The entire cover is framed by a decorative border of stylized roses and leaves. The text is contained within several rectangular frames of varying thicknesses.

**MACMILLAN'S  
TEN CENT  
SERIES**

Number 3

**Sohrab and  
Rustum**

BY

**MATTHEW ARNOLD**

**THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA  
LIMITED**

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*MORANG'S TEN CENT SERIES*

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ARNOLD'S  
SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

EDITED WITH NOTES BY

JOHN JEFFRIES, B.A.

ENGLISH SPECIALIST, JARVIS COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE  
TORONTO

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TORONTO

MORANG EDUCATIONAL COMPANY LIMITED.

1911



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## INTRODUCTION

### LIFE OF ARNOLD

MATTHEW ARNOLD, poet and critic, was born at Laleham, on the Thames, December 24, 1822. His father was Dr. Thomas Arnold, who became the famous headmaster of Rugby and a distinguished historian of Rome. In 1828 the Arnolds removed from Laleham to Rugby, and in 1833 they made their summer home in Westmoreland, in the shadow of the hills and near the margin of the streams and lakes so dear to Wordsworth. Young Arnold received most of his earlier education at Rugby, the character of whose school-life has been described, to the delight of many boys, in *Tom Brown's School Days*. In 1841 he went to Oxford University, having been elected the previous year to an open scholarship at Balliol College. There, as at school, he showed marked ability, winning a scholarship and also the Newdigate prize for English verse. His university life must have been a pleasant one, for there he was associated with such men as Thomas Hughes, John Shairp, the Froudes, Bishop Fraser, Dean Church, John Henry Newman, and most intimately with Arthur Hugh Clough, whose untimely death he mourned in *Thyrsis*. In 1844 he graduated with honors, and next year he was elected a fellow of Oriel College. He taught for a short time at Rugby. In 1847 he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, and remained

so until 1851, when he was appointed an inspector of schools. From that time he was chiefly engaged in educational work, serving most efficiently as inspector and commissioner for more than thirty-five years. In connection with these duties, he frequently travelled on the continent, to study aims and methods of various school systems, with the view of revising and improving that of his own country. He visited the United States and Canada twice, and delivered several important lectures on literary and educational subjects. He died suddenly of heart disease at Liverpool on April 15, 1888. He was buried at Laleham, the place of his birth.

Arnold's first volume of poetry, published in 1849, was entitled *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*; the second, in 1852, *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*; and the third, in 1853, *Poems*, made up mainly of those already published. Thereafter he added but little to his poetic work. His first important volume of prose was issued in 1865, under the title of *Essays in Criticism*. This was followed by a number of prose discourses, for he was a constant writer up to the time of his death. His collected works of all kinds, exclusive of his letters, comprise eleven volumes.

It is in his letters that we find revealed most clearly and fully Arnold's personality, concerning which George E. Woodberry has written: "Few who did not know Arnold could have been prepared for the revelation of a nature so true, so amiable, so dutiful. In every relation of private life he is shown to have been a man of exceptional constancy and plainness. The letters are mainly home letters; but a few friendships also yielded up their hoard, and thus the circle of private life is made complete. Every one must take delight



in the mental association with Arnold in the scenes of his existence, thus daily exposed, and in his family affections. A nature warm to its own, kindly to all, cheerful, fond of sport and fun, and always fed from pure fountains, and with it a character so founded upon the rock, so humbly serviceable, so continuing in power and grace, must wake in all the responses of happy appreciation, and leave the charm of memory."

### SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

**Composition and Publication.** — *Sohrab and Rustum* appeared in the volume of verse published by Arnold in 1853. In a letter to Mrs. Foster, dated April, 1853, he said: —

"I am occupied with a thing that gives me more pleasure than anything I have ever done yet, which is a good sign, but whether I shall not ultimately spoil it by being obliged to strike it off in fragments instead of at one heat, I cannot quite say." In a letter to his mother, May, 1853, he wrote: "All my spare time has been spent on a poem which I have just finished, and which I think by far the best thing I have yet done, and I think it will be generally liked; though one can never be sure of this. I have had the greatest pleasure in composing it, a rare thing with me, and, as I think, a good test of the pleasure what you write is likely to afford to others."

**Source of the Poem.** — *Sohrab and Rustum* records an episode found in the story of the exploits of Persian kings and heroes recounted in the great Persian epic, the *Sháh Náme*, written by Firdausi towards the end of the tenth century. This latter poem purports to narrate the achievements of the heroes of Persia during

a period of thirty-six centuries. It is to Persian literature what the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are to the Greek, and the *Aeneid* to the Latin. It was gathered from the traditions of the country, and describes the most romantic and marvellous adventures with a vividness and a wealth of color peculiar to oriental writings. The chief hero of the *Sháh Náme*h is the strong and valorous Rustum; and the most dramatic of his adventures is the one recorded in Arnold's poem.

Rustum was the son of Zal, champion of Seistan, a district of Persia. While a mere child, he killed a raging elephant. After succeeding to the place of his father and choosing his famous steed Ruksh (or Raksh), he performed prodigious feats in defence of his kings and native country. He found a spring in a burning desert, slew a dragon eighty feet long, killed an enchantress, and achieved other similar triumphs. While hunting, on a certain occasion, in the hostile land of Turan, he lost his faithful steed, and during his search for it he was received with honor by the king of Samengán, a neighboring Turanian city. At the royal palace he met the beautiful princess Takmineh, and married her. Being summoned home before the birth of his son, Rustum left for him a bracelet by which he was to be able to recognize him. When Sohrab, the son, was born, his mother, fearing that the child might be taken away to Iran, pretended that it was a daughter. Sohrab grew up unknown to his father, and became a great warrior. On learning that his father was the renowned Rustum, he became ambitious to see him and to help make him King of Persia. He collected a large army and set out in search of him. His purpose was to fight his way against the Persians until Rustum should be sent against him, when he

would make himself known to his father and form an alliance with him. The hostile armies met on the shore of the Oxus River. At this point Arnold's poem begins.

