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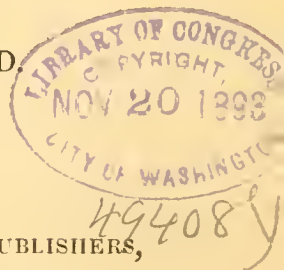
MATTHEW ARNOLD.



With Introduction and Explanatory Notes

BY

J. W. ABERNETHY, PH.D.



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## INTRODUCTION.

MATTHEW ARNOLD was the son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the celebrated head-master of Rugby School. He was born December 24, 1822, at Laleham, near Staines. In 1836 he entered Winchester School, but was removed the following year to Rugby, where he completed his preparation for the university. He maintained a high position in the school, presenting in 1840 a prize poem, and winning the same year a scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford. During his first year at the university he obtained the Hertford Scholarship, for proficiency in Latin, and later won the Newdigate Prize for English Poetry, with a poem entitled "Cromwell." He graduated with honors, and in 1845 was elected Fellow of Oriel College, just thirty years after the election of his father to the same honor. Among his colleagues here were R. W. Church, Dean of St. Paul's, John Earle, the present Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, and the poet A. H. Clough. His intimacy with Clough grew into the closest friendship, which received its final seal in the tender and noble lines of "Thyrsis," an elegy that for exalted beauty must be placed with Milton's "Lycidas" and Shelley's "Adonais."

Of his life at Oxford one who knew him in those days says: "His perfect self-possession, the sallies of his ready wit, the humorous turn which he could give to any subject that he handled, his gayety, exuberance, versatility, audacity, and unflinching command of words, made him one of the most popular and successful undergraduates that Oxford has ever known." Oxford, as the home of his intellectual life, was always dear to him, that "beautiful city, so venerable, so lovely!" who, "by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us near to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection."

During his residence the university was still under the influence of the famous Tractarian Movement, which did so much to purify English religious thought. The leaders of the movement were Fellows of Oriel, and the year in which Mr. Arnold became Fellow of this college was the year in which Dr. Newman seceded to Rome. The influence of these events may be traced in all his writing and thinking; in apparent contradiction of his radical and analytical habit of thought, he maintained through life a conservative admiration for the Established Church.

From 1847 to 1851 Mr. Arnold acted as private secretary to the late Lord Lansdowne. He married in 1851, and the same year was appointed Lay Inspector of Schools, a position which he held with honor for nearly thirty-five years. Twice he was sent abroad by the government to study the school-systems of the Continent, and his various reports are among the most valuable contributions to educational literature. He labored zealously until the end of his life for the reform of the English public schools, aiming especially at the elevation of middle-class education, to the defects of which he traced the greater part of the moral, social, and political faults of English civilization. To organize middle-class education as well as it is organized in France and Germany was, to his mind, the "one thing necessary" for expelling the "Philistines" and regenerating English society.

Mr. Arnold's first appearance in literature was as a poet, with the now famous little volume of 1848, entitled "The Strayed Reveller, and other Poems, by A." In 1853 "Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems" appeared, and soon after he published in his own name a volume of selections from the two preceding volumes, including a few new poems. The impression produced by his poetry was such that in 1857 he was elected to the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford, a position which he held for two terms, a period of ten years, at the end of which there was general regret that the limitation of the statutes did not permit a third term. During this period "Merope," a tragedy after the Greek manner, was published, followed by the celebrated "Lectures on Translating Homer,"



and, in 1865, by the epoch-making volume of "Essays in Criticism." This book was a revelation in literature. By it criticism was endowed with a new function; it was elevated to the dignity of a creative art; even poetry was made a "criticism of life." The author defined the new criticism to be "a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world," and his whole literary work was an illustration of the definition. Such a form of criticism was far removed from the militant omniscience of the Edinburgh critics, as also from the tea-table civility of the Lamb and Leigh Hunt school. The lesson of this volume was that criticism must be broadened and humanized, that it must be sympathetic, tempered with "sweet reasonableness," and, above all, truthful, endeavoring with sincerity to "see things as in themselves they are." With these essays a new era in critical writing began. England now had her own Sainte-Beuve.

With this view of the true function of criticism it is not strange, perhaps, that Mr. Arnold's attention was often withdrawn from literature and devoted to social and religious questions. In 1870 appeared "Culture and Anarchy," an essay in political and social criticism, presenting a good illustration of the logical force of that peculiar literary style which in his hands was always an instrument of marvelous delicacy and power. His theological criticism is contained in "St. Paul and Protestantism," published in 1871; "Literature and Dogma," 1873; "God and the Bible," 1875; and "Last Essays on Church and Religion," 1877. These books aroused bitter controversy. His earnest effort to rescue the essential elements of the Christian religion from the destruction threatened by dogmatic theology in the one direction and materialistic science in the other was regarded by many as an attack upon Christianity itself.

Mr. Arnold's other published works are: "The Study of Celtic Literature," 1868; "Friendship's Garland," 1871; "Mixed Essays" and "Irish Essays," 1882; "Discourses in America," 1885; "Complete Poems," 1876; a volume of "Selected Poems" in the Golden Treasury Series, and a posthumous

volume, "Essays in Criticism, Second Series." A mere enumeration of his books shows the breadth and versatility of his mind. He was poet, essayist, theologian, critic, philosopher; yet a remarkable singleness of purpose runs through all his work. Whatever the topic, the real theme is culture, in its highest sense,—the refinement and harmonious development of the intellect and the soul. His writing is a constant appeal to the ideal in human nature, an insistence upon the moral and spiritual aspects of life in contrast with the vulgar material aspects. As a prose stylist he is one of the great masters. As a poet only two, or three at most, of his contemporaries should be named before him. His poetry is a splendid embodiment of the profoundest thought and feeling of the period, especially of the struggle through which all sensitive souls are passing in the recoil before the "hopeless tangle of this age."

