

The Sháh's heart will be still disturbed by thoughts,  
 While this king's daughter of Hámávarán  
 Hath made thee doubtful on the other side.  
 Such being then the statements of the pair  
 Let one of them be made to pass through fire,  
 Because high heaven ordaineth that no harm  
 Shall in this way befall the innocent."

The world-lord called Súdába, seated her  
 With Siyáwush to parley on the case,  
 And said at last: "My heart and my shrewd mind  
 Trust neither of you; fire will show the truth,  
 And quickly make the guilty infamous."

V. 550

Súdába answered: "What I said is true;  
 I showed the Sháh two babes untimely born:  
 What greater outrage can there be than mine?  
 'Tis Siyáwush that ought to right himself:  
 He sought to ruin me and did the wrong."

The king of earth then asked his youthful son:—  
 "What seemeth good to thee as touching this?"

He answered: "Such a charge is worse than Hell!  
 I would pass o'er a mountain all aflame,  
 'Twere baseness not to rid me of this shame."

## § 13

*How Siyáwush passed through the Fire*

The thoughts of Kai Káús ran on them both;  
 He said: "If either prove a profligate  
 Will any henceforth call me Sháh? Moreover  
 My son and wife are blood and brain to me;  
 Whom then will this perplexing business profit?  
 Still it is best to purify my heart  
 From foul surmise and take this dreadful course.  
 How well the moralizing monarch said:—

'If thou art faint of heart play not the king!'<sup>1</sup>

He gave instructions to his minister  
To have a hundred caravans of camels  
Brought from the plain. These went to gather firewood,  
While all the people of Írán looked on,  
Till two huge mountains rose that might be seen  
Two leagues away; so should a key be found  
To loose the bonds of bale, so much he yearned  
To learn the truth amid this fraud and wrong.

V. 551

When thou hast heard the story thou wilt find  
Thyself disposed to shun all womankind;  
Seek none of them except the virtuous; she  
That worketh ill will bring disgrace on thee.

They piled two mounts of firewood on the plain  
While all the folk looked on. A path was left  
Such that a horseman armed might hardly pass  
Between the piles. This done, the glorious Sháh  
Bade pour black naphtha over all the wood.  
Came ten score men to light and blow the fire,  
And thou hadst said: 'The day is turned to night.'  
When first they blew there was a mass of smoke,  
But presently the tongues of fire rose fast;  
The earth became more radiant than the sky,  
The people shouted and the flames ascended.  
All that were on the plain were scorched and wept  
To see the cheery face of Siyáwush,  
Who came before his sire with golden helmet,  
And raiment all of white. His mien was tranquil,  
His face all smiles, his heart all hopefulness;  
His black steed's hoofs sent dust up to the moon.  
The prince then sprinkled camphor o'er himself,  
So bodies are prepared for burial,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Farídún. See vol. i. p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> "Alp-Arselan determined not to survive defeat. He made a display of pious resignation to his fate, . . . by clothing himself in a white robe, or shroud, perfumed with musk."—MHP, i. 211.

And lighting from his charger did obeisance.  
 The Sháh was shame-faced and his words were kind.  
 "Be not discomfited," said Siyáwush,  
 "That fortune taketh such a turn as this.  
 I am dishonoured: such a state is ruin.  
 If I am innocent I shall escape,  
 While if in fault the Maker will not heed me;  
 But by the power of God who giveth good  
 I shall not feel the heat."

V. 552

As he drew near

The flames he prayed the Judge that hath no needs:—  
 "Grant me a passage through this mount of fire,  
 And free me from my sire's misprision."

Thus

He testified the anguish of his soul,  
 Then urged his black steed on like smoke. A wail  
 Ascended from the city and the waste,  
 For all the people grieved at what was done.  
 Súdába heard the wailing on the plain,  
 Went to the palace-roof, descried the blaze,  
 Wished ill to him, and babbled feverishly.  
 The people fixed their eyes upon Káuś;  
 Their tongues wagged freely and their hearts were  
 wroth.

Meanwhile the prince so handled his black charger  
 That thou hadst said: "His steed took to the fire."  
 From every side the flames closed o'er his head,  
 And none could see his helmet or his horse,  
 While all the plain wept tears of blood and asked:—  
 "How will he ever issue from the flames?"

The noble hero nathless reappeared,  
 With rosy cheeks and smiles upon his lips.  
 A roar went up as men caught sight of him:  
 They cried: "The young Sháh cometh from the fire!"

He came with horse and raiment such that thou  
 Hadst said: "He beareth jasmine in his breast."

Had flame been water he had not been wetted,  
 His garments would have holden none of it ;  
 For when all-holy God doth so vouchsafe  
 The breath of fire is even as the wind.  
 The horsemen of the host urged on their steeds,  
 While all the people on the plain threw drachms  
 Before him ; there was universal joy  
 Among the mighty and the mean alike  
 As each to other gave the gladsome tidings :—  
 " God hath shown mercy to the innocent."

V. 553

Meanwhile Súdába in her frenzy plucked  
 Her hair, wept bitterly, and tore her cheeks.  
 When all unsmirched, unsinged, unstained, un-  
 led,

The guiltless Siyáwush approached, his sire  
 And all the warriors of the host alighted ;  
 But Siyáwush with cheek upon the ground  
 Gave thanks to God that he had been delivered  
 Out of that burning mount, and had confounded  
 His foes' device. Then said the Sháh: " Brave  
 youth,

Of stainless lineage and ardent soul !  
 None but a holy mother bringeth forth  
 A son like thee, and such should rule the world."

Then clasped he Siyáwush against his breast,  
 Excused his own ill conduct, and in state  
 Moved palace-ward. He took his seat rejoicing,  
 And placed the royal crown upon his head.  
 He had wine brought, the minstrels called, and  
 granted

The prince whate'er he would. The Sháh prolonged  
 Those revels for three days: till they were o'er  
 No lock or key was at the treasury-door.