**Critical Comments.** — Mr. Andrew Lang's appreciation of *Sohrab and Rustum* may be seen in the following critique: "*Sohrab and Rustum*, the tale of the fatal combat which the old Persian chief and his unknown son wage against each other, approaches more nearly, I think, to the spirit and manner of Homer than does anything else in our English literature. The strong, plain blank verse is almost a substitute for the hexameter. The story is told with Homer's pellucid simplicity, with his deep and clear-sighted sympathy with all conditions of men, with his delight in nature as man's friend and life-long companion. The spirit of the narrative, too, is Homeric, and the fall of the young warrior, in the pride of his beauty and strength, his death, assuaged by resignation to fate and by consciousness of a courageous strife, are subjects of the sort that often moved the singer of the *Iliad* to his most moving strains. The similes are, in spirit, directly borrowed from Homer. The Ionian compares Nausicaa, the princess of Phæacia, to a tall palm-tree growing by Apollo's shrine. And Sohrab is compared to

“Some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,  
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound.”

Another appreciative critic has said: “Arnold has illustrated with remarkable success his ideas of that unity which gratifies the poetical sense, and has approached very close to his Greek models in his epic or narrative poem of *Sohrab and Rustum*. Here we have a

theme which is intensely tragic, and which challenges our sympathy at once. A young hero, in search of his warrior father, whom he has never seen, meets him in deadly single combat between the lines of contending armies; but it is only after he has received a mortal wound by his father's hand, that the relationship is discovered. The accessories are in keeping with the wildness of the main incident. The weird shapes of the Tartar hordes and of the Iranian hosts, awaiting the event of the combat, are dimly seen on the edge of the desert through the mists of the Oxus; while, in sharp contrast with the passions and anguish awakened in the tragedy enacted on its banks, the mighty river maintains its calm and majestic flow out 'into the frosty starlight,' and typifies the inexorableness of fate. The treatment, in smooth and simple verse, is strictly subordinated and adapted to the action of the theme, and the whole is admirably calculated to impart that totality of impression which Mr. Arnold and the Greeks esteemed so highly. It has been said of this poem that it is 'the nearest analogue in English to the rapidity of action, plainness of thought, plainness of diction, and nobleness of Homer.' "

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The *Sháh Náme* of Firdausi, translated by James Atkinson, which contains a full account of the adventures of Rustum, is published by Routledge & Son, London, in *Sir John Lubbock's Hundred Books*.

## SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AND the first gray of morning fill'd the east,  
And the fog rose out of the Oxus<sup>1</sup> stream.  
But all the Tartar<sup>2</sup> camp along the stream  
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep;  
5 Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long  
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;  
But when the gray dawn stole into his tent,  
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,  
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,  
10 And went abroad into the cold wet fog,  
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's<sup>3</sup> tent.  
Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which  
stood  
Clustering like beehives on the low flat strand  
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow  
15 When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere<sup>4</sup>;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Oxus*. The principal river of Central Asia, 1400 miles in length, and emptying into the Sea of Aral. It separates Turan from Iran, or the Persian Empire.

<sup>2</sup> *Tartar*. The Tartars, or Black Tartars, fierce Turanian tribes, who, on being overthrown in China, moved westwards and founded an empire which stretched from the Oxus to the desert of Shamo.

<sup>3</sup> *Peran-Wisa* (Pē'rān-Wē'sä). A Turanian chief, and the commander of King Afrasiab's Tartar forces.

<sup>4</sup> *Pamere*. The Pamir is an extensive plateau region, 13,000 feet high, in Central Asia, north-east of Afghanistan. The Oxus River has its source in this plateau.

Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan<sup>1</sup> first  
 I came among the Tartars and bore arms,  
 I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,  
 45 At my boy's years, the courage of a man.  
 This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on  
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,  
 And beat the Persians back on every field,  
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone —  
 50 Rustum, my father; who I hoped should greet,  
 Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,  
 His not unworthy, not inglorious son.  
 So I long hoped, but him I never find.  
 Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.  
 55 Let the two armies rest to-day; but I  
 Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords  
 To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,  
 Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall —  
 Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.  
 60 Dim is the rumor of a common fight,  
 Where host meets host, and many names are sunk;  
 But of a single combat fame speaks clear."  
 He spoke; and Peran-Wisa took the hand  
 Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said:—  
 65 "O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!  
 Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,  
 And share the battle's common chance with us  
 Who love thee, but must press forever first,  
 In single fight incurring single risk,  
 70 To find a father thou hast never seen?  
 That were far best, my son, to stay with us  
 Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,  
 And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ader-baijan* (*Azer-bī'yān*). A province of north-western Persia, on the Turanian frontier.

Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low  
strand,

And to a hillock came, a little back  
From the stream's brink — the spot where first a  
boat,

Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.

20 The men of former times had crown'd the top  
With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now  
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,  
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.  
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood

25 Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,  
And found the old man sleeping on his bed  
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.  
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step  
Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;

30 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said: —

“Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.  
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?”

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said: —

“Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa! it is I.

35 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe  
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie  
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.

For so did King Afrasiab<sup>1</sup> bid me seek  
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,

40 In Samarcand,<sup>2</sup> before the army march'd;  
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Afrasiab* (Afrä'siāb). King of the Tartars, who carried on a long struggle between Turan and Iran. The ground of the war was the obligation to blood-revenge for the death of an Iranian by a Turanian.

<sup>2</sup> *Samarcand*. A city of Turkestan, still important and belonging to Russia.