The death of Matthew Arnold occurred suddenly, April 15, 1888, bringing a painful shock to the thousands who had long been accustomed to regard him as a leader and teacher. "Not only the world of literature, but the infinitely larger world of unexpressed thought and feeling and unembodied imagination, is sensibly the poorer for his loss." His special mission was, as Mr. Stedman expresses it, "that of spiritualizing what he deemed an era of unparalleled materialism." His most earnest desire was to warn all, as he warned his "Scholar-Gypsy," to fly from

" This strange disease of modern life,  
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,  
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts."

And although his words of warning have often been "on men's impious uproar hurled," they have left a deep and permanent impress upon the finer consciousness of the age.



## ARNOLD AS A POET.

“He is a maker of such exquisite and thoughtful verse that it is hard sometimes to question his title to be considered a genuine poet. On the other hand, it is likely that the very grace and culture and thoughtfulness of his style inspire in many the first doubt of his claim to the name of poet. Where the art is evident and elaborate, we are all too apt to assume that it is all art and not genius. Mr. Arnold is a sort of miniature Goethe ; we do not know that his most ardent admirers could demand a higher praise for him, while it is probable that the description will suggest exactly the intellectual peculiarities which lead so many to deny him a place with the really inspired singers of his day.”—*MCCARTHY'S History of Our Own Times.*

“Mr. Arnold belongs to the classical school of poetry, regarding the Greeks, with their strength and simplicity of phrase and their perfect sense of form, as his masters. To the imaginative power of a true poet he adds a delicacy and refinement of taste and a purity and severity of phrase which uncultivated readers often mistake for boldness. Nowhere in his poems do we find those hackneyed commonplaces, decked out with gaudy and ungraceful ornament, which pass for poetry with many people. His fault rather is that he is too exclusively the poet of culture. Many of his verses will always seem flat and insipid to those who have not received a classical education ; while, on the other hand, students of Greek literature will be disposed to praise certain of his pieces more highly than their intrinsic merit demands. Yet it may be doubted whether some of his work as a poet will not stand the ordeal of time better than that of any contemporary poet, Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning excepted. There are few poems which show such a refined sense of beauty, such dignity and self-

restraint, such admirable adaptation of the form to the subject, as Mr. Arnold's 'Sohrab and Rostum,' 'Tristram and Iseult,' and the 'Forsaken Mermaid.'—NICOLL'S *Landmarks of English Literature*.

"His shorter meters, used as the framework of songs and lyrics, rarely are successful; but through youthful familiarity with the Greek choruses he has caught something of their irregular beauty. 'The Strayed Reveler' has much of this unfettered charm. Arnold is restricted in the range of his affections; but that he is one of those who can love very loyally the few with whom they do enter into sympathy, through consonance of traits or experiences, is shown in the emotional poems entitled 'Faded Leaves' and 'Indifference,' and in later pieces, which display more fluency, 'Calais Sands' and 'Dover Beach.' A prosaic manner injures many of his lyrics; at least he does not seem clearly to distinguish between the functions of poetry and of prose. He is more at ease in long, stately, swelling measures, whose graver movement accords with a serious and elevated purpose. Judged as works of art, 'Sohrab and Rostum' and 'Balder Dead' really are majestic poems. Their blank verse, while independent of Tennyson's, is the result, like that of the 'Mort d'Arthur,' of its author's Homeric studies; is somewhat too slow in 'Balder Dead,' and fails of the antique simplicity, but is terse, elegant, and always in 'the grand manner.' Upon the whole this is a remarkable production; it stands at the front of all experiments in a field remote as the northern heavens and almost as glacial and clear. . . . 'Sohrab and Rostum' is a still finer poem, because more human and more complete in itself. The verse is not so devoid of epic swiftness. The powerful conception of the relations between the two chieftains and the slaying of the son by the father are tragical and heroic."—STEDMAN'S *Victorian Poets*.

## THE STORY OF SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

THE material for Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum" was taken from the great Persian epic, the "Shah-Namah," or "Book of Kings." Firdusi, the author of this celebrated poem, whose real name was Abu'l Casim Mansur, was born about the year 941 A.D. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Persian and Arabic literatures, and was chosen by Mahmud, the sultan of Ghaznin, after a competition with seven other poets, to convert the ancient legends of Persia into a connected poem. At one of the meetings of the court poets he was so successful with an improvised verse that the sultan bestowed upon him the name Firdusi (*Firdus*, paradise), saying: "Thou hast made my court a paradise."

Firdusi labored upon his royal task for thirty years, and wrote sixty thousand verses; for each verse he was to receive a gold piece from the sultan, and it was his purpose to devote the whole sum to the building of a dike for his native town of Tns. But there were rivals and enemies at court, and instead of the sixty thousand pieces of gold that had been promised, the sultan was persuaded to send him sixty thousand pieces of silver. With righteous indignation Firdusi rejected the gift, sent back a proud message of scorn, wrote a scathing satire against the sultan, and then fled from his dominions. He,

"Who loved the ancient kings, and learned to see  
Their buried shapes in vision one by one,  
And wove their deeds in lovely minstrelsy,  
For all the glory that his name had won  
To Persia, was in exile by the sea."

At length, after many years of wandering, he returned to his native town, a decrepit old man. Time and the entreaties of friends had appeased the sultan's anger, and he sought to make amends for the wrong done to the noble poet. The promised gold he now sent to him, with a robe of honor and a message of welcome and good-will. But it was too late; while the camels were

bearing the treasure in at one gate of the town, the body of Firdusi was borne out at another. But the great stone dike for the river of Tus was built with the gold, as a monument to the poet's memory.

