

And what that fair Íránian slave had done
 For love of him : " I have through her and God
 Preserved my life. May Fortune smile on her.
 Grant but a virtuous slave and thou wilt be
 The slave of such though king and glorious.
 I am the slave of this fond slave whose heart
 Is open and who keepeth secrets well.
 Wherever I have forces, and my rule
 Is recognised, send thither men and give
 The tidings. Scatter scouts upon the roads,
 Secure them, and the one to Taisafún
 In chief. The news must not transpire. If Cæsar
 Hear of me that the Grace of king of kings
 Appeareth he will come, destroy my host,
 And break the Íránians' hearts and backs. We cannot
 Withstand him yet or cope with his lush fortune,
 But when the high priest cometh and shall bring
 Troops we will bar the road to ants and gnats.
 We will be instant then and take new order
 To clear our garden quietly of weeds,
 To every corner spies shall be dispatched,
 And outposts be on guard by day and night.
 Thenceforth I give no Rúman liberty
 To sleep in peace or lay his armour by."

§ 7

How Shápúr made a Night-attack, and how Cæsar was taken

Shápúr, whose troops were soon six thousand strong,
 Sent veteran chiefs to spy out Taisafún,
 C. 1445 And notify his high and glorious court
 Of Cæsar. Instantly they went to find
 How matters stood, then told the exalted Sháh :—
 " No thought hath Cæsar save for wine and chase.
 His troops are scattered everywhere to pillage.

There are no guards or sentries day or night,
His troops are like a flock without a shepherd.
He seeth not a foe on any side,
And so it pleaseth him to live at ease."

Shápúr rejoiced; his troubles turned to wind.
He chose three thousand of the Íránians,
All horsemen mailed on barded chargers, armed
Himself, and marched on Taisafún by night.
He marched by night and turned aside by day.
His route lay over wilderness and mountain
By track or no track, and two leagues and more
Ahead were scouts till Taisafún was nigh.
In the third watch he reached the camp of Cæsar,
Of whom he felt no fear, heard no man's voice,
No sentries' challenge and no tinkling bells.
Tents and pavilions covered all the waste.
Who wotted of that onset? In his tent
Lay Cæsar drunk, his troops were all abroad.
Shápúr, the valiant, gave his royal steed
The rein, on seeing this, led on his powers
Against the camp, and grasped his massive mace.
Rang cloudward clarion, mace, and Indian bell;
Rose battle-cry and tumult everywhere.
Thou wouldst have said: "May be the heaven is rent,
And through the air blood droppeth from the sun!"
Gleamed Káwa's flag, gloomed night, flashed violet
swords;
Thou wouldst have said: "The air is raining them;
The world is in a mist!" Heaven disappeared
Amid the dust, the stars drew in their skirts,
And brave Shápúr wrecked worthless Cæsar's camp.
They slew twelve thousand Rúman cavaliers
And over, fired the camp, dashed heaven to earth,
And in the end made Cæsar prisoner.
His good stars grew averse. Among the tents
They captured many of his nobles, horsemen

Elect and brave, and put them into bonds.

Such is the action of the lofty sky
At whiles up-lifting and at whiles low-laying,
At whiles delighting and at whiles affraying!

The innocent that hath humanity

Is best; almighty God is his ally.

When it was day, when night withdrew its skirt,
And Sol's flag showed aloft, Shápúr commanded
A scribe to come with writing implements.
They wrote to every province, to each king,
And chief. Shápúr began: "Our heart-felt praise
Be to almighty God who helpeth others
To good but hath no need of others' help.
Since Cæsar hath kept not God's laws, but sown
Naught but the seed of wrong within Írán,
Bonds chafe him sorely, for he had not wisdom
To guide his soul. He hath resigned to us
The crown of kingship and reserveth only
His infamy. His host and court are broken
By God's own might who pointed out the way.
Those Rúmans whom ye capture in your cities
Must have their portion of the scimitar.
Seek ye all justice, do as I command,
And swear allegiance unto me afresh."

A cameleer came to each quarter quickly;
And brought the letter of the ardent Sháh,
Who left the camp for Taisafún and there
Held session safely with his counsellors,
And, having donned the ancestral crown, gave thanks
To God, the Giver of all good. He bade
A scribe to go inside the prison-house,
And make a list of all the captives' names.
There were a thousand and five score and two
Of Cæsar's kindred and high rank in Rúm.
The world-lord lopped the hands and feet of those
That had been chief in ill, and then commanded

To bring in Cæsar, lord of Rúm. The guard
 Brought him from prison like a man insane.
 That tyrant, when he saw Shápúr's crown, wept ;
 He rubbed his visage red upon the ground,
 And swept it with his lashes, grovelling,
 And blessing crown and throne.