But, if this one desire indeed rules all,  
 75 To seek out Rustum — seek him not through fight!  
 Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,  
 O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!  
 But far hence seek him, for he is not here.  
 For now it is not as when I was young,  
 80 When Rustum was in front of every fray;  
 But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,  
 In Seistan,<sup>1</sup> with Zal,<sup>2</sup> his father old.  
 Whether that<sup>3</sup> his own mighty strength at last  
 Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age,  
 85 Or in<sup>4</sup> some quarrel with the Persian King.<sup>5</sup>  
 There go! — Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forbodes  
 Danger or death awaits thee on this field.  
 Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost  
 To us; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace  
 90 To seek thy father, not seek single fights  
 In vain; — but who can keep the lion's cub  
 From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son?  
 Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires."  
 So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left  
 95 His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay;

<sup>1</sup> *Seistan* (Sā-ēs-tān'). A region partly in modern eastern Persia and partly in south-western Afghanistan. It was so divided by British arbitration in 1872. The territory was held by Rustum's family, feudatory to the Persian kings.

<sup>2</sup> *Zal* (Zäl). According to the *Sháh Náme*, Zal was born with snow-white hair. This so displeased his father, Säm, that the child was exposed to death on the Elburz Mountains. He was miraculously preserved by a griffin, and was afterwards reclaimed by his repentant father. He later married the Princess Rudä'-beh of Seistan, and became the father of Rustum.

<sup>3</sup> *Whether that*. Either because.

<sup>4</sup> *Or in*. Or on account of.

<sup>5</sup> *Persian King*. For his name see line 223.



And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat  
 He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,  
 And threw a white cloak round him, and he took  
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;  
 100 And on his head he set his sheepskin cap,  
 Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul<sup>1</sup>;  
 And raised the curtain of his tent, and call'd  
 His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog  
 105 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.  
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed  
 Into the open plain; so Haman bade —  
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled  
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime.  
 110 From their black tents, long files of horse, they  
 stream'd;

As when some gray November morn the files,  
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes  
 Stream over Casbin<sup>2</sup> and the southern slopes  
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,<sup>3</sup>  
 115 Or some frore<sup>4</sup> Caspian reed bed, southward bound  
 For the warm Persian seaboard — so they stream'd.  
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,  
 First, with black sheepskin caps and with long spears;  
 Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara<sup>5</sup> come

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<sup>1</sup> *Kara-Kul*. A district south-west of Bokhara, noted for its pasturage.

<sup>2</sup> *Casbin* (Kāz-bīn). A city of Persia, on the main route to Europe. The Elburz Mountains are just north of the city.

<sup>3</sup> *Aralian estuaries*. The Aral Sea is a brackish inland body of water, without any outlet, into which the Oxus and the Sir rivers empty.

<sup>4</sup> *Frore*. Frozen.

<sup>5</sup> *Bokhara*. Bokhara and Khiva are states of central Asia, in the vicinity of the Oxus River and the Aral Sea.

- 120 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.<sup>1</sup>  
 Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns<sup>2</sup> of the south,  
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,  
 And those from Attruck<sup>3</sup> and the Caspian sands;  
 Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
- 125 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.  
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came  
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;  
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks  
 Of the Jaxartes,<sup>4</sup> men with scanty beards
- 130 And close-set skullcaps; and those wilder hordes  
 Who roam o'er Kipchak<sup>5</sup> and the northern waste,  
 Kalmucks<sup>6</sup> and unkempt Kuzzaks,<sup>7</sup> tribes who stray  
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,<sup>8</sup>  
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere;
- 135 These all filed out from camp into the plain.  
 And on the other side the Persians form'd;—  
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Milk of mares.* An intoxicating liquor made from mares' or camels' milk fermented and distilled. It is called Koumiss, and is much used by the Tartars.

<sup>2</sup> *Toorkmuns.* A branch of the Turkish race found chiefly in Persia and Afghanistan.

<sup>3</sup> *Attruck.* A river in northern Persia emptying into the Caspian Sea.

<sup>4</sup> *Jaxartes.* A river rising in the Pamere plateau and flowing into the Aral Sea. It is called the Sir, or Sihon River.

<sup>5</sup> *Kipchak.* A kingdom on the Oxus River.

<sup>6</sup> *Kalmucks.* Mongolian tribes of western Siberia.

<sup>7</sup> *Kuzzaks.* Now generally called Cossacks, a military people inhabiting the steppes of Russia and, in lesser numbers, parts of Asia. As light cavalry they form an important part of the Russian army, and are used chiefly in skirmishing operations and in the protection of frontiers. The word means "Riders."

<sup>8</sup> *Kirghizzes.* A nomadic people dwelling in south-eastern Russia, western Siberia, and western China.

The Ilyats of Khorassan<sup>1</sup>; and behind,  
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,  
 40 Marshal'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.  
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,  
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,  
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.  
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw  
 45 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,  
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,  
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they  
 stood.

And the old Tartar came upon the sand  
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—  
 150 "Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!  
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.  
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man."

As, in the country, on a morn in June,  
 155 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,  
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—  
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,  
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran  
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.  
 160 But as a troop of peddlers,<sup>2</sup> from Cabool,<sup>2</sup>  
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,<sup>3</sup>  
 That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow;  
 Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass  
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Khorassan*. A province of north-eastern Persia, bordering on Asiatic Russia on the north and Afghanistan on the east. It is largely a desert. The word means: "The Land of the Sun."

<sup>2</sup> *Cabool*. The capital of Afghanistan, noted as a commercial and strategic centre.

<sup>3</sup> *Indian Caucasus*. The Hindu Kush Mountains.

165 Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves  
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulber-  
 ries —

In single file they move, and stop their breath,  
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging  
 snows —

So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

170 And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up

To counsel; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,  
 And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host  
 Second, and was the uncle of the King;

These came and counselled, and then Gudurz said: —

175 "Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,  
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.

But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits

And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart.

180 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear

The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.

Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.

Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up."

So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and cried: —

185 "Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said!

Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man."

He spake: and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode

Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.

But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,

190 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,

Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.

Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,

Just pitch'd; the high pavilion in the midst

Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.

195 And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found

Rustum; his morning meal was done, but still

- The table stood before him, charged with food —  
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,  
 And dark-green melons; and there Rustum sate  
 200 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,  
 And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood  
 Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand,  
 And with a cry sprang up and dropp'd the bird,  
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said: —  
 205 "Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.  
 What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink."  
 But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said: —  
 "Not now! a time will come to eat and drink,  
 But not to-day; to-day has other needs.  
 210 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze;  
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought  
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight their champion — and thou know'st his  
 name —  
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.  
 215 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!  
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;  
 And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,  
 Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.  
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose!"  
 220 He spoke; but Rustum answer'd with a smile: —  
 "Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I  
 Am older; if the young are weak, the King  
 Errs strangely; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,<sup>1</sup>  
 Himself is young, and honors younger men,  
 225 And lets the aged molder to their graves.  
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young —  
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.

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<sup>1</sup> *Kai Khosroo* (Kī-khus-rou'). The third Iranian king, who succeeded to the throne of Persia during the sixth century B.C.

For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?  
 For would that I myself had such a son,  
 230 And not that one slight helpless girl<sup>1</sup> I have —  
 A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,  
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,  
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,  
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,  
 235 And he has none to guard his weak old age.  
 There would I go, and hang my armor up,  
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,  
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,  
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,  
 240 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,  
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no  
 more."

He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply: —  
 "What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,  
 When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks  
 245 Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,  
 Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say:  
 'Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,  
 And shuns to peril it with younger men.'"

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply: —  
 250 "O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?  
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.  
 What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,  
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?  
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?  
 255 But who for men of naught would do great deeds?  
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!  
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms<sup>2</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> *Helpless girl.* See lines 607–611.

<sup>2</sup> *Plain arms.* Unemblazoned with mottoes and devices.  
 Compare Tennyson's *Lancelot and Elaine*, lines 190–194

Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd  
In single fight with any mortal man."

260 He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and  
ran

Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy —  
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.

But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd  
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,

265 And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose  
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,

Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,  
And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume  
Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.

270 So arm'd, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,  
Follow'd him like a faithful hound at heel —  
Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the  
earth,

The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once  
Did in Bokhara by the river find

275 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,  
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,  
Dight<sup>1</sup> with a saddlecloth of broider'd green  
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd  
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.

280 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd  
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.  
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts  
Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.  
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes

285 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,  
By sandy Bahrein,<sup>2</sup> in the Persian Gulf,

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<sup>1</sup> *Dight*. Adorned.

<sup>2</sup> *Bahrein* (Bä'-rān'). A group of islands in the Persian Gulf,  
near the coast of Arabia, celebrated for their pearl fisheries.

- Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,  
 Having made up his tale <sup>1</sup> of precious pearls,  
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands —
- 290 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.  
 And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,  
 And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.  
 And as afield the reapers cut a swath  
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,  
 295 And on each side are squares of standing corn,  
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare —  
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears  
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.  
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast  
 300 His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw  
 Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.  
 As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,  
 Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge  
 Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire —  
 305 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,  
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-panes—  
 And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
 Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed  
 The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar  
 310 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth  
 All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused  
 His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.  
 For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;  
 Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and  
 straight,  
 315 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
 By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound —  
 So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tale.* Number.



- And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul  
 320 As he beheld him coming; and he stood,  
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said: —  
 "O thou young man, the air of heaven is soft,  
 And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!  
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.  
 325 Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron,  
 And tried<sup>1</sup>; and I have stood on many a field  
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe —  
 Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.  
 O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?  
 330 Be govern'd<sup>2</sup>! quit the Tartar host, and come  
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,  
 And fight beneath my banner till I die!  
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."  
 So he spake, mildly; Sohrab heard his voice,  
 335 The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw  
 His giant figure planted on the sand,  
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief  
 Hath builded on the waste in former years  
 Against the robbers; and he saw that head,  
 340 Streak'd with its first gray hairs; — hope fill'd his  
 soul,  
 And he ran forward and embraced his knees,  
 And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said: —  
 "Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!  
 Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?"  
 345 But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,  
 And turn'd away, and spake to his own soul: —  
 "Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean!  
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.  
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,  
 350 And hide it not, but say: 'Rustum is here!'

<sup>1</sup> *Tried.* Experienced.<sup>2</sup> *Govern'd.* Advised.

He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,  
 But he will find some pretext not to fight,  
 And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,  
 A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.  
 355 And on a feast tide,<sup>1</sup> in Afrasiab's hall,  
 In Samarcand, he will arise and cry:  
 'I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd  
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords  
 To cope with me in single fight; but they  
 360 Shrank, only Rustum dared; then he and I  
 Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'  
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud;  
 Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me."  
 And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—  
 365 "Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus  
 Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd  
 By challenge forth; make good thy vaunt, or yield!  
 Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?  
 Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee!  
 370 For well I know, that did great Rustum stand  
 Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,  
 There would be then no talk of fighting more.  
 But being what I am, I tell thee this—  
 Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:  
 375 Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield,  
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds  
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,  
 Oxus in summer wash them all away."  
 He spoke; and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—  
 380 "Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so!  
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.  
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand  
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then.

<sup>1</sup> *Feast tide.* The occasion of a feast. Cf. Christmas-tide.