The Shah-Namah is the national epic of Persia, as the Iliad is of Greece, the Nibelungenlied of Germany, and the Cid of Spain. Rustum is a hero like Hercules, Achilles, and Siegfried. The finest episode of the poem is the story of the fatal contest between Rustum and his son. Some of the details of the narrative were changed by Arnold, in order to bring it within the requirements of modern poetic art. The original story runs thus :

Rustum was hunting near the borders of Turan, and while he was sleeping, his faithful horse, Ruksh, was stolen by certain young men of Turan. At this Rustum was sorely troubled. He followed the hoof-prints to the neighboring city of Samengan, and in great wrath demanded of the king of that city that his steed be restored to him, and he vowed that if Ruksh were not restored, many of the sons of Turan should pay for him with their heads. The king calmed his anger with gracious promises of assistance, and conducted him to his palace. And there Rustum was entertained by the beautiful princess Tahmineh, who was already in love with him for his great deeds of heroism of which she had heard much, and who had connived at the stealing of Ruksh in order that she might bring him thither. The conclusion of this adventure was a royal wedding at the court of Samengan. But the wild spirit of Rustum could not be confined at court, and having recovered his horse Ruksh, he departed. At parting he gave to his young bride an amulet of onyx, saying : "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."

A remarkable son was born, and he was called Sohrab ; but Tahmineh sent word to Rustum that the child was a girl, for she feared that he would take the boy from her ; wherefore Rustum gave no heed to his child. When Sohrab had grown to great strength and courage he demanded the name of his father, and upon learning that the far-famed Rustum was his father he resolved to find him. His mother would have him keep his lofty

parentage a secret, for King Afrasiab was the enemy of Rustum, but he boldly proclaimed his birth and his purpose to conquer the kingdom of Iran and place his father upon the throne. And he had also a secret purpose, which was to return with Rustum and conquer the kingdom of Turan for himself.

Now King Afrasiab was much pleased with the young hero, for his heart was at once filled with a crafty purpose. He prepared an army for Sohrab, and called the leaders to him secretly, and 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 Rustum the Pehliva, but from Rustum 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 Rustum, will fall a prey into my hands. Then will we subdue Sohrab also, and all the world will be ours." So the united Tartar bands set out toward the kingdom of Kai Kaoos, and on the way Sohrab performed mighty deeds of valor, the fame of which was loudly sounded through the land of Iran. The king in terror sent to Rustum, asking him to come forth from his retirement and lead the army against this new conqueror. But Rustum tarried in his coming many days, and when at length he came the king was in great wrath, and threatened to put him to death. Then Rustum answered him with words of scorn: "I am a free man and no slave, and am servant alone unto God; and without Rustum Kai Kaoos is as nothing. But for me, who called forth Kai Kobād, 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 strode proudly from the king's presence, sprang upon Ruksh, and disappeared. And now the nobles and chieftains of Iran were in still greater terror because of this folly of their king, and they went to Rustum and with many prayers prevailed with him to return, and the king humbled himself and craved pardon from Rustum for his words spoken in anger, and bestowed rich gifts upon him. So Rustum prepared himself for the contest.

At length the two armies were face to face by the river Oxus Sohrab, hoping ever to find Rustum, led Hujir, an Iranian cap



tive, to a height overlooking the enemy's camp, and questioned him about the tents of the leaders; but Hujir answered falsely, and so he believed that Rustum's tent was not among them. He then challenged Kai Kaoos to single combat, and the craven king persuaded Rustum to meet the bold champion. When Rustum saw the youth and noble bearing of Sohrab his heart went out in compassion toward him, and he besought him to retire: "O young man, the air is warm and soft, but the earth is cold." And Sohrab, filled with a sudden and strange hope, said: "Tell me thy name, that my heart may rejoice in thy words, for it seemeth unto me that thou art none other than Rustum, the son of Zal." But Rustum denied that he was Rustum, for he deemed that Sohrab would be the more afraid when he beheld such prowess in an Iranian chieftain; and Sohrab was made sorrowful by his words.

And now the combat began: They fought with spears, with swords, with arrows, and with clubs. They strove until their mail was torn and covered with blood, and their horses spent with exhaustion. Rustum thought within himself that in all his days he had not met such a foe, and finally he was felled by a terrible blow from Sohrab's club. The day being then far spent, the champions rested for the night. Still troubled in mind, Sohrab sought again to know of Haman whether his antagonist might not be Rustum; but Haman, mindful of the command of his master, Afrasiab, replied that he knew the face of Rustum well, for he had often seen him in battle, and this man was not Rustum. On the morrow the champions again met, and again Sohrab urged peace: "For it seemeth unto me that this conflict is impure. And if thou wilt listen to my desires, my heart shall speak to thee of love. 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 Rustum, the chosen one, the son of Zal." And Rustum 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."

Then they joined battle, and from morning until the setting of the sun they struggled. At last Sohrab seized Rustum by the girdle and threw him to the ground, and would have ended his life had not Rustum, bethinking himself of a wile, cried out to

him that in such contests it was the custom in Iran not to slay an adversary until he had been twice overcome. So again they rested, and that night Rustum prayed to his god Ormuzd that the strength of his earlier years might return. And Ormuzd heard his prayer. On the morning of the third day Rustum rushed upon Sohrab with renewed might, seized him with a terrible grasp, hurled him to the earth, so that his back was broken like a reed, and drew forth his sword to sever the body. Then Sohrab in agony cried: "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 shouldest become a fish that swimmeth in the depths of the ocean, if thou shouldest change into a star that is concealed in the farthest heaven, 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 Rustum the Pehliva, and it shall be told unto him how that Sohrab, his son, perished in the quest after his face." At these words Rustum fell to the earth as if stricken by a blow, and he demanded of Sohrab some token of Rustum. Then Sohrab charged him to open his armor, and there he saw the amulet of onyx upon his arm; and when he had seen it he cried out in terrible agony of soul. Then Sohrab asked that the army of Turan be permitted to return in peace. "As for me," he said, "I came like the thunder and I vanish like the wind, but perchance it is given unto us to meet again above." And then the spirit of Sohrab departed.

Now that Sohrab was dead, Rustum burned his tent, his throne, and all his arms and trappings of war. And he cried aloud continually, "I that am old have killed my son. My heart is sick unto death." The body of his son he bore to Seistan, and placed it in a noble tomb. And joy never again entered into the heart of Rustum. The heavy news was carried to the court of Samengan, and the old king tore his garments. And when Tahmineh knew that her son Sohrab was dead, she was beside herself with grief. She sent for his steed and his armor, and she stroked the steed, pressing his head to her breast and pouring her tears upon

him. And the helmet that Sohrab had worn she kissed many times, and his gold and jewels she gave to the poor. A year she mourned, and then, borne down to death by her sorrow, her spirit departed to her son.

