

When once I am engaged in fight; moreover,
 Though we may tread upon a dragon's eyes,
 We cannot 'scape the process of the heavens.
 If death is to befall me by his hand
 'Twill not be let by friend or enemy.
 I recognise this might and manliness;
 This noble warrior hath the Grace divine,
 Still I may be the better man afoot,
 And as we struggle make him stream with blood."

Then spake the monarch of the world to Shída:—
 "O famous offspring of a noble race!
 Of all the men of Kaian seed not one
 In sooth hath e'er assayed to fight afoot,
 But notwithstanding if thou wishest I
 Hold it a wish that I shall ne'er deny."

§ 9

How Shída was slain by Khusrau

The Sháh dismounted from his night-hued steed,
 Removed his royal helmet and, entrusting
 The noble charger to Ruhhám, advanced
 As 'twere Ázargashasp. When Shída saw
 From far Khusrau approaching him on foot
 That warlike Crocodile dismounted likewise,
 And there upon the plain the champions closed
 Like elephants, and puddled earth with blood.
 When Shída saw the stature of the Sháh,
 The breast, the Grace divine, and mastery,
 He sought some shift whereby he might escape;
 Such is the purchase of a shifty heart!
 Khusrau, when ware of this, though not expressed
 In words, reached out, strong in the strength of Him
 By whom the world was made—the Omnipotent—
 And, as a lion putteth forth its paws

Upon an onager and flingeth it,
 Clutched with left hand the neck, with right the back
 Of Shída, raised him, dashed him to the ground,
 And brake his legs and back-bone like a reed.
 Then, drawing forth his trenchant blade, Khusrau
 Clave Shída's heart in twain and, having shivered
 His breastplate and thrown dust upon his helmet,
 Said to Ruhám: "This 'matchless miscreant,
 Brave but unstable, was my mother's brother;
 Entreat him kindly now that he is slain,
 And fashion him a royal sepulchre;
 Anoint his head with precious gums, rose-water,
 And musk, his body with pure camphor; place
 A golden torque about his neck, a casque
 With ambergris therein upon his head."

The interpreter of Shída looking forth
 Beheld the body of the famous prince,
 Which they had raised blood-boltered from the sands
 To carry toward the army of Khusrau.
 The interpreter drew near and cried aloud:—
 "O thou illustrious and just-dealing king!
 I was no more than Shída's feeble slave,
 No warrior, cavalier, or paladin:
 O Sháh! forgive me in thy clemency,
 And may thy spirit be the joy of heaven."

"Tell my grandfather," thus the Sháh replied,
 "Before the troops what thou hast seen me do."

The nobles' hearts and eyes were on the road,
 Awaiting Shída's coming from the field.
 A cavalier sped o'er the yielding sand,
 Bare-headed, weeping scalding tears of blood,
 And told Afrásiyáb, who in despair
 Plucked out his locks all camphor-white and scattered
 Dust on his head. His paladins drew nigh,
 And all who saw the Turkman monarch's face
 Rent hearts and garments for him; such a wail