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But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.  
 385 Begin! thou art more vast, more dread than I,  
 And thou art proved, I know, and I am young —  
 But yet success sways with the breath of heaven.  
 And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure  
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.  
 390 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,  
 Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,  
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.  
 And whether it will heave us up to land,  
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,  
 395 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,  
 We know not, and no search will make us know;  
 Only the event will teach us in its hour.”  
 He spoke, and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd  
 His spear; down from the shoulder, down it came,  
 400 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk,  
 That long has tower'd in the airy clouds,  
 Drops like a plummet; Sohrab saw it come,  
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash; the spear  
 Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,  
 405 Which it sent flying wide; — then Sohrab threw  
 In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield; sharp rang,  
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.  
 And Rustum seized his club, which none but he  
 Could wield; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,  
 410 Still rough — like those which men in treeless plains  
 To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,  
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes,<sup>1</sup> when, high up  
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter time  
 Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hyphasis* or *Hydaspes*. Ancient names of two great rivers in the Punjab, northern India.

<sup>2</sup> *Wrack*. Wreck, or ruin.

- 415 And strewn the channels with torn boughs — so huge  
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck  
 One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside,  
 Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came  
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
- 420 And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell  
 To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand;  
 And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,  
 And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay  
 Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand;
- 425 But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,  
 But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said: —  
 "Thou strik'st too hard! that club of thine will  
 float  
 Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.  
 But rise, and be not wroth! not wroth am I;  
 430 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.  
 Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum; be it so!  
 Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?  
 Boy as I am, I have seen battles too —  
 Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,  
 435 And heard their hollow roar of dying men;  
 But never was my heart thus touch'd before.  
 Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart?  
 O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!  
 Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,  
 440 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,  
 And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,  
 And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.  
 There are enough foes in the Persian host,  
 Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;  
 445 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou  
 Mayst fight; fight *them*, when they confront thy  
 spear!

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But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!"

He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,  
 And stood erect, trembling with rage; his club  
 450 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,  
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right hand  
 Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn star,<sup>1</sup>  
 The baleful sign of fevers; dust had soil'd  
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.  
 455 His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his  
 voice

Was choked with rage; at last these words broke  
 way: —

"Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!  
 Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!  
 Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!  
 460 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now  
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to  
 dance;

But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance  
 Of battle, and with me, who make no play  
 Of war; I fight it out, and hand to hand.  
 465 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!  
 Remember all thy valor; try thy feints  
 And cunning! all the pity I had is gone;  
 Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts  
 With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."  
 470 He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,  
 And he too drew his sword; at once they rush'd  
 Together, as two eagles on one prey  
 Come rushing down together from the clouds,

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<sup>1</sup> *Autumn star.* The reference is probably to Sirius, a very white star, the brightest in the heavens. It is popularly known as the dog-star. Its rising and setting with the sun has given rise to the name of the period called dog-days.

One from the east, one from the west; their shields  
 475 Dash'd with a clang together, and a din  
 Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters  
 Make often in the forest's heart at morn,  
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees — such blows  
 Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.  
 480 And you would say that sun and stars took part  
 In that unnatural<sup>1</sup> conflict; for a cloud  
 Grew suddenly in heaven, and dark'd the sun  
 Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose  
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,  
 485 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.  
 In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;  
 For both the on-looking hosts on either hand  
 Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,  
 And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.  
 490 But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes  
 And laboring breath; first Rustum struck the shield  
 Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spiked spear  
 Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,  
 And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.  
 495 Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,  
 Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest  
 He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,  
 Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;  
 And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom  
 500 Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air,  
 And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the  
 horse,  
 Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry; —  
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar  
 Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day  
 505 Hath trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,

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<sup>1</sup> *Unnatural.* Because it was between father and son.

And comes at night to die upon the sand.  
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,  
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.  
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,  
510 And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd  
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,  
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,  
And in the hand the hilt remain'd alone.  
Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes  
515 Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,  
And shouted: "Rustum!" — Sohrab heard that  
shout,  
And shrank amazed: back he recoil'd one step,  
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form;  
And then he stood bewilder'd, and he dropp'd  
520 His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.  
He reel'd, and, staggering back, sank to the ground;  
And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,  
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all  
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair —  
525 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,  
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.  
Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began: —  
"Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill  
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,  
530 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent;  
Or else that the great Rustum would come down  
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move  
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go;  
And then that all the Tartar host would praise  
535 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,  
To glad thy father in his weak old age.  
Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man!  
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be

Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.”

540 And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied : —  
 “ Unknown thou art ; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.  
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man !  
 No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.  
 For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,  
 545 And I were that which till to-day I was,  
 They should be lying here, I standing there.  
 But that beloved name unnerved my arm —  
 That name, and something, I confess, in thee,  
 Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield  
 550 Fall ; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.  
 And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.  
 But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear :  
 The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death !  
 My father, whom I seek through all the world,  
 555 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee ! ”

As when some hunter in the spring hath found  
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,  
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,  
 And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,  
 560 And follow'd her to find her where she fell  
 Far off ; — anon her mate comes winging back  
 From hunting, and a great way off descries  
 His huddling young left sole <sup>1</sup> ; at that, he checks  
 His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps  
 565 Circles above his eyry, with loud screams  
 Chiding his mate back to her nest ; but she  
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,  
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,  
 A heap of fluttering feathers — never more  
 570 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it ;  
 Never the black and dripping precipices

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<sup>1</sup> *Sole.* Alone.



Echo her stormy scream as she sails by —  
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,  
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood  
575 Over his dying son, and knew him not.  
But, with a cold incredulous voice, he said: —  
“What prate is this of fathers and revenge?  
The mighty Rustum never had a son.”  
And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied: —  
580 “Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.  
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,  
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,  
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;  
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap  
585 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.  
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!  
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be?  
Oh, could I live till I that grief had seen!  
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,  
590 My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells  
With that old king, her father, who grows gray  
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.  
Her most I pity, who no more will see  
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,  
595 With spoils and honor, when the war is done.  
But a dark rumor will be bruited up,<sup>1</sup>  
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;  
And then will that defenceless woman learn  
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more,  
600 But that in battle with a nameless foe,  
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.”  
He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,  
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.  
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bruited up.* Noised abroad.