*Note.*—There is no complete translation of the Shah-Namah in English. The standard version is the French version of Jules Mohl, published by Madame Mohl in 1876. There is an English version by Mr. James Atkinson, giving an epitome of the poem from a Persian abridgment. Portions of the poem will be found in Mr. Robinson's "Persian Poetry for English Readers," and in Miss Zimmern's "Heroic Tales from Firdusi the Persian." This adaptation has been drawn upon for the foregoing narrative. The story of Firdusi's exile has been told in pleasing verse by Edmund W. Gosse in his "Firdusi in Exile."



# SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

## AN EPISODE.

AND the first gray of morning filled the east,  
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.  
But all the Tartar camp along the stream  
Was hushed, 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 gray 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  
Clustering like beehives 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 passed, 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.  
The men of former times had crowned the top 20

---

1. **And.** This form of opening indicates the episodical character of the poem.

2. **Oxus.** The classical name of the great river now called Amoo Daria. It was the scene of many important events in ancient history. Consult Classical Dictionary and Encyclopedia Britannica.

5. **Sohrab** (*sō'rāb*) Note the effect of the repetition.

8. Suggest similar repetitions of *and* in the Scriptures.

11. **Peran-Wisa** (*pē'rān we'sä*). The commander of King Afrasiab's (*af-rä'si-äb*) army.

15. **Pamere** (*pä-meer'*). Usually written *Pamir* ; an elevated steppe or plateau in which the Oxus has its source,—a part of the great Himalayan plateau.

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  
 Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent, 5  
 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 dulled ; for he slept light, an old man's sleep ;  
 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said :— 10  
 “ 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.  
 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe 15  
 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,  
 In Samarcand, before the army marched ; 20  
 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,  
 At my boy's years, the courage of a man. 25  
 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, 30

9. **He slept light.** So Shakespeare says, in “Romeo and Juliet,” II, 3 :

“ Care keeps his watch in every old man's eye,  
 And where care lodges sleep will never lie.”

20. **Samarcand** (*sām-ar-kānd'*). The ancient *Marcanda*, destroyed by Alexander ; later the great conqueror Timur's capital. See map of Asia.

22. **Ader-baijan** (*ād'er-bī'yān*). A northern province of Persia.

29. **I seek . . . son.** What effect is produced by the repetitions in this sentence?

30. **Rustum** (*rōōs'tum*). This celebrated Persian hero is supposed to have lived about 600 years B.C. His romantic life, a mixture of fact and fiction,

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 5  
 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 rumor of a common fight, 10  
 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 sighed, and said :

“ O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine ! 15  
 Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,  
 And share the battle's common chance with us  
 Who love thee, but must press forever first,  
 In single fight incurring single risk,  
 To find a father thou hast never seen ? 20  
 That were far best, my son, to stay with us  
 Unmurmuring ; in our tents, while it is war,  
 And when 'tis truee, then in Afrasiab's towns.  
 But, if this one desire indeed rules all,  
 To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight ! 25  
 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,  
 When Rustum was in front of every fray ; 30  
 But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,  
 In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.

---

is the favorite theme of Persian poets. Some believe that he was a commander under Cyrus the Great. The name is variously spelled *Roostam*, *Roostem*, *Rostem*, *Roustem*, etc.

10. **Common fight.** General fight, in which all are engaged.

32. **Seistan** (*se-is tãu'*). Also *Sistan*. A province and lake in Afghanistan.

32. **Zal** (*zäl*). He was distinguished in Persian legend as a hero, but mainly as the father of Rustum.

Whether that his own mighty strength at last  
 Feels the abhorred approaches of old age,  
 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. 5  
 Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost  
 To us; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace  
 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? 10  
 Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires.”

So said he, and dropped Sohrab's hand, and left  
 His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay;  
 And o'er his chilly limbs his woolen coat  
 He passed, and tied his sandals on his feet, 15  
 And threw a white cloak round him, and he took  
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;  
 And on his head he set his sheepskin cap,  
 Black, glossy, curled, the fleece of Kara-Kul;  
 And raised the curtain of his tent, and called 20  
 His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun by this had risen, and cleared the fog  
 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.  
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed  
 Into the open plain; so Haman bade— 25  
 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 streamed;  
 As when some gray November morn the files,  
 In marching order spread, of long-necked cranes 30  
 Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes

1-3. **Whether that . . . Or in.** Either because . . . Or because of.

10. **Ravening.** Obtaining prey by violence, like animals. So in Eze. xxii. 25: "like a roaring lion ravening the prey."

19. **Kara-Kul** (*kä'rä-kool*). A famous pasturage for sheep in Bokhara.

25. **Haman** (*hä'man*). In the original poem he aids in deceiving Sohrab as to his father's presence in the Persian army.

31. **Casbin.** Also *Kasvin*; a city of Persia, once the seat of royalty. Near it, to the north, are the Elburz (*el'boorz*) mountains.

Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,  
 Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound  
 For the warm Persian seaboard—so they streamed.  
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,  
 First, with black sheepskin caps and with long spears ; 5  
 Large men, large steeds ; who from Bokhara come  
 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.  
 Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,  
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,  
 And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ; 10  
 Light men and on light steeds, who only drink  
 The aerid milk of camels, and their wells.  
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came  
 From far, and a more doubtful service owned ;  
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks 15  
 Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards  
 And close-set skullcaps ; and those wilder hordes  
 Who roam o'er Kipehak and the northern waste,  
 Kalmueks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray  
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes, 20

2. **Frore.** Frozen, frosty. Anglo-Saxon *froren*, from *freosan*, to freeze.

1. **Khiva** (*ke'vā*). An important province, or khanate, of Turkestan. Its capital is *Khiva*.

7. **Milk of mares.** This intoxicating liquor, used by the Tartars, is called *koumiss*. The name is now applied to a somewhat similar preparation of milk for invalids.

