the lines of Iran, and men and horses fell under his hands. And Rustem was sad in his soul, and he turned with sorrow into his camp. But when he saw the destruction Sohrab had wrought, his anger was kindled, and he reproached the youth, and challenged him to come forth yet again to single combat. But because that the day was far spent they resolved to rest until the morrow.

Then Rustem went before Kai Kaous and told him of this boy of valour, and he prayed unto Ormuzd that He would give him strength to vanquish his foe. Yet he made ready also his house lest he should fall in the fight, and he commanded that a tender message be borne unto Rudabeh, and he sent words of comfort unto Zal, his father. And Sohrab, too, in his camp lauded the might of Rustem, and he said how the battle had been sore, and how his mind had misgiven him of the issue. And he spake to Human, saying:—

“My mind is filled with thoughts of this aged man, mine adversary, for it would seem to me that his stature is like unto mine, and that I behold about him the tokens that my mother recounted unto me. And my heart goeth out towards him, and I muse if it be Rustem, my father. For it behoveth me not to combat him. Wherefore, I beseech thee, tell unto me how this may be.”

But Human answered and said, “Oft have I looked upon the face of Rustem in battle, and mine eyes have beheld his deeds of valour; but this man in no wise resembleth him, nor is his manner of wielding his club the same.”

These things spake Human in his vileness, because that Afrasiyab had enjoined him to lead Sohrab into destruction. And Sohrab held his peace, but he was not wholly satisfied.

Now when the day had begun to lighten the sky and clear away the shadows, Rustem and Sohrab strode forth unto the midway spot that stretched between the armies. And Sohrab bare in his hands a mighty club, and the garb of battle was upon him; but his mouth was full of smiles, and he asked of Rustem how he had rested, and he said:—

“Wherefore hast thou prepared thy heart for battle? Cast from thee, I beg, this mace and sword of vengeance, and let us doff our armour, and seat ourselves together in amity, and let wine soften our angry deeds. For it seemeth to me that this conflict is impure. And if thou wilt listen to my desires, my heart shall speak to thee of love, and I will make the tears of shame spring up into thine eyes. And for this cause I ask thee yet again, tell me thy name, neither hide it any longer, for I behold that thou art of noble race. And it would seem unto me that thou art Rustem, the chosen one, the Lord of Zaboulistan, the son of Zal, the son of Saum the hero.”

But Rustem answered, “O hero of tender age, we are not come forth to parley but to combat, and mine ears are sealed against thy words of lure. I am an old man, and thou art young, but we are girded for battle, and the Master of the world shall decide between us.”

Then Sohrab said, “O man of many years, wherefore wilt thou not listen to the counsel of a stripling? I desired that thy soul should leave thee upon thy bed, but thou hast elected to perish in the combat. That which is ordained it must be done, therefore let us make ready for the conflict.”

So they made them ready, and when they had bound their steeds, they fell upon each other, and the crash of their encounter was heard like thunder throughout the camps. And they measured their strength from the morning until the setting sun. And when the day was about to vanish, Sohrab seized upon Rustem by the girdle and threw him upon the ground, and kneeled upon him, and drew forth his sword from his scabbard, and would have severed his head from his trunk. Then Rustem knew that only wile could save him. So he opened his mouth and said:—

“O young man, thou knowest not the customs of the combat. It is written in the laws of honour that he who overthroweth a brave man for the first time should not destroy him, but preserve him for fight a second time, then only is it given unto him to kill his adversary.”

And Sohrab listened to Rustem’s words of craft and stayed his hand,

and he let the warrior go, and because that the day was ended he sought to fight no more, but turned him aside and chased the deer until the night was spent.

* * * * *

Now while Sohrab was thus doing, Rustem was gone beside a running brook, and laved his limbs, and prayed to God in his distress. And he entreated of Ormuzd that He would grant him such strength that the victory must be his. And Ormuzd heard him, and gave to him such strength that the rock whereon Rustem stood gave way under his feet, because it had not power to bear him. Then Rustem saw it was too much, and he prayed yet again that part thereof be taken from him. And once more Ormuzd listened to his voice. Then when the time for combat was come, Rustem turned him to the meeting place, and his heart was full of cares and his face of fears. But Sohrab came forth like a giant refreshed, and he ran at Rustem like to a mad elephant, and he cried with a voice of thunder:—

“O thou who didst flee from battle, wherefore art thou come out once more against me? But I say unto thee, this time shall thy words of guile avail thee naught.”

And Rustem, when he heard him, and looked upon him, was seized with misgivings, and he learned to know fear. So he prayed to Ormuzd that He would restore to him the power He had taken back. But he suffered not Sohrab to behold his fears, and they made them ready for the fight. And he closed upon Sohrab with all his new-found might, and shook him terribly, and though Sohrab returned his attacks with vigour, the hour of his overthrow was come. For Rustem took him by the girdle and hurled him unto the earth, and he broke his back like to a reed, and he drew forth his sword to sever his body. Then Sohrab knew it was the end, and he gave a great sigh, and writhed in his agony, and he said:—

“That which is come about, it is my fault, and henceforward will my youth be a theme of derision among the people. But I sped not forth for empty glory, but I went out to seek my father; for my mother had

told me by what tokens I should know him, and I perish for longing after him. And now have my pains been fruitless, for it hath not been given unto me to look upon his face. Yet I say unto thee, if thou shouldst become a fish that swimmeth in the depths of the ocean, if thou shouldst change into a star that is concealed in the farthest heavens, my father would draw thee forth from thy hiding-place, and avenge my death upon thee when he shall learn that the earth is become my bed. For my father is Rustem, the Pehliva, and it shall be told unto him how that Sohrab his son perished in the quest after his face."

When Rustem heard these words, his sword fell from out of his grasp, and he was shaken with dismay. And there broke from his heart a groan as of one whose heart was racked with anguish. And the earth became dark before his eyes, and he sank down lifeless beside his son. But when he had opened his eyes once more, he cried unto Sohrab in the agony of his spirit. And he said: —

"Bearest about thee a token of Rustem, that I may know that the words that thou speakest are true? For I am Rustem, the unhappy, and may my name be struck from the lists of men!"