- 605 Nor did he yet believe it was his son  
 Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;  
 For he had had sure tidings that the babe,  
 Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,  
 Had been a puny girl, no boy at all —
- 610 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear  
 Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.  
 And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,  
 By a false boast, the style <sup>1</sup> of Rustum's son;  
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
- 615 So deem'd he: yet he listen'd, plunged in thought;  
 And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide  
 Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore  
 At the full moon; tears gather'd in his eyes;  
 For he remember'd his own early youth,
- 620 And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,  
 The shepherd from his mountain lodge descries  
 A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,  
 Through many rolling clouds — so Rustum saw  
 His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
- 625 And that old king,<sup>2</sup> her father, who loved well  
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child  
 With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,  
 They three, in that long-distant summer time —  
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
- 630 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills  
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that youth,  
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,  
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,  
 Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
- 635 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,  
 Mowing the garden grassplots near its bed,

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<sup>1</sup> *Style.* Name.

<sup>2</sup> *King.* The king of Samengán. See page 10.

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ew;  
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,  
 On the mown, dying grass — so Sohrab lay,  
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.

640 And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said:—

“O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son  
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have  
 loved!

Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men  
 Have told thee false — thou art not Rustum's son.

645 For Rustum had no son; one child he had —

ht;  
 But one — a girl; who with her mother now  
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us —  
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now  
 650 The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,

And he desired to draw forth the steel,  
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die —  
 But first he would convince his stubborn foe;  
 And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

655 “Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?

Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,  
 And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.  
 I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm <sup>1</sup> I bear  
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,

660 That she might prick it on the babe she bore.”

He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks,  
 And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand  
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,  
 That the hard iron corselet clank'd aloud;

665 And to his heart he press'd the other hand,

And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—

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<sup>1</sup> *Arm.* Arnold makes the means of identification the design of a griffin pricked on Sohrab's arm. In the original story, the son wore an onyx stone as an amulet.

“Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie!  
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum’s son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed  
670 His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,  
And show’d a sign in faint vermilion points  
Prick’d; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,  
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,  
An emperor’s gift — at early morn he paints,  
675 And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp  
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands —  
So delicately prick’d the sign appear’d  
On Sohrab’s arm, the sign of Rustum’s seal.  
It was that griffin,<sup>1</sup> which of old rear’d Zal,  
680 Rustum’s great father, whom they left to die,  
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks;  
Him that kind creature found, and rear’d and  
loved —

Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.  
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,  
685 And himself scann’d it long with mournful eyes,  
And then he touch’d it with his hand, and said: —  
“How say’st thou? Is that sign the proper sign  
Of Rustum’s son, or of some other man’s?”

He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood  
690 Speechless; and then he utter’d one sharp cry:  
“O boy — thy father!” — and his voice choked  
there.

And then a dark cloud pass’d before his eyes,  
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.  
But Sohrab crawl’d to where he lay, and cast  
695 His arms about his neck, and kiss’d his lips,  
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,

<sup>1</sup> *Griffin*. A mythical animal; in the fore part representing an eagle, in the hinder part, a lion.

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Trying to call him back to life; and life  
 Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,  
 And they stood wide with horror; and he seized  
 700 In both his hands the dust which lay around,  
 And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair, —  
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms;  
 And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,  
 And his sobs choked him; and he clutch'd his  
     sword,  
 705 To draw it, and forever let life out.  
 But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,  
 And with a soothing voice he spake, and said: —  
     “Father, forbear! for I but meet to-day  
 The doom which at my birth was written down  
 710 In heaven, and thou art heaven's unconscious hand.  
 Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,  
 When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,  
 I know it! but fate trod those promptings down  
 Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged  
 715 The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.  
 But let us speak no more of this! I find  
     My father; let me feel that I have found!  
 Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take  
 My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,  
 720 And wash them with thy tears, and say: ‘My son!’  
 Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,  
 And swift; for like the lightning to this field  
 I came, and like the wind I go away —  
 Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.  
 725 But it was writ in heaven that this should be.”  
 So said he, and his voice released the heart  
 Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast  
 His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,  
 And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts,

- 730 When they saw Rustum's grief; and Ruksh, the  
 horse,  
 With his head bowing to the ground and mane  
 Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe  
 First to the one then to the other moved  
 His head, as if inquiring what their grief  
 735 Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,  
 The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked<sup>1</sup> the  
 sand.  
 But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said: —  
 "Ruksh, now thou grieveest; but, O Ruksh, thy  
 feet  
 Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,  
 740 Or ere they brought thy master to this field!"  
 But Sohrab look'd upon the horse, and said: —  
 "Is this, then, Ruksh? How often, in past days,  
 My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,  
 My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,  
 745 That I should one day find thy lord and thee.  
 Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!  
 O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;  
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go,  
 And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.  
 750 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,  
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake  
 Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself  
 Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,  
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,  
 755 And said: 'O Ruksh! bear Rustum well,' — but I  
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,  
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,  
 Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Caked.* Hardened into cakes.

But lodged among my father's foes, and seen  
 760 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,  
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,  
 And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk  
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,  
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,  
 765 The northern Sir<sup>1</sup>; and this great Oxus stream,  
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd:—  
 "Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!  
 Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt  
 770 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!"

But, with a grave, mild voice, Sohrab replied:—  
 "Desire not that, my father! thou must live.  
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,  
 As some are born to be obscured, and die.  
 775 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,  
 And reap a second glory in thine age;  
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.  
 But come! thou seest this great host of men  
 Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these!  
 780 Let me entreat for them; what have they done?  
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.  
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.  
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,  
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,  
 785 And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,  
 Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.  
 And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,  
 And heap a stately mound above my bones,  
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all.  
 790 That so the passing horseman on the waste

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<sup>1</sup> *Sir*. The Sir Daria, or Jaxartes. See page 18, note 4.