8. **Toorkmun.** The Toorkmuns, or Turkomans, are Tartars inhabiting the steppe east of the Caspian and south of the Oxus.

10. **Attruck.** Also *Atrak* ; a river emptying into the Caspian Sea.

14. **A more doubtful service owned.** They did not acknowledge obedience to King Afrasiab, and therefore formed an uncertain part of the army.

15. **Ferghana** (*fer-ghā'nā*). A province of Turkestan, in which are the head-waters of the river Jaxartes (*jax-ar'teez*), the modern Sihon, or Syr Daria.

18. **Kipchak.** A name once applied to a large region bordering the Caspian Sea on the north.

19. **Kalmueks.** Or *Calmueks* ; a nomadic race, inhabiting various parts of the Russian and Chinese empires. They live in "conical felt tents, set up in regular lines like the streets of a town. Their wealth consists entirely in small but high-spirited horses, excellent cattle, and broad-tailed, rough-fleeced sheep."

19. **Kuzzaks** (*kooz'zaks*). The modern Cossacks, a wandering Russian tribe.

20. **Kirghizzes** (*kīr'ghī-zeez*). A fierce Mongolian tribe from the high mountainous regions.



Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere ,  
 These all filed out from camp into the plain.  
 And on the other side the Persians formed ;—  
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seemed,  
 The Ilyats of Khorassan ; and behind, 5  
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,  
 Marshaled battalions bright in burnished steel. *all identical*  
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,  
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,  
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks. 10  
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw  
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,  
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,  
 And checked his ranks, and fixed them where they stood.  
 And the old Tartar came upon the sand 15  
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said :  
 “ 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.” 20  
 As, in the country, on a morn in June,  
 When the dew glistens on the pearly 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 25  
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.  
 But as a troop of peddlers, from Cabool,  
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,  
 That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow ;  
 Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass 30  
 Long flocks of traveling birds dead on the snow,

5. **Khorassan** (*ko-rās-sān'*). “The land of the Sun”; a northeastern province of Persia. **Ilyats** (*il'ī-āts*), a word meaning *tribes*, is applied collectively to the Tartar tribes of this province.

23. **Corn**. Used in the European sense of *grain*, as wheat, barley, etc.

27. **Cabool** (*kā-bool'*). Also *Cabul* and *Kabul*; the capital of Afghanistan.

28. **Indian Caucasus**. The same as the Hindoo Koosh mountains, between Afghanistan and Turkestan.

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Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves  
 Slake their parched throats with sugared 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. 5

And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up  
 To counsel ; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,  
 And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host  
 Second, and was the uncle of the King ;  
 These came and counseled, and then Gudurz said : 10

“ Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,  
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.  
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart. *metonymy*  
 But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits  
 And sullen, and has pitched his tents apart. 15

Him will I seek, and carry to his ear  
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.  
 Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.  
 Stand forth the while, and take their challengè up.”

So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and cried : 20  
 “ Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said !  
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”

He spake : and Peran-Wisa turned, and strode  
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.  
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran, 25  
 And crossed the camp which lay behind, and reached,  
 Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.

Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,  
 Just pitched ; the high pavilion in the midst  
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camped around. 30  
 And Gudurz entered Rustum's tent, and found  
 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,

---

1. **Choked by the air.** Explain the conditions that produce this effect. Suggest any Alpine experiences or adventures that justify the description contained in this fine simile, ll. 27, p. 20 to 5, p. 21.

7. **Gudurz** (*goo'doorz*) ; **Zoarrah** (*zo-är'räh*) ; **Feraburz** (*fe'rä-boorz*).

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And dark-green melons ; and there Rustum sate  
 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,  
 And played with it ; but Gudurz came and stood  
 Before him ; and he looked, and saw him stand,  
 And with a cry sprang up and dropped the bird, 5  
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said :

“ 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, 10  
 But not to-day ; to-day has other needs.

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— 15  
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.

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. 20  
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose ! ”

He spoke ; but Rustum answered 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, 25

1. **Sate.** Obsolete form of *sat*.

2. **Falconry**, or the sport of using falcons and hawks in hunting, has been practised in the East from the most ancient times. It was known in China 2000 years n.c. According to Layard, “ a falconer bearing a hawk on his wrist ” was found represented in the bas-reliefs of Nineveh.

7 to 8, p. 24. Those who are familiar with Homer's Iliad will find many suggestive similarities in Arnold's poem, notably in the simple and direct language, in the fine similes, and in some of the incidents. This appeal to Rustum recalls the appeal to the “ implacable Achilles ” in the Iliad, book ix. The poem is an evidence of Arnold's splendid classical culture and of his ability to make English verses truly Homeric in quality.

19. **Iran's chiefs.** Persia is called *Iran* by the Persians themselves. According to the Shah-Namah, there were two brothers, Iran and Tur, from whom sprang the Iranians and Turanians.

23. **Go to.** An old phrase of exhortation, often contemptuous, common in the Scriptures and in Shakespeare, as in “ Twelfth Night,” IV, 1: “ Go to, go to, thou art a foolish fellow.”

25. **Kai Khosroo** (*kī kos-roo'*). The Persian name of Cyrus the Great. He was the third of the Kaianian dynasty, the founder of which, Kai Kobad,



Himself is young, and honors younger men,  
 And lets the aged molder 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? 5  
 For would that I myself had such a son,  
 And not that one slight helpless girl I have—  
 A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,  
 And I to tarry with the snow-haired Zal,  
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex, 10  
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,  
 And he has none to guard his weak old age.  
 There would I go, and hang my armor up,  
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,  
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got, 15  
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,  
 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,  
 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, 20  
 When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks  
 Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,  
 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.' " 25

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply :  
 "O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?  
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.

---

according to legend, was placed upon the throne by Rustum. In the  
 "Rubaiyat" of Omar Khayyam (Fitzgerald's translation) we have :

"What have we to do  
 With Kaikobad the Great, or Kaikhosru?  
 Let Zal and Rustum thunder as they will."

