

The stirrup-leathers in the violent strain
 Snapped, but each rider still retained his seat,
 And neither of them had the mastery.
 Then both the warriors lighted from their chargers,
 And breathed themselves a while. The interpreters
 Held the two steeds. Anon the combatants
 Rose like fierce lions, wearied as they were,
 And gat them ready for a wrestling-bout.
 Thus from the morning till the shadows lengthened
 These champions, on the poise of hope and fear,
 Contended with each other; neither turned
 His head away; their mouths were parched, their bodies
 A-sweat with toil and with the blazing sun:
 Then by consent they hastened to a pool.
 Bízhan, when he had drunk, arose in anguish,
 All shaking like a willow in a gale,
 And, in his heart despairing of sweet life,
 Called upon God and said: "Omnipotent!
 Thou knowest all within me and without.
 If thou perceivest justice in my cause,
 Both in my challenge and my purposes,
 The strength which I possess take not away,
 And give me self-possession in the fray."

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§ 15

How Húmán was slain by Bízhan

Húmán, distressed and raven-black with pain,
 Advanced. All wounded as they were both came
 Like pards to fight again, strove mightily,
 And first one, then the other, touched the ground.
 They put forth all their strength and artifice
 Until high heaven's own artifice was seen,
 For, though Húmán was mightier, all prowess
 Is but defect in him whose sun is set.

Bízhan put forth his hands like leopard's claws
 To catch upon Húmán where'er he could ;
 His left hand gripped his foeman's neck, the right
 His foeman's thigh, he bent that mighty Camel,
 Raised him aloft, and flung him to the ground ;
 Then holding down Húmán, and drawing forth
 A dagger, swift as wind beheaded him,
 And flung away his carcase like a dragon's.
 Húmán lay rolled in dust, the waste ran blood.
 Bízhan surveyed that elephantine form,
 Fall'n like a stately cypress in a meadow,
 V. 1183 With great amazement, turned away, looked up
 To Him who ruleth o'er the world, and said :—
 " O Thou that art above both place and time,
 Above the revolution of the sky !
 Thou and Thou only rulest o'er the world—
 A matter which no wisdom can gainsay.
 I have no portion in this doughty deed,
 Not having pluck to fight an elephant,
 Yet have cut off Húmán's head in revenge
 For Siyáwush, and my sire's seventy brothers.
 Now may his spirit be in thrall to mine,
 His body rent to pieces by the lions."

He bound Húmán's head to the saddle-straps
 Upon Shabrang and flung the trunk to dust,
 With armour shattered and with girdle snapped,
 His head in this place and his trunk in that.
 The world is all imposture, nothing more,
 It will not help thee when distress is sore ;
 It showeth fairly, but it doth not so,
 And therefore let thy heart its love forego.

Húmán, the son of Wísa, being slain,
 The two interpreters ran to Bízhan
 To worship him as Brahmans do an image
 In Chín. He looked around the battlefield,
 And saw no way save past the Turkman host,