May see my tomb a great way off, and cry:  
 'Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,  
 Whom his great father did in ignorance kill!  
 And I be not forgotten in my grave.'

- 795 And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:—  
 "Fear not! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,  
 So shall it be; for I will burn my tents,  
 And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,  
 And carry thee away to Seistan,  
 800 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,  
 With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.  
 And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,  
 And heap a stately mound above thy bones,  
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all,  
 805 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.  
 And I will spare thy host; yea, let them go!  
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace!  
 What should I do with slaying any more?  
 For would that all that I have ever slain  
 810 Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,  
 And they who were call'd champions in their time,  
 And through whose death I won that fame I have—  
 And I were nothing but a common man,  
 A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,  
 815 So thou mightest live too, my son, my son!  
 Or rather would that I, even I myself,  
 Might now be lying on this bloody sand,  
 Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,  
 Not thou of mine! and I might die, not thou;  
 820 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;  
 And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;  
 And say: 'O son, I weep thee not too sore,  
 For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end!  
 But now in blood and battles was my youth,



825 And full of blood and battles is my age,  
And I shall never end this life of blood."

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied: —

"A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man!

But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now,

830 Not yet! but thou shalt have it on that day<sup>1</sup>

When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,

Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,

Returning home over the salt blue sea,

From laying thy dear master in his grave."

835 And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said: —

"Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!

Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."

He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took

The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased

840 His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood

Came welling from the open gash, and life

Flow'd with the stream; — all down his cold white  
side

The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,

Like the soil'd tissue of white violets

845 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,

By children whom their nurses call with haste

Indoors from the sun's eye; his head droop'd low,

His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay —

White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,

---

<sup>1</sup> *That day.* It would appear that this prediction was not fulfilled. According to tradition, Rustum's death was the result of a ruse practised by a half-brother, Shughad, who lured him into a hunting-park in which had been dug concealed trenches filled with javelins. Ruksh sank into one of these. Rustum was wounded unto death; but before he died was able to pierce with an arrow the treacherous Shughad. Kai Khosroo did indeed disappear in this way, but, according to the *Sháh Náme*h, Rustum was not among those who perished.

- 850 Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,  
 Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them,  
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face;  
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs  
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
- 855 Regretting the warm mansion which it left,  
 And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.  
 So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;  
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak  
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
- 860 As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd  
 By Jemshid in Persepolis,<sup>1</sup> to bear  
 His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps  
 Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side —  
 So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
- 865 And night came down over the solemn waste,  
 And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,  
 And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,  
 Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,  
 As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
- 870 Began to twinkle through the fog; for now  
 Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;  
 The Persians took it on the open sands  
 Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;  
 And Rustum and his son were left alone.
- 875 But the majestic river floated on,  
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Persepolis*. An ancient capital of the Persian Empire. "On its site are found the ruins of enormous buildings, and conspicuous among them the huge black granite pillars; some of which are still standing. These remains go by the name of 'Takhti Jamshid,' which translated is 'the throne of Jamshid, or Jemshid,' a mythical king."

Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,  
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian<sup>1</sup> waste,  
Under the solitary moon; — he flow'd  
880 Right for the polar star,<sup>2</sup> past Orgunjè,<sup>3</sup>  
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
And split his currents; that for many a league  
The shorn and parcel'd Oxus strains along  
885 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles —  
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
A foil'd circuitous wanderer — till at last  
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
890 His luminous home<sup>4</sup> of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars<sup>5</sup>  
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

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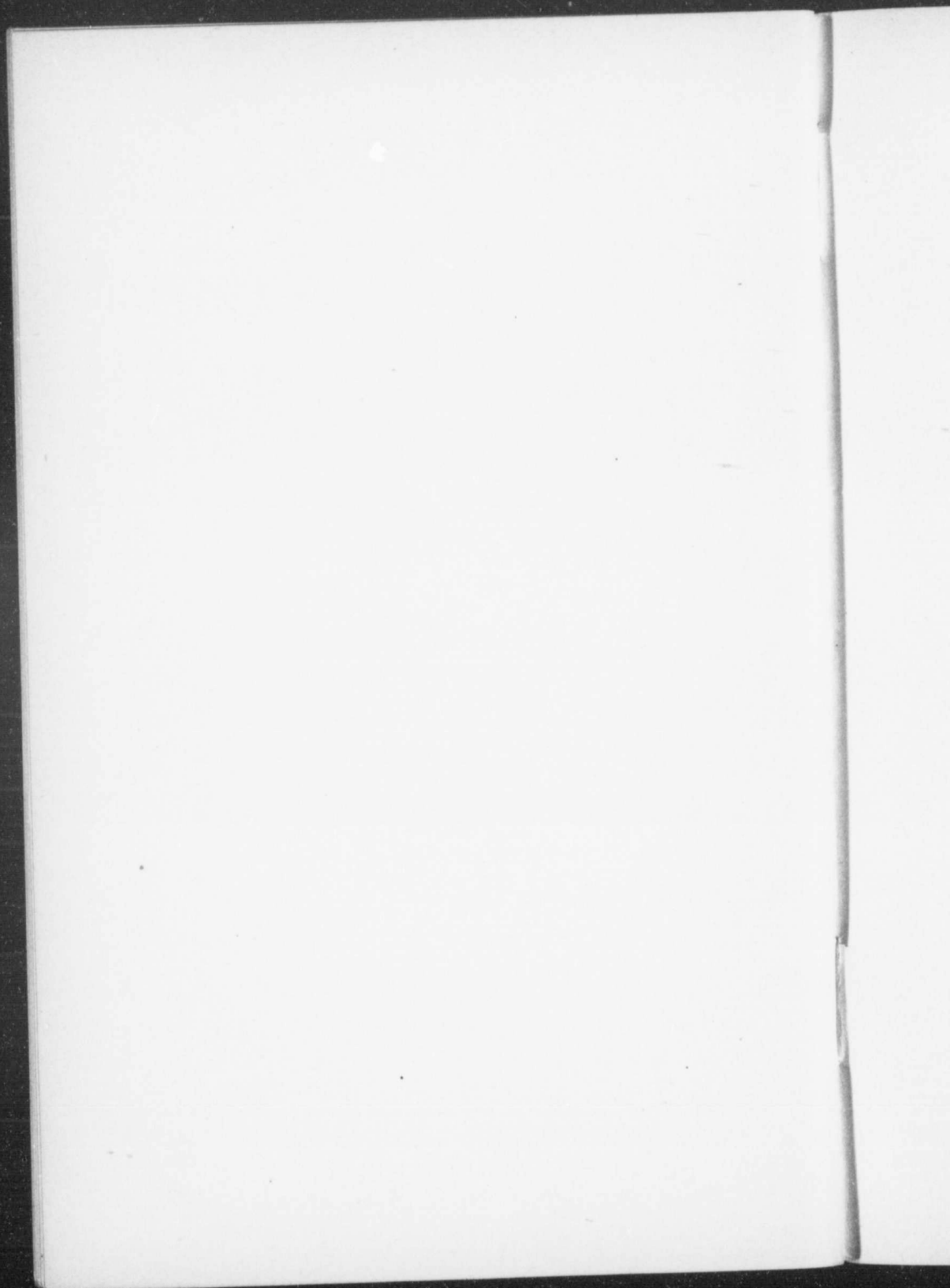
<sup>1</sup> *Chorasmian*. Chorasmia is a region of Turkestan; at one time the seat of a powerful empire, but now much reduced.