Arnold has transferred the scene of the poem from the reign of Kai Kaoos,  
 as given in the Shah-Namah, to the more glorious reign of Kai Khosroo.

7. **Helpless girl.** He had been deceived by the mother. See Introduction,  
 and ll. 11-17, p. 34.

10. **Snow-haired Zal.** He was born with white hair, and this being  
 regarded as an ill omen by the father, he was exposed upon the mountains  
 to perish; but was miraculously preserved by a prodigious bird, and  
 received again by his father. See ll. 18-22, p. 36.

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 naught would do great deeds ?  
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame ! 5  
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms ;  
 Let not men say of Rustum, he was matched  
 In single fight with any mortal man."

He spoke, and frowned ; and Gudurz turned, and ran  
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy— 10  
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.  
 But Rustum strode to his tent door, and called  
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,  
 And clad himself in steel ; the arms he chose  
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device, 15  
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,  
 And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume  
 Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.  
 So armed, he issued forth ; and Ruksh, his horse,  
 Followed him like a faithful hound at heel— 20  
 Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,  
 The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once  
 Did in Bokhara by the river find  
 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,  
 And reared him ; a bright bay, with lofty crest, 25  
 Dight with a saddlecloth of broidered green  
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were worked  
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.  
 So followed, Rustum left his tents, and crossed  
 The camp, and to the Persian host appeared. 30  
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts  
 Hailed ; but the Tartars knew not who he was.

19. **Ruksh** (*rooksh*). This horse plays an important part in the story of Rustum (see Introduction). Recall other famous horses of mythical and historical heroes, as the "swift-footed" Xanthus of Achilles, Alexander's Bucephalus, the Cid's Babieca, etc.

26. **Dight**. Decker, arrayed. From Anglo-Saxon *dihtan*, to prepare, dress. So in Milton's "L'Allegro": "The clouds in thousand liveries dight."

And dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
 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, 5  
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—  
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,  
 And Sohrab armed in Haman's tent, and came.  
 And as afield the reapers cut a swath 10  
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,  
 And on each side are squares of standing corn,  
 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. 15  
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast  
 His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw  
 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 20  
 Who with numb blackened fingers makes her fire—  
 At cockerow, on a starlit winter's morn,  
 When the frost flowers the whitened window-panes—  
 And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
 Of that poor drudge may be ; so Rustum eyed 25  
 The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar  
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth  
 All the most valiant chiefs ; long he perused  
 His spirited air, and wondered who he was.  
 For very young he seemed, tenderly reared ; 30  
 Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,  
 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
 By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—

3. **Bahrein** (*bä'rān*). An island in the Persian Gulf, famous for its pearl fisheries

5. **Tale**. Number, or reckoning. From A.S. *talian* to tell, count. The Israelites in Egypt had to make their "tale of bricks."

So slender Sohrab seemed, so softly reared.

And a deep pity entered Rustum's soul

As he beheld him coming ; and he stood,

And beckoned to him with his hand, and said :

“ O thou young man, the air of heaven is soft,

5

And warm, and pleasant ; but the grave is cold !

Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.

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—

10

Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.

O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death ?

Be governed ! quit the Tartar host, and come

To Iran, and be as my son to me,

And fight beneath my banner till I die !

15

There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.”

So he spake, mildly ; Sohrab heard his voice,

The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw

His giant figure planted on the sand,

Sole, like some single tower, which a chief

20

Hath builded on the waste in former years

Against the robbers ; and he saw that head,

Streaked with its first gray hairs ;—hope filled his soul,

And he ran forward and embraced his knees,

And clasped his hand within his own, and said :

25

“ Oh, by thy father's head ! by thine own soul !

Art thou not Rustum ? speak ! are thou not he ?”

But Rustum eyed askanee the kneeling youth,

And turned away, and spake to his own soul :

“ Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean !

30

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 !’

He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,

But he will find some pretext not to fight,

35

9. *Tried*. The same as *proved*, l. 34, p. 27.

11. The antithesis here is strengthened by alliteration.

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,  
 In Samarcand, he will arise and ery :  
 ' I challenged once, when the two armies camped 5  
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords  
 To cope with me in single fight ; but they  
 Shrank, only Rustum dared ; then he and I  
 Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'  
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud ; 10  
 Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me."

And then he turned, and sternly spake aloud :  
 " Rise ! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus  
 Of Rustum ? I am here, whom thou hast called  
 By challenge forth ; make good thy vaunt, or yield ! 15  
 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  
 Before thy face this day, and were revealed,  
 There would be then no talk of fighting more. 20  
 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,  
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds  
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods, 25  
 Oxus in summer wash them all away."

He spoke ; and Sohrab answered, on his feet :  
 " 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 30  
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then.  
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.  
 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. 35

11. **Were.** Would be.

33. **Dread,** Inspiring awe, or fear. So "dread sovereign."



And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure  
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.  
 •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. 5  
 And whether it will heave us up to land,  
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,  
 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.” 10

†) He spoke, and Rustum answered not, but hurled  
 His spear ; down from the shoulder, down it came,  
 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk,  
 That long has towered in the airy clouds,  
 Drops like a plummet ; Sohrab saw it come, 15  
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash ; the spear  
 Hissed, and went quivering down into the sand,  
 Which it sent flying wide ;—then Sohrab threw  
 In turn, and full struck Rustum’s shield ; sharp rang,  
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turned the spear. 20  
 And Rustum seized his club, which none but he  
 Could wield ; an unlopped trunk it was, and huge,  
 Still rough—like those which men in treeless plains  
 To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,  
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up 25  
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter time  
 Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,  
 And strewn the channels with torn boughs—so huge  
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck  
 One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside, 30  
 Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came  
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum’s hand.

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22. **Unlopped.** Not cut and trimmed with an axe. The Cyclops, Polyphemus, used a pine tree as a walking-stick (Virgil’s *Æneid*, bk. 11). The weapon of Hercules was a club.