When Sohrab heard these words, his misery was boundless, and he cried: —

"If thou art indeed my father, then hast thou stained thy sword in the life-blood of thy son. And thou didst it of thine obstinacy. For I sought to turn thee unto love, and I implored of thee thy name, for I thought to behold in thee the tokens recounted of my mother. But I appealed unto thy heart in vain, and now is the time gone by for meeting. Yet open, I beseech thee, mine armour and regard the jewel upon mine arm. For it is an onyx given unto me by my father, as a token whereby he should know me."

Then Rustem did as Sohrab bade him, and he opened his mail and saw the onyx; and when he had seen it, he tore his clothes in his distress, and he covered his head with ashes. And the tears of penitence ran from his eyes, and he roared aloud in his sorrow. But Sohrab said: —

"It is in vain, there is no remedy. Weep not, therefore, for doubtless it was written that this should be. But I entreat of thee that thou do unto me an act of love. Let not the Shah fall upon the men of Turan, for they came not forth in enmity to him but to do my desire, and on my head alone resteth this expedition. Wherefore I desire not that they should perish when I can defend them no longer. As for me, I came like the thunder and I vanish like the wind, but perchance it is given unto us to meet again above."

Then Rustem promised to do the desires of Sohrab. And he sent word unto Human, saying: —

"The sword of vengeance must slumber in the scabbard. Thou art leader of the host, return, therefore, whence thou camest, and depart across the river ere many days be fallen. As for me, I will fight no more, yet neither will I speak unto thee again, for thou didst hide from my son the tokens of his father, of thine iniquity thou didst lead him into this pit."

Then when he had thus spoken, Rustem turned him yet again unto his son. And the nobles went with him, and they beheld Sohrab, and they heard his groans of pain. And Rustem, when he saw the agony of the boy, was beside himself, and would have made an end of his own life, but the nobles suffered it not, and stayed his hand. Then Rustem remembered him that Kai Kaous had a mighty balm to heal. And he prayed Gudarz go before the Shah, and bear unto him a message of entreaty from Rustem his servant. And he said: —

"O Shah, if ever I have done that which was good in thy sight, if ever my hand have been of avail unto thee, recall now my benefits in the hour of my need, and have pity upon my dire distress. Send unto me, I pray thee, of the balm that is among thy treasures that my son may be healed by thy grace."

And Gudarz outstripped the whirlwind in his speed to bear unto the Shah this message. But the heart of Kai Kaous was hardened, and he remembered not the benefits he had received from Rustem, and he recalled only the proud words that he had spoken before him. And he was afraid lest the might of Sohrab be joined to that of his

father, and that together they prove mightier than he, and turn upon him. So he shut his ear unto the cry of his Pehliva. And Gudarz bore back the answer of the Shah, and he said:—

“The heart of Kai Kaous is flinty, and his evil nature is like to a bitter gourd that ceaseth never to bear fruit. Yet I counsel thee, go before him thyself, and see if peradventure thou soften this rock.”

And Rustem in his grief did as Gudarz counselled, and turned to go before the Shah, but he was not come before him ere a messenger overtook him, and told unto him that Sohrab was departed from the world. Then Rustem set up a wailing such as the earth has not heard the like of, and he heaped reproaches upon himself, and he could not cease from plaining the son that was fallen by his hands. And he cried continually:—

“I that am old have killed my son. I that am strong have uprooted this mighty boy. I have torn the heart of my child, I have laid low the head of a Pehliva.”

Then he made a great fire, and flung into it his tent of many colours and his trappings of Roum, his saddle, and his leopard-skin, his armour well tried in battle, and all the appurtenances of his throne. And he stood by and looked on to see his pride laid in the dust. And he tore his flesh, and cried aloud,—

“My heart is sick unto death.”

Then he commanded that Sohrab be swathed in rich brocades of gold worthy his body. And when they had enfolded him, and Rustem learned that the Turanians had quitted the borders, he made ready his army to return unto Zaboulistan. And the nobles marched before the bier, and their heads were covered with ashes, and their garments were torn. And the drums of the war-elephants were shattered, and the cymbals broken, and the tails of the horses were shorn to the root, and all the signs of mourning were abroad.

Now Zal, when he saw the host returning thus in sorrow, marvelled what was come about; for he beheld Rustem at their head, wherefore he knew that the wailing was not for his son. And he came before Rustem and questioned him. And Rustem led him unto the bier and

showed unto him the youth that was like in feature and in might unto Saum the son of Neriman, and he told him all that was come to pass, and how this was his son, who in years was but an infant, but a hero in battle. And Rudabeh too came out to behold the child, and she joined her lamentations unto theirs. Then they built for Sohrab a tomb like to a horse's hoof, and Rustem laid him therein in a chamber of gold perfumed with ambergris. And he covered him with brocades of gold. And when it was done, the house of Rustem grew like to a grave, and its courts were filled with the voice of sorrow. And no joy would enter into the heart of Rustem, and it was long before he held high his head.

Meantime the news spread even unto Turan, and there did all men grieve and weep for the child of prowess that was fallen in his bloom. And the King of Samengan tore his vestments, but when his daughter learned it, she was beside herself with affliction. And Tahmineh cried after her son, and bewailed the evil fate that had befallen him, and she heaped black earth upon her head, and tore her hair, and wrung her hands, and rolled on the ground in her agony. And her mouth was never weary of plaining. Then she caused the garments of Sohrab to be brought unto her, and his throne and his steed. And she regarded them, and stroked the courser and poured tears upon his hoofs, and she cherished the robes as though they yet contained her boy, and she pressed the head of the palfrey unto her breast, and she kissed the helmet that Sohrab had worn. Then with his sword she cut off the tail of his steed and set fire to the house of Sohrab, and she gave his gold and jewels unto the poor. And when a year had thus rolled over her bitterness, the breath departed from out her body, and her spirit went forth after Sohrab her son.

APPRECIATIONS ON THE POEM

"Sohrab and Rustum combines classic purity of style with romantic ardor of feeling. The truth of its oriental color, the deep pathos of the situation, the fire and the intensity of the action, the strong conception of character, and the full, solemn music of the verse, make it unquestionably the masterpiece among Arnold's longer poems."

— MOODY AND LOVETT, *A History of English Literature*.

. . . "A noble story, full of the simplest and deepest elements of human feeling; and Mr. Arnold has told it not unworthily. Three things especially distinguish the poem. First, the vividness with which he has seized and expressed the whole environment of his picture, the vast spaces of Central Asia, and the wild freedom of the Tartar life. Secondly, the more than usually free and untrammelled movement which he has given to much of his blank verse. Lastly and chiefly, the expressiveness of many of the Homeric similes with which the poem is so thickly strewn."

