

The warriors when the sun began to sink,
 And when the desert was a-glow like iron,
 Were so exhausted that thou wouldst have said:—
 “They cannot stir a step.” “Our livers now,”
 V. 1242 They said, “are scorching; let us stay to breathe
 Awhile, and afterward renew the combat.”

They went accordingly and led their chargers
 Apart, and then securely hobbled them.
 Thereafter, having taken rest, they rose
 For fight again, and with their lances wheeled
 Like fire about the centre of the ground,
 Till Zanga got the better: rending earth
 He charged and struck Akhást upon the waist,
 Then flung him headlong from his steed face-downward,
 And shouted like a rattling thunder-clap:
 Thou wouldst have said: “He split the battlefield!”
 Alighting, Zanga went and dragged his foe
 Face-downward through the dust, made shift to lift him,
 And flung him prone across the saddle-back,
 Then, mounting his own charger, led the other.
 Strange! what misfortunes fell upon the Turkmans!
 He left the plain and reached the glorious hill,
 Wolf-blazoned flag in hand. He set it up
 Before his mates with blessings therewithal
 Upon the Sháh and his chief general.

§ 39

How Gúdarz fought with Pírán

Whenas the ninth hour of the day had passed
 There was no Turkman left on that broad plain,
 Their lives had been dissevered by the sword.
 Thou wouldst have said: “The world is pitiless!
 For one, whom it is tending with all care,
 And dowering with days, it will prepare

A night-surprise amid his happiness,
And bring upon him obloquy and stress.
Both first and last we are the wind's possession,
We ask for justice and behold oppression!"

Whenas the Turkmans in those luckless combats
Had struggled fruitlessly Pírán descried
None of his champions left upon the field ;
The leaders of Írán and of Túrán
Advanced together for their grim revenge,
And set earth's surface rolling as they came,
Grief in their hearts and vengeance in their heads.
The sun paused dust-stayed on that day of battle.
Those cavaliers tried every kind of sleight
With sword and brand, with lasso and with mace,
But Heaven's purposes were brought to pass,
Disaster came upon Pírán from God ;
Against that will he had no remedy—
The will that made his steed fail under him.
Pírán saw well enough how matters stood,
And knew that God had caused that change of fortune,
Yet he acquitted him right manfully,
And strove against the purposes of fate.

The two chiefs of the host, those shrewd old men,
Then took their bows and arrows in their hands.
Gúdarz chose out a poplar arrow—one
That would pierce iron—shot it mightily,
And pierced the armour of his foeman's steed,
Which shivered, gasped, and fell. Pírán fell under ;
His steed rolled o'er him ; his right hand was broken.
He struggled out and rose upon his feet.
Though knowing well that his last hour had come,
And that he could not scape from that dark day,
Yet fled he from Gúdarz toward the hill,
Distressed by running and his injured hand,
And gained the top if so the paladin
Might not pursue. Gúdarz, perceiving this,

Wept bitterly. He feared a change of fortune,
 Well knowing its inconstancy and how
 'Tis ever prone to tyranny. He shouted:—
 V. 1244 “O famous paladin! what aileth thee
 That thou dost foot it thus like game before me?
 Where are thy troops, O captain of the host!
 Where all thy might and manhood, arms and heart,
 Thy treasure and thy wisdom? Prop of heroes!
 Afrásiyáb's main stay! the sun is louring
 Upon thy king, and fortune utterly
 Hath turned its face from thee. No room is here
 For guile, attempt it not. Since thus bestead
 Ask quarter for thy life that I may bear thee
 Still living to the Sháh. That conquering one
 Will pardon thee because, like me, thou art
 A hoary paladin.”

“Now God forbid!”

Pírán replied, “God grant that no such ill
 Befall my latter end and I survive.
 To beg my life were heaviness indeed!
 Born was I in the world for death, and I
 Thus fighting put my neck within thy power.
 A saying have I heard among the great:—
 ‘In this fair world, though many days be past,
 Inevitable death will come at last.’
 Herein I have no reason to complain.”

Gúdarz rode round the hill and grieved to find
 No road. He lighted, took his shield and went,
 Like those in quest of quarry, up the mount,
 His shield before him and a dart in hand.
 Pírán descried him, leaped up on the crest,
 And, arrow-fashion, hurled a javelin
 Which struck the ancient chieftain on the arm.
 Gúdarz thus wounded by Pírán's hand raged
 For vengeance and sped forth a dart. It hit
 Pírán upon the breast, crashed through his mail,

Transfixed his liver, and came out behind,
 Pírán reeled and his head became distraught ;
 His liver's blood came pouring from his mouth,
 His soul departed to rejoin his comrades.
 Thus fortune changeth sides from day to day,
 It heareth not what counsellors may say,
 But rendeth, having dipped its hands in bane,
 The lion's heart and leopard's hide in twain.

V. 1245

Now when Gúdarz had clambered to the summit
 He saw Pírán o'erthrown in sorry plight,
 With broken arm and heart, his head in dust,
 His armour riven and his girdle snapped.
 "O Lion," said Gúdarz, "chief paladin,
 And warrior bold ! the world hath looked on many
 Like me and thee but will have peace with none !"

He stretched his hand out, horrible to tell,
 Drank of his foeman's blood, smeared his own face
 Therewith, lamenting bitterly the murder
 Of Siyáwush, then praised the Omnipotent,
 And mourned before the just Judge for the death
 Of his own seventy well-belovèd sons.
 He was about to take his foeman's head,
 But deemed the act unworthy of himself,
 So raised the banner of Pírán beside him,
 His head and body lying in its shade,
 And went back to his warriors, while the blood
 Poured from his wounded arm as 'twere a flood.

§ 40

How Gúdarz returned to the Warriors of Írán

Meanwhile the vengeful warriors of Írán
 Descended from the hill toward the host,
 Their slain opponents bound upon their saddles
 According to the usages of war ;