C. 1447

“ O thou compact
 Of ill,” the Sháh said, “ Christian and God's foe,
 Ascribing unto Him who hath no mate,
 No period, and no origin, a son !
 Thou art a very knave, a lunatic,
 A miscreant, fool, and utterest naught but lies,
 Which are an evil, unilluming fire.
 Where are thy counsel, modesty, and heart
 Inciting thee to good, if thou art Cæsar ?
 Why bind me in an ass's hide and so
 Fling greatness to the dust ? I came to feast
 In merchant's guise, I came not forth to fight
 With drums and troops, but thou didst clothe thy guest
 In ass's skin and march against Írán.
 Now shalt thou feel the clutch of valiant men,
 And seek no more to fight Írán.”

“ O Sháh !”

Said Cæsar, “ who can 'scape God's ordinance ?
 The royal throne put wisdom far from me,
 And made my soul a hireling of the Dív.
 Thou wilt be famous, doing good for ill,
 Because thy name ne'er will grow old, and thou
 Wilt compass all thy longing by thy prowess.
 If I have safeguard for my life from thee
 Wealth and dínárs are worthless in mine eyes,
 Then will I be a slave about thy court,
 And seek for nothing but to grace thy throne.”

The Sháh replied: “ Vile wretch ! why didst thou
 turn
 This country upside down ? If all the spoil

That thou didst bear to Rúm (ne'er mayst thou look
 On that cursed land again!) thou wilt restore
 Back from thy house to this exalted folk;
 Next, if whate'er was harried in Írán,
 And made the lair of lions and of pards,
 Thou wilt recover at thine own expense,
 And in requital for thine evil deeds;
 Next, if for those Íránians whom thou slewest
 Thou choosest Rúmans of the royal race,
 And givest me ten for every one of ours,
 Surrendering their lives as hostages,
 And I will take but men of Cæsar's stock
 To be with me here in this happy land;
 And, next, if for each tree felled in Írán,
 (None well-disposed would fell the trees of others)
 Thou plant another, reinstate all walls,
 And thus abate the anger in our hearts,
 Shall I not bind thee as thou bindest me?
 Can I forgive thee for the ass's skin?
 If thou shalt fail in aught that I have said
 My men shall rend thy skin from head to foot."

C. 1448

As soon as he had finished his demands
 Shápúr, the world-lord, as the conqueror
 Split with his dagger both his prisoner's ears,
 And having bored his nostrils put a bit
 Therein in memory of the ass's hide,
 And loaded both his feet with heavy chains;
 The guard moreover bare him back to ward.

They held review and muster, and demanded
 The treasury-key. The monarch massed and paid
 The host, then, bent on justice and revenge,
 Marched from Írán upon the coast of Rúm.
 All that were in the desert and that land
 They slew and set the houses there on fire,
 So that the world was lighted by the blaze.
 When news reached Rúm: "Our fertile lands are wasted,

And in a night-attack illustrious Cæsar
 Hath been made captive," all the people wept,
 And at Shápúr's name were consumed with dread.
 "Ungenerous Cæsar wrought this woe," they said.

§ 8

*How Shápúr went to Rúm and fought with Yánus, Cæsar's
 Brother*

Though Cæsar's sire was dead, his mother lived ;
 He had a younger brother too—Yánus—
 A generous and potent atheling.
 Troops mustered at his gate, his warlike mother
 Gave them a donative, and said to him :—
 "Avenge thy brother : seest not that a host
 Hath come forth from Írán ?"

He beat the drums,
 And carried out the Cross. The Cross was great,
 The army fierce. The hosts met face to face ;
 The warriors had no rest. The ranks were ranged ;
 A shout went up ; Yánus led on the van.
 Black dust-clouds rose, and none could see his way
 Amid the murk. Upon one flank were mountains,
 And on the other, where the troops were massed,
 A river ran. The din of battle rose,
 Sword, mace, and arrow flashed, while azure-dim
 Was air with dust of horsemen, spearheads gleamed,
 And banners fluttered while the stars looked down
 Upon that strife—all wreek and malison.

C. 1449

The warriors of Rúm all girt their loins,
 Like furious lions, for that strife. The air
 Was lapis-lazuli, the ground was iron,
 Dark dusk rose cloud-ward, and thou wouldst have
 said :—

"The air is all a mist whence diamonds pour."