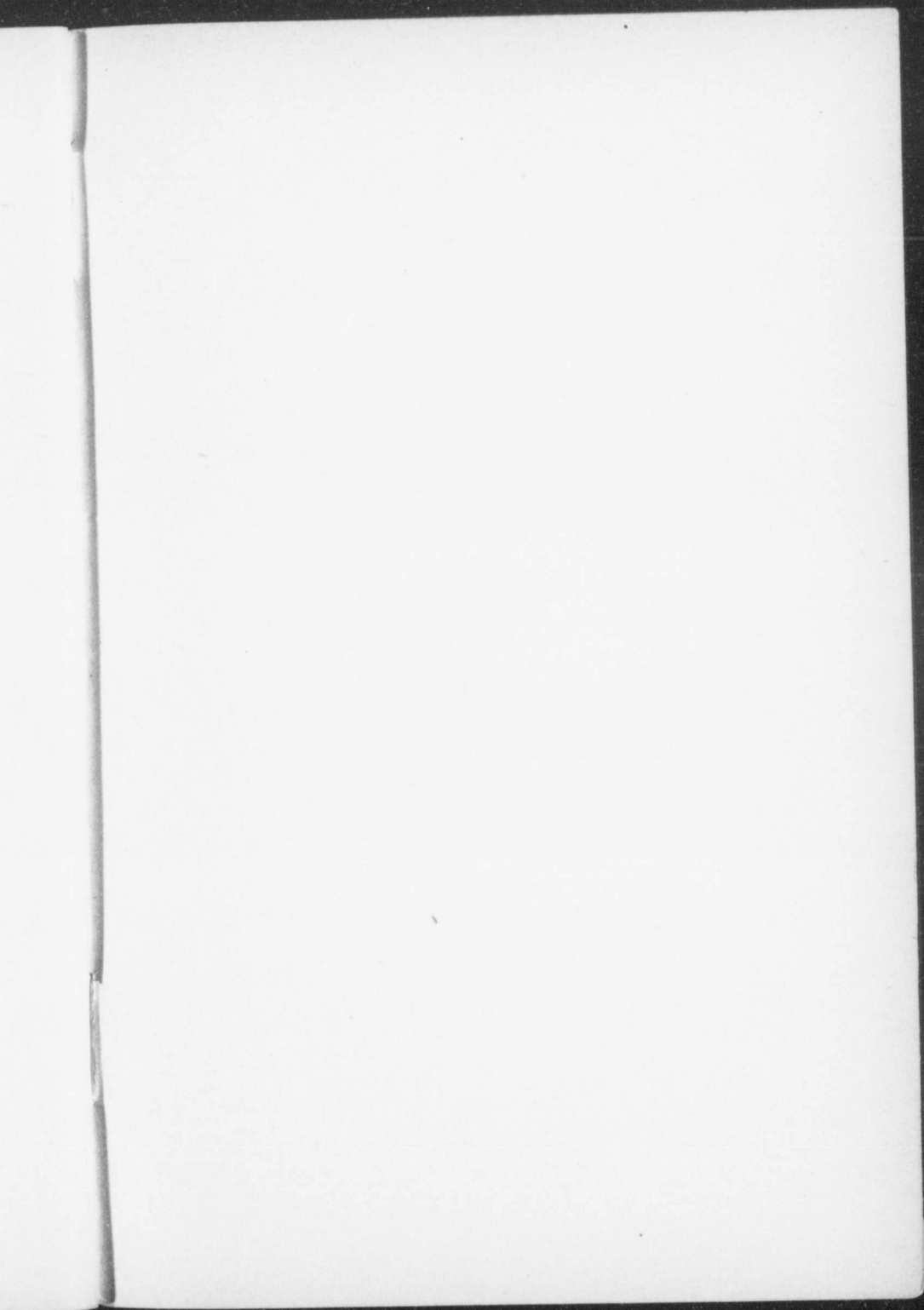
<sup>2</sup> *Star*. Due north.

<sup>3</sup> *Orgunjè*. A village on the Oxus, about seventy miles from Khiva.

<sup>4</sup> *Home*. The Aral Sea.

<sup>5</sup> *New-bathed stars*. The stars, when they appear above the horizon, seem to emerge from the sea.





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