— *North British Review for August, 1854*.

. . . "The simple flow of the narrative, unbroken by reflection, the breadth and ease of handling, the unrestrained expression of emotion, the diffuseness of the imagery drawn from natural objects, and the skilful use and repetition of sonorous names, remind one continually of Homer. . . . Not the least impressive touch of art is the recurring reference to the presence of the great river beside which the tragedy is enacted, that contrasts the calm dignity of its course with the unseemly turbulence of human passions, its unexhausted permanence with their transience and decay."

— *The Contemporary Review for September, 1874*.

“Sohrab and Rustem is an episode from Firdusi’s *Shah Nameh*, noble and affecting in subject, and so simple in its perfect unity of action as to leave no room for digression, while fully admitting the adornments of description and elaborate simile. These are introduced with exquisite judgment, and, while greatly heightening the poetical beauty of the piece, are never allowed to divert attention from the progress of the main action, which culminates in a situation of unsurpassable pathos.”

— RICHARD GARNETT, *Matthew Arnold*.

“Sohrab and Rustum, the tale of the fatal combat which the old Persian chief and his unknown son wage against each other, approaches more nearly to the spirit and manner of Homer than does anything else in our English literature. The strong, plain, blank verse is almost a substitute for the hexameter. The story is told with Homer’s pellucid simplicity, with his deep and clear-sighted sympathy with all conditions of men, with his delight in Nature as man’s friend and life-long companion. The spirit of the narrative, too, is Homeric, and the fall of the young warrior, in the pride of his beauty and strength, his death assuaged by resignation to fate and by consciousness of a courageous strife, are subjects of the sort that often moved the singer of the Iliad to his most moving strains.”

— *The Century Magazine for April, 1882.*

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AN EPISODE

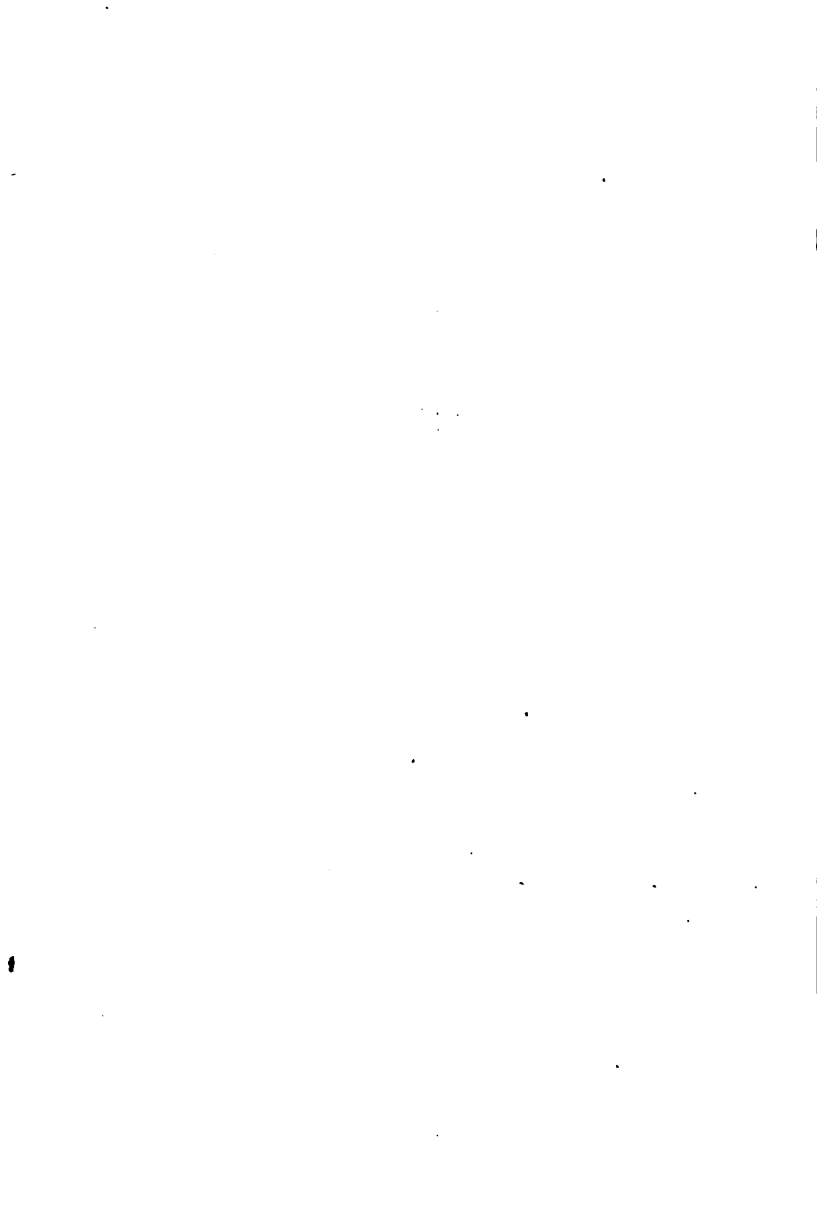
“I am occupied with a thing that gives me more pleasure than anything I have ever done yet, which is a good sign; but whether I shall not ultimately spoil it by being obliged to strike it off in fragments instead of at one heat, I cannot quite say.”

—ARNOLD. *Letter to Mrs. Foster, 14 Apr., 1853.*

“All my spare time has been spent on a poem which I have just finished, and which I think by far the best thing I have yet done, and that it will be generally liked, though one can never be sure of this. I have had the greatest pleasure in composing it—a rare thing with me—and, I think, a good test of the pleasure that what you write is likely to afford to others; but then the story is a very noble and excellent one.”—ARNOLD, *Letter to his mother, May, 1853.*

“What you say about the similes looks very just upon paper. I can only say that I took a great deal of trouble to orientalise them (the Bahrein diver was originally an ordinary fisher), because I thought they looked strange and jarred, if western.”

—ARNOLD, *Letter to John F. B. Blackett, 26 Nov., 1853.*



SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

AN EPISODE.

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep;
Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long 5
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
And went abroad into the cold wet fog, 10
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he passed, which stood
X Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer-floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere; 15
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink — the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.

