

A shout rose from both hosts; the din of chiefs
 Keen for the fray, the drumming on the backs
 Of elephants, were heard for miles around.
 Earth trembled with the chargers' tramp, the hills
 Were seas of blood, the plains were hills of slain.
 The cries and blaring clarions shook the sky,
 The stones were coral and the dust was gore;
 The heads of many chieftains were laid low,
 And thou hadst said: "The sky is raining blood."
 It was no time for love 'twixt sire and son.
 A breeze arose upon the battlefield,
 And murky dust usurped the firmament.
 Then both hosts charged with fury o'er the plain
 While neither could distinguish foe from friend;
 The world became as sombre as the night,
 And day in sooth had well nigh spent its light.

§ 9

How Afrásiyáb fled from Rustam

Afrásiyáb said to his troops: "Our fortune
 That was awake is sleeping. Ye are feeble,
 And I must to the field. Be leopard-like
 In resolution if but for to-day,
 Attack from every quarter and fight on.
 Lay ambushades on all sides for the foe,
 And bring the sun down with your spears."

He quitted

The centre of his host, heart-seared, revengeful,
 Charged Tús and slaughtered many of Írán
 Till Tús, whose heart misgave him, showed his back.
 One came for aid to Rustam saying thus:—
 "The matter goeth ill with us to-day:
 Our whole right is a sea of blood, the banner
 Of our Íránian horsemen hath gone down."

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Came elephantine Rustam from the centre
 With Farámarz and troops. Confronting them
 Were many buckler-men who hated Rustam,
 Allies and kinsmen of Afrásiyáb,
 Swift in revenge, of whom the matchless one
 Slew many, backed by Tús and Farámarz.
 Afrásiyáb, when he beheld the flag
 Of violet and Káwa's standard, knew:—
 " 'Tis Rustam of the elephantine form,
 The noble chieftain sprung from Narímán,"
 And raging as it were a warrior-leopard,
 Sat tight and went up to encounter him.
 As soon as Rustam saw the sable flag
 He bounded like a lion in its rage,
 Then full of fury gave fleet Rakhsh the reins
 And, with blood streaming from his lance's point,
 Encountered proud Afrásiyáb. One shaft
 Of poplar, pointed like a willow-leaf,
 Pinned to his head the Turkman's helm, while he
 Speared warlike Rustam full upon the breast,
 The point went through the leather of his belt
 But failed against the tiger-skin cuirass;
 Then matchless Rustam, bent upon revenge,
 Speared his opponent's charger through the chest.
 The speedy steed fell prone in agony
 And threw the rider, whom the hero strove
 To seize around the waist and make an end.
 Húmán apart caught sight of him and, raising
 His massive mace upon his shoulder, smote
 The shoulder-blade of elephantine Rustam,
 While both the armies shouted. Rustam turned
 And looked behind him, thus the king escaped
 His grasp, and mounted on a speedy steed,
 While by a hundred shifts Húmán, the son
 Of Wísa, saved him from that Dragon's clutch.
 The hero-flinging crown-bestower followed

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Húmán in furious haste but caught him not,
 His time had not yet come. Shouts rose to heaven,
 And massive maces whirled. There came to Rustam
 Some of the army of Írán lest harm
 Might fall upon him, and the noble Tús
 Made question of him: "Felt the Elephant
 The impact of the Onager's assault?"

He answered: "Neither heart of stone nor anvil
 Can bear the buffets of a massive mace
 When wielded by a man with chest and arms;
 As for that mace wherewith Húmán struck me—
 Call it not iron; it was merely wax."

When Rustam's foeman turned and fled the troops
 All gave a shout and raised their spearheads cloudward.
 If slain and wounded covered not the ground
 It was a field of tulips and of saffron;
 The horses trampled blood, the elephants
 Had feet incarnadined. The Turkmans fled,
 Swift as the wind, because the arm of Rustam
 Did execution on them. For three leagues
 That matchless hero like a raging dragon
 Pursued the foe. Then he returned to camp,
 And thou hadst said that heaven befriended him;
 The soldiers came back satiate with spoil;
 And iron, gold, and silver, weapon, rein,
 Spearhead, and girdle covered all the plain.

§ 10

How Afrásiyáb sent Khusrau to Khutan

Now when the sun rose o'er the mountain-tops,
 And scattered jewels on night's pitchy back,
 A shout rose and the din of clarions
 As matchless Rustam led his army forth.
 They marched against Afrásiyáb with cheeks