

Proved an abiding trouble, and he prayed
 To God in bitterness of soul to minish
 His strength that he might walk like other men.
 According to his prayer his mountain-strength
 Had shrunk, but face to face with such a task,
 And pierced by apprehension of Suhráb,
 He cried to God and said: "Almighty Lord!
 Protect Thy slave in his extremity.
 O holy Fosterer! I ask again
 My former strength."

God granted him his prayer,
 The strength which once had waned now waxed in him.
 He went back to the field perturbed and pale
 While, like a maddened elephant, Suhráb,
 With lasso on his arm and bow in hand,
 V. 502 Came in his pride and roaring like a lion,
 His plunging charger flinging up the soil.
 When Rustam saw the bearing of his foe
 He was astound and gazing earnestly
 Weighed in his mind the chances of the fight.
 Suhráb, puffed up with youthful arrogance,
 On seeing Rustam in his strength and Grace,
 Cried: "Thou that didst escape the Lion's claws!
 Why com'st thou boldly to confront me? Speak!
 Hast thou no interests of thine own to seek?"

§ 21

How Suhráb was slain by Rustam

They tied their steeds while fate malignantly
 Revolved o'erhead, and when dark fate is wroth
 Flint rocks become like wax. The two began
 To wrestle, holding by their leathern belts.
 As for Suhráb thou wouldst have said: "High heaven
 Hath hampered him," while Rustam reaching clutched
 That warrior-leopard by the head and neck,

Bent down the body of the gallant youth,
 Whose time was come and all whose strength was gone,
 And like a lion dashed him to the ground ; V. 503
 Then, knowing that Suhráb would not stay under,
 Drew lightly from his waist his trenchant sword
 And gashed the bosom of his gallant son.

Whenever thou dost thirst for blood and stain
 Therewith thy glittering dagger, destiny

Will be athirst for thy blood, and ordain
 Each hair of thine to be a sword for thee.

Suhráb cried : " Ah ! " and writhed. Naught recked
 he then

Of good or ill. " I am alone to blame,"
 He said to Rustam. " Fate gave thee my key.
 This hump-backed sky reared me to slay me soon.
 Men of my years will mock me since my neck
 Hath thus come down to dust. My mother told me
 How I should recognise my father. I
 Sought him in love and die of my desire.
 Alas ! my toils are vain, I have not seen him.
 Now wert thou fish, or wrapped like night in gloom,
 Or quit of earth wast soaring like a star,
 My father would avenge me when he seeth
 My pillow bricks. Some chief will say to Rustam :—
 ' Suhráb was slain and flung aside in scorn
 While seeking thee.' "

Then Rustam grew distraught,
 The world turned black, his body failed ; o'ercome
 He sank upon the ground and swooned away ;
 Till coming to himself he cried in anguish :—
 " Where is the proof that thou art Rustam's son ?
 May his name perish from among the great,
 For I am Rustam ! Be my name forgotten,
 And may the son of Sám sit mourning me ! "

He raved, his blood seethed, and with groans he
 plucked

His hair up by the roots, while at the sight
 Suhráb sank swooning till at length he cried :—
 "If thou indeed art Rustam thou hast slain me
 In wanton malice, for I made advances,
 But naught that I could do would stir thy love.
 Undo my breastplate, view my body bare,
 Behold thy jewel, see how sires treat sons!
 The drums beat at my gate, my mother came
 With blood-stained cheeks and stricken to the soul
 Because I went. She bound this on mine arm
 And said : ' Preserve this keepsake of thy father's
 And mark its virtue.' It is mighty now,
 Now when the strife is over and the son
 Is nothing to his sire."

When Rustam loosed
 The mail and saw the gem he rent his clothes,
 And cried : "Oh ! my brave son, approved by all
 And slain by me !"

With dust upon his head
 And streaming face he rent his locks until
 His blood ran down.

"Nay, this is worse and worse,"
 Suhráb said. "Wherefore weep ? What will it profit
 To slay thyself ? What was to be hath been."

When day declined and Rustam came not back
 There went forth twenty trusty warriors
 To learn the issue. Both the steeds were standing
 Bemoiled with dust, but Rustam was not there.
 The nobles, thinking that he had been slain,
 Went to Káuś in consternation saying :—
 "The throne of majesty is void of Rustam !"

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A cry went up throughout the host and all
 Was in confusion. Then Káuś bade sound
 The drums and trumpets, Túś came, and the Sháh
 Said to the troops : "Dispatch a messenger
 That he may find out what Suhráb hath done,