- 20 The men of former times had crown'd the top
 With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now
 The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
 A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
 And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
- 25 Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,
 And found the old man sleeping on his bed
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
 And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
 Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
- 30 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—
 'Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
 Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?'
 But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:—
 'Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa! it is I.
- 35 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
 Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
 Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
 For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
 Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
- 40 In Samarcand, before the army march'd;
 And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
 Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first
 I came among the Tartars and bore arms,
 I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,
- 45 At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
 This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
 And beat the Persians back on every field,
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone—

Rustum, my father; who I hoped should greet,) 50

(Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field

His not unworthy, not inglorious son.

So I long hoped, but him I never find.

Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.

Let the two armies rest to-day; but I 55

Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords

To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,

Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall —

Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.

Dim is the rumour of a common fight, 60

Where host meets host, and many names are sunk: }

But of a single combat fame speaks clear.'

He spoke; and Peran-Wisa took the hand

Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said: —

'O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine! 65

Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,

And share the battle's common chance with us

Who love thee, but must press for ever first,

In single fight incurring single risk,

To find a father thou hast never seen? 70

That were far best, my son, to stay with us

Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,

And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.

But, if this one desire indeed rules all,

To seek out Rustum — seek him not through fight! 75

Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,

O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!

But far hence seek him, for he is not here.

For now it is not as when I was young,

80 When Rustum was in front of every fray :
 But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
 In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.
 Whether that his own mighty strength at last
 Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age ;
 85 Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
 There go ! — Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart forebodes
 Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
 Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
 To us ; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
 90 To seek thy father, not seek single fights
 In vain ; — but who can keep the lion's cub
 From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son ?
 Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires.'

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left
 95 His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay ;
 And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
 He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
 And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword ;
 100 And on his head he set his sheep-skin cap,
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul ;
 And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
 His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog
 105 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
 Into the open plain ; so Haman bade —
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime.

From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd ; 110
 As when some grey November morn the files,
 In marching order spread, of long-necked cranes
 Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
 Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound 115
 For the warm Persian sea-board — so they stream'd.)
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
 First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears ;
 Large men, large steeds ; who from Bokhara come
 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares. 120
 Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
 And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ;
 Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells. 125
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
 From far and a more doubtful service own'd ;
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
 Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
 And close-set skull caps ; and those wilder hordes 130
 Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
 Kalmucks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere —
 These all filed out from camp into the plain. 135
 And on the other side the Persians form'd ; —
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
 The Ilyats of Khorassan ; and behind,
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,

- 140 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
 145 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
 And the old Tartar came upon the sand
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—
 150 'Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.'
 As, in the country, on a morn in June,
 155 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.
 160 But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
 That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow;
 Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
 165 Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
 In single file they move, and stop their breath,
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
 So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up 170
 To counsel ; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
 And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
 Second, and was the uncle of the King ;
 These came and counsell'd, and then Gudurz said : —
 ' Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up, 175
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
 But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits
 And sullen, and has pitched his tents apart.
 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear 180
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name ;
 Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.'
 So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and cried : —
 ' Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said ! 185
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.'
 He spake ; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd, 190
 Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
 Just pitch'd ; the high pavilion in the midst
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
 And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found 195
 Rustum ; his morning meal was done, but still
 The table stood before him, charged with food —
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
 And dark green melons ; and there Rustum sate

- 200 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
 And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
 Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand,
 And with a cry sprang up and dropp'd the bird,
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—
- 205 'Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
 What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink.'
 But Gudurz stood in the tent-door, and said:—
 'Not now! a time will come to eat and drink,
 But not to-day; to-day has other needs.
- 210 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze;
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight their champion — and thou know'st his name —
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
- 215 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;
 And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,
 Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose!'
- 220 He spoke; but Rustum answer'd, with a smile:—
 'Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I
 Am older; if the young are weak, the King
 Errs strangely; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
 Himself is young, and honors younger men,
- 225 And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young —
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
 For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
 For would that I myself had such a son,

And not that one slight helpless girl I have — 230
 A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
 And he has none to guard his weak old age. 235
 There would I go, and hang my armour up,
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings, 240
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more.'

He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply: —
 'What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
 When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
 Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks, 245
 Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say:
Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men.'

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply: —
 'O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words? 250
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.
 What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
 But who for men of nought would do great deeds? 255
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
 Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
 In single fight with any mortal man.'

- 260^x He spoke, and frown'd ; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy —
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
 But Rustum strode to his tent-door, and call'd
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
 265 And clad himself in steel ; the arms he chose
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
 And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume
 Of horse-hair waved, a scarlet horse-hair plume.
 270 So arm'd, he issued forth ; and Ruksh, his horse,
 Followed him like a faithful hound at heel —
 Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
 The horse whom Rustum on a foray once
 Did in Bokhara by the river find
 275 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
 And rear'd him ; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.
 280 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 Hail'd ; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
 1^s And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
 285 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
 By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands —)

So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came. 290
 And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
 And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
 And as afield the reapers cut a swath
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
 And on each side are squares of standing corn, 295
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare —
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand. }
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
 His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw 300
 Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came,
 As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
 Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge }
 Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire }
 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn, 305
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-panes —
 And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
 Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed }
 The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar }
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth 310
 All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused
 His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
 For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
 Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws 315
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
 By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound — }
 So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd. }
 And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul

- 320 As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—
 'O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
 And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
- 325 Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron,
 And tried: and I have stood on many a field
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—
 Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
 O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
- 330 Be govern'd! quit the Tartar host, and come
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,
 And fight beneath my banner till I die!
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.'
- So he spake, mildly; Sohrab heard his voice,
- 335 The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw
 His giant figure planted on the sand,
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
 Hath builded on the waste in former years
 Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
 340 Streak'd with its first grey hairs; hope filled his soul,
 And he ran forward and embraced his knees,
 And clasped his hand within his own, and said:—
 'O, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
 Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?'
- 345 But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,
 And turn'd away, and spake to his own soul:—
 'Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean!
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,

And hide it not, but say: *Rustum is here!* 350
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall, 355
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry:
"I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank, only Rustum dared; then he and I 360
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away."
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud;
Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me.'

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—
'Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus 365
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
By challenge forth; make good thy vaunt, or yield!
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee!
For well I know that did great Rustum stand 370
Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this—
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield, 375
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus, with his summer-floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away.'