25. **Hyphasis** (*hi fa’sis*) or **Hydaspes** (*hi-das’pees*). Rivers of Northern India, tributaries of the Indus, the modern Beas and Jhelum.

26. **Dark springs.** Why “dark springs”?

27. **Wrack.** Wreck, ruin; A.S. *wræc*.

And Rustum followed his own blow, and fell  
 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 ; 5  
 But he looked on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,  
 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 ; 10  
 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul,  
 Thou say'st, 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, 15  
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;  
 But never was my heart thus touched 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, 20  
 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 ; 25  
 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou  
 Mayst 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 30  
 He left to lie, but had regained his spear,  
 Whose fiery point now in his mailed right hand  
 Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn star,  
 The baleful sign of fevers ; dust had soiled  
 His stately crest, and dimmed his glittering arms. 35

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33. **Autumn star.** Sirius, the Dog-star, is probably referred to, an object of much superstition in both ancient and modern times.

His breast heaved, his lips foamed, and twice his voice  
 Was choked with rage ; at last these words broke way :  
 “ Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands !  
 Curled minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !  
 Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more ! 5  
 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. 10  
 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !  
 Remember all thy valor ; 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.” 15  
 He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,  
 And he too drew his sword ; at once they rushed  
 Together, as two eagles on one prey  
 Come rushing down together from the clouds,  
 One from the east, one from the west ; their shields 20  
 Dashed with a clang together, and a din  
 Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters  
 Make often in the forest's heart at morn,  
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees—such blows  
 Rustum and Sohrab on each other hailed. 25  
 And you would say that sun and stars took part  
 In that unnatural conflict ; for a cloud  
 Grew suddenly in heaven, and darked the sun  
 Over the fighters' heads ; and a wind rose  
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain, 30  
 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapped the pair.  
 In gloom they twain were wrapped, 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. 35

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27. **Unnatural.** It was against nature that father and son should be thus fighting.



But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes  
 And laboring breath ; first Rustum struck the shield  
 Which Sohrab held stiff out ; the steel-spiked spear  
 Rent the tough plates, but failed to reach the skin,  
 And Rustum plucked it back with angry groan. 5  
 Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,  
 Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest  
 He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,  
 Never till now defiled, sank to the dust ;  
 And Rustum bowed his head ; but then the gloom 10  
 Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air,  
 And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the horse,  
 Who stood at hand, uttered a dreadful cry ;—  
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar  
 Of some pained desert lion, who all day 15  
 Hath trailed 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 eurdled as it crossed his stream.  
 But Sohrab heard, and quailed not, but rushed on, 20  
 And struck again ; and again Rustum bowed  
 His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,  
 Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,  
 And in the hand the hilt remained alone.  
 Then Rustum raised his head ; his dreadful eyes 25  
 Glared, and he shook on high his menaeing spear,  
 And shouted : “ Rustum ! ”—Sohrab heard that shout,  
 And shrank amazed : back he recoiled one step,  
 And scanned with blinking eyes the advaneing form ;  
 And then he stood bewildered ; and he dropped 30  
 His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.  
 He reeled, and, staggering back, sank to the ground ;  
 And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,

8. **Shore.** Obsolete preterite of *shear*, allowable only in poetry. From A.S. *sceran*, to cut; *scarf*, *scrip*, *shave*, *shove*, *shred*, and many other words indicating something *cut off*, are from this root.

33. What is the effect of the repetition of *and*? Compare Matthew vii. 27.

And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all  
 The cloud ; and the two armies saw the pair—  
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,  
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began : 5  
 “ 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 ;  
 Or else that the great Rustum would come down  
 Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move 10  
 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,  
 To glad thy father in his weak old age.  
 Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man I 15  
 Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be  
 Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.”

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied :  
 “ Unknown thou art ; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.  
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man ! 20  
 No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.  
 For were I matched with ten such men as thee,  
 And I were that which till to-day I was,  
 They should be lying here, I standing there.  
 But that belovéd name unnerved my arm— 25  
 That name, and something, I confess, in thee,  
 Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield  
 Fall ; and thy spear transfixed an unarmed foe.  
 And now thou boastést, and insults’t my fate.  
 But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear : 30  
 The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death !  
 My father, whom I seek through all the world,  
 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee !”

As when some hunter in the spring hath found  
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest, 35  
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,  
 And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,

And followed 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 5  
 Circles above his eyry, 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 10  
 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 15  
 Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But, 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 : 20  
 “ 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 25  
 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 had seen !  
 Yet him I pity not so much, but her, 30  
 My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells  
 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, 35

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11. **Glass her.** Reflect her image, like a mirror.

With spoils and honor, when the war is done.  
 But a dark rumor will be bruited up,  
 From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear ;  
 And then will that defenseless woman learn  
 That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more, 5  
 But that in battle with a nameless foe,  
 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 listened, plunged in thought. 10  
 Nor did he yet believe it was his son  
 Who spoke, although he called 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— 15  
 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear  
 Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.  
 And so he deemed that either Sohrab took,  
 By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ;  
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame. 20  
 So deemed he : yet he listened, plunged in thought ;  
 And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide  
 Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore  
 At the full moon ; tears gathered in his eyes ;  
 For he remembered his own early youth, 25  
 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 ; 30  
 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,

2. **Bruited up.** Circulated, noised abroad.

19. **The style.** The title, or name.

28. **Smitten.** Note the appropriateness of the word, to describe the sudden effect of the sun's rays shooting forth from behind a cloud.

31. **That old king.** The king of Samengan. See Introduction.

They three, in that long-distant summer time—  
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt  
 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, 5  
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,  
 Like some rich hyacinth which by the seythe  
 Of an unskillful gardener has been cut,  
 Mowing the garden grassplots near its bed,  
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom, 10  
 On the mown, dying grass—so Sohrab lay,  
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.  
 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 ! 15  
 Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men  
 Have told thee false—thou art not Rustum’s son.  
 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— 20  
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”  
 But Sohrab answered him in wrath ; for now  
 The anguish of the deep-fixed spear grew fierce,  
 And he desired to draw forth the steel,  
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die— 25  
 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 ?  
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,  
 And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine. 30  
 I tell thee, pricked upon this arm I bear  
 The seal which Rustum to my mother gave,  
 That she might prick it on the babe she bore.”  
 He spoke ; and all the blood left Rustum’s cheeks,

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5. **Of age and looks to be.** Of such age and looks that he might be.  
 32. **That seal.** In the original it is an onyx amulet, which he was to wear upon his arm. Why did Arnold change the token of recognition ?

