

I came again in such case to Írán
 That we had no foe left in all the world,
 And not a Brahman in his idol-house.
 In all my battles I have fought unaided ;
 No one hath shared with me the cares of war.
 Now, seeing that we have so long conversed,
 Tilt up the wine-cup if thou art athirst."

§ 17

How Rustam vaunted his Valour

Then Rustam spake thus to Asfandiyár :—
 " My deeds remain as my memorial ;
 So now in simple justice hear the words
 Of one whose name is known—an ancient man :
 If I had gone not to Mázandarán,¹
 And borne my massive mace upon my shoulder,
 Where would have been blind Gív, Gúdarz, and Tús,
 And our exalted Sháh—that sport of grief ?
 Who had torn out the White Dív's heart and brain ? V. 1673
 Who had sufficient trust in his own arm ?
 Who would have rescued Kai Káús from bonds,
 And have restored him to the lofty throne
 Whereto from heavy chains I carried him—
 The fortune-favoured darling of Írán ?
 I cut the heads from off the sorcerers ;
 They saw no bier, no shroud, no burial.
 Mine only helpers in those fights were Rakhsh,
 And my sharp sword which meteth out the world.
 Then when Káús went to Hámávarán,²
 Where they made fast his feet in heavy fetters,
 I took an army of Íránians,
 Drawn from wherever there were prince and chief,
 Slew in the fight that folk's king, and made void

¹ Vol. ii. p. 44 *seq.*² *Id.* 88 *seq.*

Their famous throne. The monarch of the world—
 Káús himself—was captive and his heart
 Was stricken by anxiety and travail.
 Meanwhile Afrásiyáb was in Írán
 Together with his host and famous chiefs.
 Then it was I who rescued Kai Káús
 As well as Tús, Gív, and Gúdarz, and brought them
 Back to Írán out of Hámávarán,
 Brought all the paladins and men of name.
 One dark night as I went before the troops
 In search of fame, not rest, Afrásiyáb
 Discerned my fluttering flag and heard Rakhsh neigh :
 Abandoning Írán he made for Chín,
 And justice and thanksgiving filled the world.
 Had blood come from the neck of Kai Káús
 How could he have begotten Siyáwush ?
 Had saintly mother not borne Kai Khusrau,
 Who would have named Luhrásp for Sháh ? Why vaunt
 About his crown, the armlets and the throne
 Of Sháh Gushtásp¹ who saith : ‘ Go, bind the hands
 Of Rustam ’ ? Not high heaven itself shall bind them !
 From boyhood up to now in mine old age
 I have not borne such words from any man.
 To make excuses and beg off would shame me ;
 To speak thus mildly is a degradation.”

V. 1674

V. 1675

Asfandiyár smiled at his violence
 And, reaching out and gripping Rustam’s hand,
 Said : “ Rustam of the elephantine form !
 Thou art what all have represented thee ;
 Thine arm is mighty as a lion’s thigh,
 Thy breast and limbs are like a lusty dragon’s,
 Thy waist is fine and slender as the pard’s,
 And such a chieftain beareth off the day.”

He squeezed the hand of Rustam as he spake,
 But yet the youth made not the old man writhe ;

¹ Reading with P.

Though gall exuded from his finger-nails
 Good sooth the hero writhed not with the pain.
 Then Rustam grasped the prince's hand in his,
 And said: "O prince and worshipper of God!
 How blessèd is the famous Sháh Gushtásp
 To have a son such as Asfandiyár!
 How blest is he who getteth one like thee:
 He addeth to the glory of the world!"

He spake and grasped the other's hand until
 The prince's face became as red as blood,
 Till blood and water oozed out from his nails,
 And he was frowning, though he laughed and said:—
 "Famed Rustam! drink today. In fight tomorrow
 Thou wilt have pain and think no more of feasting.
 Or ever I shall saddle my black steed,
 And place the royal helm upon my head,
 I will unhorse thee with my spear: thereafter
 Thou wilt not seek for battle and revenge.
 Then will I bind thy hands, bear thee before
 The Sháh, and say: 'I saw no fault in him,'
 Will intercede for thee and urge all pleas,
 Will set thee free from sorrow, pain, and travail,
 And thou shalt have instead both good and treasure."

V. 1676

Then Rustam, smiling at Asfandiyár,
 Said: "Thou shalt have enough of combating.
 Where hast thou seen the fights of warriors?
 Where hast thou felt the wind of massive maces?
 If such then be the aspect of the sky
 Love will be veiled between two men at least;
 We shall have war instead of ruddy wine,
 Use lasso, bow, and strategy, require
 The roar of drum instead of voice of harp,
 And greet each other with the sword and mace.
 Then shalt thou, glorious Asfandiyár!
 Behold the rush and pulsing of the fight.
 Tomorrow when I come upon the field,

And in the battle man opposeth man,
 I will unhorse thee with a firm embrace,
 And carry thee away to glorious Zál,
 Then seat thee on the famous ivory throne,
 And crown thee with the heart-rejoicing crown,
 Which I myself received from Kai Kubád,
 And may his soul rejoice in Paradise !
 I will unlock my treasury fulfilled
 With precious things and lay my hoards before thee,
 Put all thy troops past want and raise to heaven
 Thy crown, then seek the presence of the Sháh
 In state rejoicing, boldly set the crown
 Upon thy head as thanks to Sháh Gushtásp,
 Then gird me as I have been girt erewhile
 Before the Kaians, renovate my heart
 With joy, and make the Garden's surface weedless.
 Men's bodies will not keep their souls within
 When thou art Sháh and I am paladin."

§ 18

How Rustam drank Wine with Asfandiyár

V. 1677 Asfandiyár replied : " More talk is useless.
 My belly craveth, half the day is over,
 And we have had much talk of combating.
 Bring ye the table and what food ye have,
 But summon nobody that talketh much ! "

Now when the board was spread, and Rustam ate,
 They were astonied at his appetite.
 Asfandiyár and all the other heroes
 Set lambs in front of him on every side.
 He ate them all, whereat the prince and people
 Were lost in wonder. Then the prince commanded :—
 " Bring cups and ruddy wine for him, and we
 Will note how he will hold forth in his cups,
 And prate of Kai Káús. "

The drawer brought