He spoke; and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—

- 380 ' Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so!
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
- 385 Begin! thou art more vast, more dread than I,
 And thou art proved, I know, and I am young —
 But yet success sways with the breath of Heaven.
 And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
- 390 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
 Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
 And whether it will heave us up to land,
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
- 395 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
 We know not, and no search will make us know;
 Only the event will teach us in its hour.'
 He spoke, and Rustum answered not, but hurl'd
 His spear; down from the shoulder, down it came,
- 400 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk,
 That long has tower'd in the airy clouds,
 Drops like a plummet; Sohrab saw it come,
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash; the spear
 Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
- 405 Which it sent flying wide; — then Sohrab threw
 In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield; sharp rang,
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
 And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
 Could wield; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,

Still rough — like those which men in treeless plains 410
 To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
 Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,
 And strewn the channels with torn boughs — so huge) 415
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
 One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside,
 1 2-Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
 And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell 420
 To his knees, and with his fingers clutched the sand ;
 And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,
 And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
 Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand ;
 But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword, 425
 But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said : —
 'Thou strik'st too hard ! that club of thine will float
 Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
 But rise, and be not wroth ! not wroth am I ;
 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul. 430
 Thou says't, thou art not Rustum ; be it so !
 Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul ?
 Boy as I am, I have seen battles too —
 Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men ; 435
 But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
 Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart ?
 O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !
 Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,

- 440 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
 And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
 And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
 There are enough foes in the Persian host,
 Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;
- 445 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
 May'st fight ; fight *them*, when they confront thy spear,
 But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me !'
- He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
 And stood erect, trembling with rage ; his club
- 450 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
 (13 Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn-star,)
 The baleful sign of fevers ; dust had soil'd
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
- 455 His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his voice
 Was choked with rage ; at last these words broke way : —
 ' Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands !
 Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !
 Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more !
- 460 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance ;
 But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
 Of battle, and with me, who make no play
 Of war ; I fight it out, and hand to hand.
- 465 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !
 Remember all thy valour ; try thy feints
 And cunning ! all the pity I had is gone ;
 Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts
 With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles.'

He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts, 470
And he too drew his sword; at once they rush'd
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west; their shields
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din 475
Rose, such as that the sinewy wood-cutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees — such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars took part 480
In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair. 485
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes. 490
And labouring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spiked spear
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm, 495
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horse-hair plume,
Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;
And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom

- 500 Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air,
 And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
 Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry; T
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
 15 Of some pain'd desert-lion, who all day
 505 Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
 And comes at night to die upon the sand —
 The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,
 And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.)
 But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on.
- 510 And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd
 His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
 Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
 And in the hand the hilt remain'd alone.
 Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes
- 515 Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
 And shouted: *Rustum!* — Sohrab heard that shout,
 And shrank amazed: back he recoil'd one step,
 And scanned with blinking eyes the advancing form;
 And then he stood bewilderd, and he dropp'd
- 520 His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.
 He reel'd, and staggering baek, sank to the ground;
 And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
 The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair; —
- 525 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.
 Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began: —
 'Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
 A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,

And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent. 530

Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.

And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame, 535

To glad thy father in his weak old age.
Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.'

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied: — 540

'Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.

Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!

No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.

For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,

And I were that which till to-day I was, 545

They should be lying here, I standing there.

But that beloved name unnerved my arm —

That name, and something, I confess, in thee,

Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield

Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe. 550

And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.

But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear;

The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!

My father, whom I seek through all the world,)

He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!' 555

As when some hunter in the spring hath found

A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,

Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,

And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,

- 560 And follow'd her to find her where she fell
 Far off; — anon her mate comes winging back
 From hunting, and a great way off describes
 His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
 His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
- 565 Circles above his eery, with loud screams
 Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
 A heap of fluttering feathers — never more
- 570 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
 Never the black and dripping precipices
 Echo her stormy scream as she sails by —
 As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
- 575 Over his dying son, and knew him not.
 And with a cold, incredulous voice, he said: —
 'What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
 The mighty Rustum never had a son.'
- And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied: —
- 580 'Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
 Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
 Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
 Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
 And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
- 585 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
 Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!
 What will that grief, what will that vengeance be?
 Oh, could I live till I that grief have seen!
 Yet him I pity not so much, but her,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

21

My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells 590
With that old king, her father, who grows gray,
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done. 595
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
But that in battle with a nameless foe, 600
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.'

He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son 605
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all —
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear 610
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he: yet he listen'd, plunged in thought; 615
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon; tears gather'd in his eyes;
For he remember'd his own early youth

- 620 And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
 (The shepherd from his mountain-lodge descries
 A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
 Through many rolling clouds — so Rustum saw
 His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
 625 And that old king, her father, who loved well
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
 With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
 They three, in that long-distant summer-time —
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
 630 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
 (18 Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
 635 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
 Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
 On the mown, dying grass — so Sohrab lay,
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
 640 And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said: —
 'O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved!
 Yet thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
 Have told thee false — thou art not Rustum's son.
 645 For Rustum had no son; one child he had —
 But one — a girl; who with her mother now
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us —
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.'
 But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now

The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce, 650
 And he desired to draw forth the steel,
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die —
 But first he would convince his stubborn foe;
 And, rising sternly on one arm, he said: —

‘Man, who art thou who dost deny my words? 655
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
 And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
 I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
 That she might prick it on the babe she bore.’ 660

He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks,
 And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
 That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud;
 And to his heart he press'd the other hand, 665
 And in a hollow voice he spake, and said: —

‘Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie!
 If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son.’

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed 670
 His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
 And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points
 Prick'd; as a cunning workman, in Pekin, *
 Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
 An emperor's gift — at early morn he paints,
 And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp 675
 Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands —
 So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
 On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
 It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,

- 680 Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks ;
Him that kind creature found, and rear'd and loved —
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,
- 685 And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said : —
 ' How say'st thou ? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's ? '
- He spoke ; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood
- 690 Speechless ; and then he utter'd one sharp cry :
O boy — thy father ! — and his voice choked there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
- 695 His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life ; and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror ; and he seized
- 700 In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair, —
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms ;
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him ; and he clutch'd his sword,
- 705 To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said : —
 ' Father, forbear ! for I but meet to-day
The doom which at my birth was written down

In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand. 710

Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it! but fate trod these promptings down
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged

The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear. 715

But let us speak no more of this! I find
My father; let me feel that I have found!

Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take

My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,

And wash them with thy tears, and say: *My son!* 720

Quick! quick! for numbered are my sands of life,

And swift; for like the lightning to this field

I came, and like the wind I go away —

Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind;

But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.' } 725

So said he, and his voice released the heart

Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast

His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,

And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts,

When they saw Rustum's grief; and Ruksh, the horse, 730

With his head bowing to the ground and mane

Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe

First to the one then to the other moved

His head, as if inquiring what their grief

Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes, 735

The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the sand.

But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said: —

'Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on their nimble joints,

- 740 When first they bore thy master to this field !'
 But Sohrab look'd upon the horse, and said : —
 'Is this, then, Ruksh? How often, in past days,
 My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,
 My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,
 745 That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
 Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!
 O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
 And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
- 750 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
 And seen the river of Helmund, and the Lake
 Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
 Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
 Corn in a golden platter soaked with wine,
 755 And said: *O Ruksh! bear Rustum well*, — but I
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
 Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream;
 But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
 760 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
 And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
 765 The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream,
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.'
- Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd: —
 'Oh that its waves were flowing over me!
 Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt

Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!' 770

But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied: —

'Desire not that, my father! thou must live.

For some are born to do great deeds, and live, }

As some are born to be obscured, and die.

Do thou the deeds I die too young to do, 775

And reap a second glory in thine age;

Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.

But come! thou seest this great host of men

Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these!

Let me intreat for them; what have they done? 780

They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.

Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.

But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,

But carry me with thee to Seistan,

And place me on a bed, and mourn for me, 785

Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.

And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,

And heap a stately mound above my bones,

And plant a far-seen pillar over all.

That so the passing horseman on the waste 790

May see my tomb a great way off, and cry:

Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,

Whom his great father did in ignorance kill!

And I be not forgotten in my grave.'

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied: — 795

'Fear not! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,

So shall it be; for I will burn my tents,

And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,

And carry thee away to Seistan,

- 800 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
, And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
- 805 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host; yea, let them go!
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace!
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
- 810 Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have—
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
- 815 So thou mightest live too, my son, my son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine! and I might die, not thou;
- 820 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say: *O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thy end!*
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
- 825 And full of blood and battles is my age,
And I shall never end this life of blood.'

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:—
'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now,

Not yet! but thou shalt have it on that day 830
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
 Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo
 Returning home over the salt blue sea,
 From laying thy dear master in his grave.'

And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said:— 835
 'Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!
 Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure.'

He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
 The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
 His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood 840
 Came welling from the open gash, and life
 Flow'd with the stream;— all down his cold white side)
 The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,

21 Like the soil'd tissue of white violets,
 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank, 845
 By children whom their nurses call with haste
 Indoors from the sun's eye; his head droop'd low,
 His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
 White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
 Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame, 850
 Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them,
 And fixed them feebly on his father's face;
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
 Unwillingly, the spirit fled away,

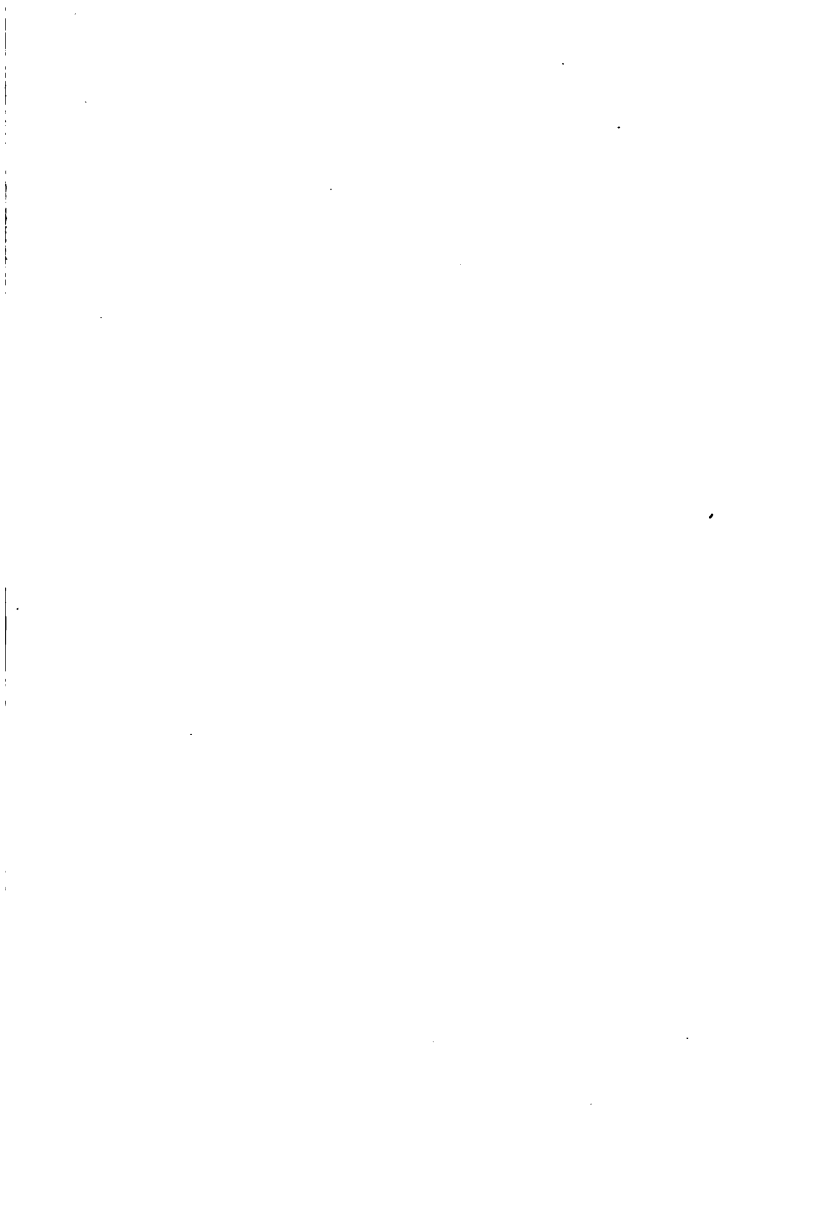
22 Regretting the warm mansion which it left, 855
 And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.

