

Now when he built the palace in the hold
 He made a secret passage underground,
 And not a soldier of the army wotted
 That there was such a by-way underneath
 The castle. He made choice of ten score chiefs,
 And vanished by that secret souterrain.
 Emerging he betook him to the waste,
 While all his kingdom wondered after him,
 None knowing where he was because he vanished
 So suddenly. Khusrau approached the palace,
 Trod down his foe's star, and assumed the throne
 Amid the paladins with golden helms.
 They made abundant quest, but failed to trace
 That chief of nobles; then the Sháh inquired
 Of Jahn and Garsíwaz about their king:—
 "How did he go and whither hath he gone?
 He vanished hence; where hath he taken shelter?"
 They answered fully and Khusrau gave ear,
 But not a trace showed of Afrásiyáb.
 V. 1343 The conquering Sháh said to the Íránians:—
 "Now that my foe hath vanished from the throne
 His name and purpose matter not a jot;
 'Tis one to us be he alive or not."

§ 23

How Kai Khusrau gave Quarter to the Family of Afrásiyáb

Khusrau then chose out sages from the host—
 Chiefs veteran and practised in affairs—
 And said thus: "Hail! May ye be filled with justice.
 The portal of this ill-starred Turkman's hoards
 Intrust I unto you. Be diligent.
 The sun from yon high heaven must not pierce
 The palace of Afrásiyáb, nor would I
 That thence his women's voices reach the street."

He sent out keepers for the herds that were
 At large about the hold and, being kingly,
 Harmed not the kindred of Afrásiyáb.
 The troops marked this and clamoured: "Kai Khusrau
 Hath entered in such wise that thou wouldst say:—
 'Tis to the portal of a host!' No thought
 Of sire beheaded by the sword unjustly,
 Of mother haled down naked by the hair
 From throne and high place by Afrásiyáb,
 Occurreth to his mind! This harmless Sháh
 Was shepherd-reared and suckled by a sheep.
 Why doth he not in sharp-clawed leopards' wise
 Awake the Day of Doom in this man's home,
 Bring to the ground his halls and palaces,
 And make a bonfire of his kith and kin?"

The Sháh, apprised of all the Íránians' words,
 Sent and convoked the sages, spake at large,
 And said to them: "We must display not harshness,
 Or praise heads void of wits. We must be just
 In vengeance, and in passion think of fame,
 For fame is our memorial in the world
 Since life continueth not, and this same sky
 Which turneth over us may play the tyrant."

V. 1344

He ordered: "Bring the women forth unseen,
 Those that are royal, have been always veiled,
 And never left the bower for the street."

Now when the Íránians were ware of this
 They hurried full of vengeance to the palace.
 The warriors thought: "Khusrau will slay these
 women,"

So wished to bear them off with ignominy,
 And were prepared to pillage and to slaughter.
 Then from the palace rose this wail: "Thou knowest,
 Most just, wise Sháh! that we are powerless,
 And no fit objects of contempt and insult."

The chiefest of the ladies with her daughters,

Came wailing to the Sháh ; each daughter had
 A hundred slaves with ruby crowns before her,
 Their jewelry was like the shining sun ;
 The raiment that they wore was cloth of gold.
 All carried golden goblets in their hands,
 Their hearts were awe-struck at the king of kings ;
 The dames were all musk, rubies, gold, and gems,
 And hung their heads down in their shamefastness ;
 They carried cups and censers, and the fuel
 Was ambergris and undried aloe-wood.
 Thou hadst said : " Saturn out of highest heaven
 Is showering constellations on the earth."
 The chiefest lady drew anear the throne,
 Invoking fervent blessings on the Sháh,
 While all her delicately nurtured daughters
 In like wise offered up their supplications.
 Oh! pity those fall'n in their day of stress
 From all self-pleasing and luxuriousness !

V. 1345 The ladies mid their anguish praised Khusrau :—
 " O man of royal birth and blessed steps !
 How well it were had not thy heart been grieved
 And vengeful with Túrán ! Then thou hadst come
 To feast and mirth, the accredited of kings ;
 Thou hadst been lord and master of this land,
 And crossed thy feet upon the royal throne ;
 Then Siyáwush would never have been slain
 In wantonness, but sun and moon decreed it,
 And base Afrásiyáb hath acted so
 That he will never dream of thy forgiveness.
 I gave him counsels but without avail ;
 He rashly turned his head from mine advice.
 I call upon my Maker to bear witness
 That blood hath fallen in showers from mine eyes,
 While here upon the earth thy kinsman Jahn,
 Galled by thy fetters, will bear testimony
 How in my palace both my heart and soul

Were full of grief because of Siyáwush,
 And that Afrásiyáb, thine enemy,
 Heard much advice, but nothing profited,
 Until his days have ended as we see,
 All his dominions being overthrown,
 His crown and girdle given up to spoil,
 His day obscured, himself flung headlong down.
 His present life is even worse than death,
 And fate hath burst the skin upon his body.
 Now look on us as being innocent,
 And treat us with a kingly clemency.
 We are dependent wholly on Khusrau,
 And hear no name but his. So let him not,
 For wrongs done by Afrásiyáb the warlock,
 Act hastily to those, who did no wrong,
 With bloodshed, outrage, and indignity,
 Or lightly persecute those not in fault;
 Unworthy 'tis for monarchs to behead
 The innocent. Thou hast another home,
 For none may tarry in this Wayside Inn,
 So act as God requireth at thy hands,
 And hold in awe the Day of Reckoning."

V. 1346

Khusrau, on hearing this, was greatly moved
 For those fair ladies in their fallen fortunes;
 His cheeks glowed like a lamp at their distress
 And anguish, and the sages' hearts were troubled,
 For all of them remembered child and wife,
 And all the captains and the valiant chiefs
 Invoked much blessing on the Sháh and said:—
 "Now for the Maker's sake let not the Sháh,
 That man of name, exact revenge on them."

The prudent Kai Khusrau made answer thus:—
 "In spite of all that hath displeased me
 I will not cause a like distress to any,
 However much my heart desireth vengeance,
 And, though aggrieved am I when I recall

How that great monarch wronged my noble mother,
Yet will I bring the like on no one's head."

The master of the world, the holy-born,
Then sent the ladies home, first saying to them:—
"Be at your ease; hear what I say in person:—
No miscreant that breaketh faith am I;
Henceforward ye have naught to fear from me,
And none shall entertain the wish to harm you,
Or otherwise his own life shall be brief.
Now in your palaces at ease abide,
Your souls and bodies unto God confide."

§ 24

How Kai Khusrau exhorted the Íránians'

Khusrau addressed the Íránians: "Conquering fortune
Hath given us the kingdom, crown, and throne;
The whole realm of Túrán, which we have captured,
Shall, like Írán, be yours to dwell therein.
Put ye away all vengeance from your hearts,
And charm the land with loving-kindliness,
For in their hearts the people fear us greatly,
And all the dust is turned to mire with bloodshed.
I give to you the treasures of Túrán,
And look not even for your gratitude.
Be strenuous and be instant in well-doing,
And where ye found it winter make it spring.
My soldiers shall be satisfied anon
With treasures and dínárs, but let us keep
Our hands from bloodshed, not behead the guiltless;
It sorteth not with manhood to be moved
To anger lightly or to strike the fallen.
Avert your faces from the women—all
That veil themselves when going forth abroad;
Respect too others' wealth since for its sake