And his knees tottered, and he smote his hand  
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,  
 That the hard iron corselet elanked aloud ;  
 And to his heart he pressed the other hand,  
 And in a hollow voice he spake, and said : 5

“ 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  
 His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,  
 And showed a sign in faint vermilion points 10  
 Prieked ; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,  
 Prieks 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  
 Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands— 15  
 So delicately prieked the sign appeared

On Sohrab’s arm, the sign of Rustum’s seal.  
 It was that griffin, which of old reared Zal,  
 Rustum’s great father, whom they left to die,  
 A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks ; 20  
 Him that kind creature found and reared, and loved—  
 Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.

And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,  
 And himself scanned it long with mournful eyes,  
 And then he touched it with his hand, and said : 25

“ 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  
 Speechless ; and then he uttered one sharp cry :  
 “ O boy—thy father ! ”—and his voice choked there. 30  
 And then a dark cloud passed before his eyes,  
 And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.  
 But Sohrab crawled to where he lay, and east  
 His arms about his neck, and kissed his lips,

3. **That.** So that.

18. **Griffin.** The marvelous vulture (like the Roc in the Arabian Nights) that rescued and nurtured Zal when cast away by his father.



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  
 In both his hands the dust which lay around, 5  
 And threw it on his head, and smirched 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 clutched his sword,  
 To draw it, and forever let life out. 10  
 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. 15  
 Surely my heart eried out that it was thou,  
 When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,  
 I know it ! but fate trod those promptings down  
 Under its iron heel ; fate, fate engaged  
 The strife, and hurled me on my father’s spear. 20  
 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 !’ 25  
 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.” 30  
 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 kissed him. And awe fell on both the hosts,  
 When they saw Rustum’s grief ; and Ruksh, the horse. 35  
 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,  
 The big warm tears rolled down, and caked the sand.  
 But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said : 5  
 “ Ruksh, now thou grievest ; but, O Ruksh, thy feet  
 Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,  
 Or ere they brought thy master to this field ! ”  
 But Sohrab looked upon the horse, and said :  
 “ Is this, then, Ruksh ? How often, in past days, 10  
 My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,  
 My terrible father’s terrible horse ! and said,  
 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 ; 15  
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go,  
 And snuffed the breezes of my father’s home.  
 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,  
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake  
 Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself 20  
 Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,  
 Corn in a golden platter soaked with wine,  
 And said : ‘ O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well, ’—but I  
 Have never known my grandsire’s furrowed face,  
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan, 25  
 Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream ;  
 But lodged among my father’s foes, and seen  
 Afrasiab’s cities only, Samareand,  
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,  
 And the blaek Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk 30  
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,  
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,

19. **Helmund** (*hel'moond*). A river of Afghanistan, flowing through the province of Seistan. Near it is Lake Zirrah (*zir'räh*), now little more than a marsh. Wide possessions here had been given to Rustum by the Persian monarchs.

31. **Moorghab, Tejend** (*te-yend'*), **Kohik** (*ko-hik'*). Rivers of Turkestan that are gradually lost in the desert.

The northern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream,  
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.”

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewailed :

“ Oh, that its waves were flowing over me !

Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt 5

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

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. 10

Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,

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 ! 15

Let me entreat for them ; what have they done ?

They followed 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, 20

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

Thou, and the snow-haired 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. 25

That so the passing horseman on the waste

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.” 30

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :

“ 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,

1. **Northern Sir.** The Syr Daria, ancient Jaxartes.

5. **Grains of yellow silt.** Mud or fine soil carried along by the water and finally deposited.

And carry thee away to Seistan,  
 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, 5  
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all,  
 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 ? 10  
 For would that all that I have ever slain  
 Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,  
 And they who were called champions in their time,  
 And through whose death I won that fame I have—  
 And I were nothing but a common man, 15  
 A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,  
 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, 20  
 Not thou of mine ! and I might die, not thou ;  
 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 thine end ! ” 25  
 But now in blood and battles was my youth,  
 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 ! 30  
 But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now,  
 Not yet ! but thou shalt have it on that day  
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,  
 Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,  
 Returning home over the salt blue sea, 25  
 From laying thy dear master in his grave.”

And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said :

“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 5  
Came welling from the open gash, and life  
Flowed with the stream ;—all down his cold white side  
The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soiled,  
Like the soiled tissue of white violets  
Left, freshly gathered, on their native bank, 10  
By children whom their nurses call with haste  
Indoors from the sun's eye ; his head drooped 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, 15  
Convulsed him back to life, he opened 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,  
Regretting the warm mansion which it left, 20  
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.  
As those black granite pillars, once high-reared 25  
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.

And night came down over the solemn waste, 30  
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,  
And darkened all ; and a cold fog, with night,  
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,  
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires

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26. **Jemshid** (*jem'sheed*). An ancient king of Persia, who is supposed to have added to the splendors of Persepolis, the ruins of which are now called Chilmimar, the "Forty Pillars."

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. 5

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 hushed Chorasmian waste,  
 Under the solitary moon ;—he flowed 10  
 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 pareeled Oxus strains along 15  
 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—  
 Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
 In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
 A foiled circuitous wanderer—till at last  
 The longed-for dash of waves is heard, and wide 20  
 His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
 And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars  
 Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

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6. **But the majestic river floated on.** The author begins and ends the poem with the picture of the smooth-flowing river, thus giving it a beautiful artistic setting. The sublime tranquillity of nature is undisturbed by human suffering and tragedy. Nothing of its kind in modern poetry is finer than this conclusion.

11. **Orgunje** (*or'goon-je*). A village on the Oxus, below Khiva.



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