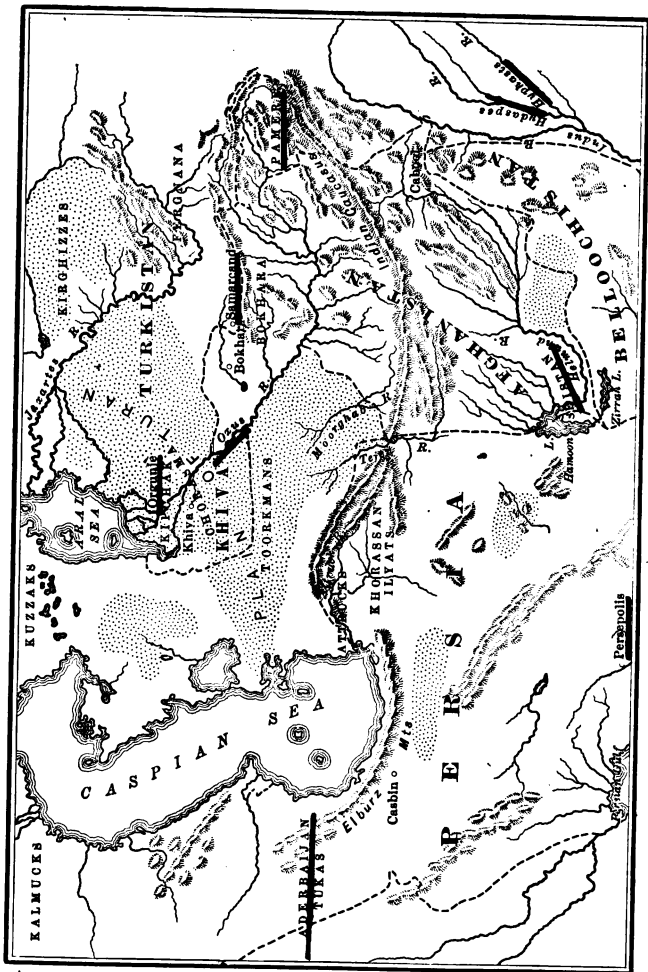
So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.

- 860 As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd }
 23 By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
 His house, now mid their broken flights of steps
 Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
 So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
- 865 And night came down over the solemn waste,
 And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
 And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
 Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
 As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
- 870 Began to twinkle through the fog; for now
 Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;
 The Persians took it on the open sands
 Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;
 And Rustum and his son were left alone.
- 875 But the majestic river floated on,
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
 Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
 Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,
 Under the solitary moon;— he flow'd
- 880 Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,
 Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin
 To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
 And split his currents; that for many a league
 The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
- 885 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
 Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
 In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
 A foil'd circuitous wanderer— till at last

The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright ————— 890
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.







NOTES

ARNOLD'S treatment of the Sohrab and Rustum episode differs quite materially from that of the original. Changes in incident, time, and name occur in many places. The student will find it both interesting and profitable to work out these differences in a comparison drawn between the prose translation in the Introduction and the poem.

1. **And the first grey of morning**, etc. **And** may be used here to indicate the relationship between the incidents dealt with in the poem and those coming before (see foot-note, page xxv, Introduction), or as a mere introductory word, as used by early English writers.

"And some men say that in the Isle of Lango is yet the daughter of Hippocrates." — MANDEVILLE, *The Lady of the Land*, I.

2. **Oxus** (Ox'us). A large river of Central Asia now called the Amu Daria (Ä-mö' Där'yä). It rises in the southern part of the Pamir Plateau, flows west, then northwest, and empties into the Aral Sea; its length is 1400 miles (see map). It was known as the Oxus by the Greeks and Romans, and as the Jihun (Jē'hön) by the early Arabs.

3. **Tartar**. The Tartars are nomadic tribes inhabiting Central Asia, parts of Russia, Siberia, and the Caucasus. They are descendants of the Mongol, Turk, and Tartar hosts that came out of the East under the leadership of Jenghiz Khan in the middle ages, swept over Asia, and threatened Europe. Here the reference is especially to the "black Tartars" (I. 12), dwelling in the basin of the Caspian and Aral seas.

11. **Peran-Wisa** (Pē'rän-Wē'sä). A Turanian chieftain in command of the Tartar forces with which Sohrab (Söh'räb) had allied himself. No mention of him is made in "The Epic of Kings." According to the epic, Human or Haman is the chieftain occupying the office assigned him (see page xix, Introduction).

15. **Pamere** (Pä-mēr') or Pamir. A large plateau of Central Asia. It

has a mean elevation of 13,000 feet, with peaks rising 25,000 feet, and contains the sources of the Oxus and Jaxartes rivers (see map).

38. **Afrasiab** (Äf-rä'si-yäb). The king of the Tartars. He is one of the chief characters in the "Shah Nameh" (see page xix, Introduction).

40. **Samarcand** (Säm-är-känd'). A city in the southern part of Turkistan, noted for its learning and its commerce (see map).

42. **Ader-baijan** (Äd-er-bi'jän) or **Azer-baijan**. The northwestern province of Persia (see map).

45. **At my boy's years**. Sohrab was but ten years of age when he began his search for his father (see page xvii, Introduction).

60. **common fight**, *i.e.* a fight in which many take part, a battle.

61. **are sunk**. Perish, are lost.

"For every false drop in her bawdy veins

A Grecian's life has *sunk*."

—SHAKESPEARE, *Troilus and Cressida*, Act IV, Sc. 1.

67. **share the battle's common chance with us**, *i.e.* share the danger of battle with us. A person's chance of being harmed would be much less in a struggle where many were engaged than it would be in a combat against a single foe.

82. **Seistan** (Sē-is-tän'). A province in the southwestern part of Afghanistan, through which the Helmund River flows (see map). According to tradition, it was long governed by Rustum's family, subject to Persia.

83-85. **Whether that . . . Or in**, *i.e.* either because . . . or because of.

85. **Persian King**. Kai Khosroo (Ki Kös-roo'). The thirteenth king of Persia and the grandson of Afrasiab (see note, l. 38). Historians think him to have been Cyrus the Great.

101. **Kara-Kul** (Kä-rä-Käl'). A district in the western part of Bokhara, noted for its flocks (see map).

107. **Haman** (Hä'män). The officer second to Peran-Wisa in command of the Tartars (see note, l. 11).

113. **Casbin** (Kaz-bēn'). A city of Persia about sixty miles southwest of the Caspian Sea in the province of Irak Ajemi (Ē-räk' Aj'e-mē) (see map). It was at one time the capital of the Iranian Empire.

114. **Elburz** (El-börz) or **Elbruz**. A range of mountains in the northern part of Persia, separating the Persian Highlands from the basin of the Caspian and Aral seas (see map). **Aralian estuaries**. The estuaries or wide lower parts of the tidal rivers flowing into the Aral Sea.

