

§ 16

How Rustam divided the Spoil

"Disarm," said Rustam to the Íránians.
 "Before the All-conquering we need not mace,
 Or belt or treasure. Stoop ye all your heads
 To darksome dust, then crown them, for the chiefs
 Are minished not by one for whom our hearts
 Would now be mourning. When the tidings reached
 The world's king he repeated them to me
 Forthwith: 'The chieftain Tús hath gained the moun-
 tains,
 Defeated by Pírán and by Húmán!'
 The Sháh's words robbed me of my wits, my brain
 Seethed for the fray, while for Gúdarz, Bahrán,
 And for Rívníz my heart turned ebon-black.
 I sped forth from Írán without delay
 Intent upon the fight, but when I saw
 The Khán, the men of name and warriors,
 Especially Kámús, his Grace and stature,
 Such shoulders and such limbs, such hands and mace,
 Why then methought: 'My time is o'er!' For since
 I girt me as a man I have not looked
 In my long life on better men or arms
 Assembled anywhere. I have invaded
 Mázandarán, a land of dívs, where nights
 Are dark and maces massive, yet my heart
 Forwent its courage never and I said:—
 'I tender neither heart nor life.' Howbeit
 In this campaign my days were plunged in gloom,
 My heart—the lustre of the world—was darkened!
 If now we fall in sorrow in the dust
 Before all-holy God it will be well,
 For He hath given strength, success, and aid
 From Saturn and the sun. Long be it so.

God grant that fear may never fall on us!
 Let men too bear the Sháh the news forthwith,
 Let him adorn his throne, set on his head
 The royal cap, give great gifts to the poor,
 And may their blessings be upon his soul.
 Now put we off our mail and rest in peace.
 No doubt both grief and longing pass away,
 And fate is counting up our every breath,
 But still 'tis good to add up cups of wine,
 And not to stare at yon unloving sky:
 Quaff we till midnight then, and let our talk
 Be of the mighty men, with thanks to God,
 The Conqueror, from whom are manhood, fortune,
 And prowess; we should not possess our hearts
 Too much in sorrow and laboriousness
 In this our Wayside Inn."

The nobles blessed him,

And said: "May crown and signet lack thee never!
 All honour to the stock, the native worth,
 And mother that brought forth a son like thee.
 A man of elephantine Rustam's strain
 Is more exalted than the turning sky.
 Thou knowest what thou hast achieved through love
 For us. Let heaven rejoice because thou livest.
 We were as good as slain, our days were done,
 But now we live and light the world through thee."

Then having bade to fetch the elephants,
 Crown, ivory throne, and golden torques, he brought
 Forth royal wine and goblets, and first gave:—
 "The monarch of the world," and when he grew
 Blythe in his cups they parted glad and gay.

When Luna rent the robe of night and set
 Its turquoise throne in heaven the scouts dispersed
 About the plains and hills, and when the rust
 Of night's rest passed, when day's bright Falchion
 showed,

And earth grew jewel-like, the drum-roll rose
 Before his tent, the chiefs arrived, and Rustam
 Said: "We have found no traces of Pirán!
 Return we to the field and send our troops
 In quest of him."

Bízhán the lion-man

Advancing came upon a world of corpses,
 Of goods, and treasure; all the plain was strewn
 With wounded men flung down and bound; of others
 Still living they saw none. Tents and enclosures
 Filled all the earth, and tidings came to Rustam:—
 "The foe hath fled the field."

Like lion wroth

He raged about the Íránians' sloth and slackness,
 And said reviling them: "Hath no one wisdom
 Paired with his brain? How when two mountains thus
 Shut in our foes could they escape in mass
 From us? Did not I say: 'Send forward scouts,
 And make each gorge and dale like plain and waste?'¹
 Ye thought of ease and rest, the foe of toil
 And march. Slack bodies bring forth care and travail,
 But he who chooseth labour fruiteth treasure.
 How can I say: 'I am at ease to-day'?
 I tremble for Írán."

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Then leopard-like

He raged at Tús and said: "Is this a bedroom?
 Or battlefield? See to Húmán, Kulbád,
 Pírán, Rúín, and to Púlád thyself
 Henceforth with thine own host upon this plain:
 We are not of one province, thou and I.
 If ye have strength fight on your own account,
 For how should ye have me, when I have gained
 The victory and its results are spoiled?
 See from what company the scouts were drawn,

¹ "Et de convertir en plains les vallées et les ravins en les combattant avec des morts" (Mohl).

And who is head man of the family,
 And when thou findest any of those scouts
 Let him be beaten on the feet and hands
 With sticks, take what he hath, make fast his feet,
 Set him upon an elephant and thus
 Dispatch him to the Sháh for execution.
 The ivory thrones, the jewels, and dínárs,
 Brocade, crowns, treasure, coronets, and all
 That they took from us, seach for and bring hither,
 For there were many kings upon this plain ;
 The most illustrious of the world were here
 From Chín and from Sakláb, from Hind and Wahr,
 And all possessed of realms and treasuries.
 First let us choose a present for the Sháh,
 And then my portion of the spoils and thine."

Tús and his warriors went and gathered all
 The golden girdles and the amber crowns,
 The ivory thrones and the brocade of Rúm,
 The arrows, the horse-armour, and the bows,
 The iron maces and the Indian swords,
 And raised a mountain 'twixt the other two :
 The troops stood round and gazed. Then had an
 archer,

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A cavalier, broad-chested, strong, and valiant,
 Shot a four-feathered arrow o'er the heap,
 The carry had not reached from end to end !
 When Rustam saw the spoil he stood amazed,
 And oft invoking the Creator said :—
 " Our changeful lifetime giveth feast and fight
 By turns, transferring wealth from host to host.
 It giveth now with curses, then with blessings ;
 One gathereth wealth for others to enjoy.
 Kámús was minded, and the Khán as well,
 To burn Írán. With these huge elephants,
 These havings, troops, and stores, their joy was all
 In them and in their multitudes of men,

And for a while God was not in their thoughts,
 God who created heaven and earth and time,
 Much manifest and much mysterious.
 Their host is not, their goodly wealth is not,
 Their aims and unjust doings are no more !
 Now will I send the Sháh these chosen chiefs
 From every realm on their huge elephants,
 Together with these golden thrones and crowns,
 And goods on lusty camels. I will send
 Such goods as are most worthy to be sent,
 V. 1010 And journey hence myself with all dispatch
 To Gang, for heroes cannot brook delay.
 To spare the guilty and the murderers
 Is weakness ; let us wash our hands in blood.
 I will allow the bad no rest but bring
 The heads of these idolaters to dust,
 And show to all the way of Holy God."

Gúdarz replied : " O thou of goodly rede !
 Mayst thou remain till place shall be no more."

Then matchless Rustam sought a messenger
 To bear the first news to the imperious Sháh,
 And chose out Fariburz son of Káuś,
 Commended by his kinship, and thus said :—
 " Famed chief, of royal race, thyself a king,
 Accomplished, understanding, nobly born,
 Both glad thyself and making others glad !
 Take up a task. Go, bear to our young Sháh
 My letter, and convey with thee the captives,
 The camels, and this wealth—all that there is—
 Torques, treasure, bracelets, crowns, and diadems,
 The mighty elephants and ivory thrones."

" O raging Lion," Fariburz replied,
 " My loins are girded even now to ride."