115. **frore.** Frozen, frosty.

"His beard, all white as spangles *frore*,
That clothes Phinlimmon's forests hoar."

— WARTON, *The Grave of King Arthur*.

119. **Bokhara** (Bō-khā'rā). A khanate of Central Asia south of Turkistan and bordered on the south and west by the Oxus (see map).

120. **Khiva** (Chē'vā). A khanate northwest of Bokhara in the lower valley of the Oxus (see map). **ferment the milk of mares.** The nomadic tribes of Asia make a beverage known as *kumiss* out of mares' milk by fermenting it. The drink resembles sour buttermilk.

121. **Toork'muns.** A nation of Tartars living south of Khiva (see map).

122. **Tuk'as.** A Tartar tribe of the province of Ader-baijan (see note, l. 42).

123. **Attruck** (A-trūk'). A river in the northeastern part of Persia, flowing west into the Caspian Sea (see map).

127. **a more doubtful service own'd.** Allies drawn from foreign lands seldom obey as readily or fight as bravely as troops enlisted in the home country.

128. **Ferghana** (Fer-ghā'nā). A province in the eastern part of Turkistan in the upper valley of the Jaxartes (see map).

129. **Jaxartes** (Jak-sār'tēz). The former name of the Sir Daria (Sēr Dār'yā) River. It rises in the northern part of the Pamir Plateau, flows northwest, and empties into the Aral Sea (see map).

131. **Kipchak** (Kip-chāk'). A province lying north of Khiva in the lower valley of the Oxus (see map).

132. **Kal'muks.** A Mongolian tribe of nomads living in western Siberia (see map). **Kuzzaks.** The modern Cossacks. They inhabit the steppes of southern Russia and southwestern Siberia (see map).

133. **Kirghiz'zes.** A Mongolian-Tartar people of Turkistan (see map). Arnold locates them in Pamir (see l. 134).

138. **Khorassan** (Chō-rā-sān'). A province in the northeastern part of Persia, largely desert (see map). **Ilyats.** A name given to the Tartar nomad tribes. The term (plural of Ili) means simply "tribes."

142. **Threading the Tartar squadrons, i.e. making his way carefully through them.**

"A serf that rose betimes to thread the wood
And hew the bough that bought his children's food."

— BYRON, *Lara*, Canto II, Stanza 24.

156. **shiver.** What do you think of the use of this word here? **corn.** Used here in the general sense of grain.

160. **Cabool** (Kāb-ool'). A city in the eastern part of Afghanistan, noted for its commerce (see map).

161. **Indian Caucasus** (Kā'ka-sus). A range of mountains in Afghanistan, commonly called the Hindu Koosh (Hin-dū' Koosh) range (see map).

162. Note the effectiveness of the epithets in this line.

167. **and stop their breath.** Travellers passing below the great snowbeds upon the mountain-slopes are forbidden by the guides to speak, lest the sound of their voices precipitate an avalanche.

178-179. **aloof he sits,** etc. The fact that Rustum had quarrelled with King Kai Khosroo accounts for his conduct here (see page xxiii, Introduction).

199. **sate.** Old form of sat. A favorite word with Arnold.

200. **held a falcon.** Falconry has been a favorite pastime in many parts of Asia for at least 3000 years. It is popular in Persia.

210. **The armies are drawn out and stand at gaze,** *i.e.* the armies are drawn up in battle formation and stand looking about them in a puzzled manner.

Go to! Come, or come now. An archaic expression.

"Go to; you are not, Cassius."

— SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Caesar*, Act IV, Sc. iiii.

Iran (Ē-rān'). The name by which Persia is known to its inhabitants.

223. **Kai Khosroo.** See note, l. 85.

230. **and not that one slight helpless girl.** When Sohrab was born, his mother sent word to Rustum that their child was a girl. See foot-note on page xviii, Introduction, and lines 607-611.

232. **snow-hair'd Zal.** Tradition has it that Zal was born with snow-white hair. His father, believing this to be an ill omen, — "for the Persians hated white; it was to them a colour antagonistic to the sun," — had him carried to the foot of the Elburz Mountains and there left to die. He was rescued, however, by the Simurgh, a griffin, which cared for him through his infancy, and afterward restored him to his home. He later married the Princess of Seistau, by whom he became the father of Rustum.

237. **fence that weak old man.** *Fence* is used here in the sense of defend.

"Walls here are men who *fence* their cities more
Than Neptune when he doth in mountains roar."

— DRUMMOND, *Speech of Caledonia*.

257. **But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms.** It was customary for knights to wear devices and mottoes upon their arms, armor, and shields by means of which their identity might be easily discovered. Rustum's device was an image of the Simurgh or griffin that rescued his father when exposed to death in his infancy. See note, l. 232; also ll. 679-683.

268. **fluted spine.** The helms or helmets worn by the knights were decorated with a crest or spike. Rustum's was topped with a spike in which parallel grooves were cut.

270. **Ruksh.** "Then Rustem perceived in their midst a mare mighty and strong, and there followed after her a colt like its mother, with the chest and shoulders of a lion. And in strength it seemed like an elephant, and in colour it was as rose-leaves that had been scattered on saffron ground. . . . And the keeper said, 'We know not its master, but rumours are rife anent it throughout the land, and men name it the Rakush of Rustem.' Then Rustem, when he heard these words, swung himself upon the colt with a great bound. And the rose-coloured steed bore him along the plain like unto the wind. And Rustem rejoiced in Rakush whose name, being interpreted, meaneth the lightning." — *Epic of Kings*.

277. **Dight.** Arrayed (Rare).

"The clouds thousand liveries *dight*."

— MILTON, *L'Allegro*, l. 62.

278. **and on the ground, i.e.** the blank space or field.

286. **Bahrein (Bā-rān')** or Aval. A group of islands in the Persian Gulf, near the Arabian coast, celebrated for pearl fisheries.

288. **tale.** Number, total.

"And every shepherd tells his *tale*
Under the hawthorn in the dale."

— MILTON, *L'Allegro*, ll. 67-68.

305. **At cock crow, i.e.** at the dawn of day.

"I have heard
The cock, that is the trumpet of the day,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day."

— SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. i.

325. **vast.** Mighty.

330. **govern'd.** Persuaded, advised.

