

HAMILTON

WRIGHT MABIE

Legends That Every Child Should
Know; a Selection of the Great
Legends of All Times for Young
People

Hamilton Wright Mabie

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Mabie H.

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Legends That Every Child Should Know

CHAPTER I

HAWATHA

WIGWAM LEGEND OF HIAWATHA [Footnote: This story is ascribed to Abraham le Fort, an Onondaga chief, a graduate of Geneva College. The poem of Longfellow has given it general interest. Hiawatha is an example of the intellectual capacity of one of that race of whom it has been said "Take these Indians in their owne trimme and naturall disposition, and they bee reported to bee wise, lofty spirited, constant in friendship to one another: true in their promise, and more industrious than many others."—Wood's, "New England's Prospect," London, 1634.]

On the banks of Tioto, or Cross Lake, resided an eminent man who bore the name of Hiawatha, or the Wise Man.

This name was given him, as its meaning indicates, on account of his great wisdom in council and power in war. Hiawatha was of high and mysterious origin. He had a canoe which would move without paddles, obedient to his will, and which he kept with great care and never used except when he attended the general council of the tribes. It was from Hiawatha the people learned to raise corn and beans; through his instructions they were enabled to remove obstructions from the water courses and clear their fishing grounds; and by him they were helped to get the mastery over the great monsters which overran the country. The people listened to him with ever increasing delight; and he gave them wise laws and maxims from the Great Spirit, for he had been second to him only in power previous to his taking up his dwelling with mankind.

Having selected the Onondagas for his tribe, years passed away in prosperity; the Onondagas assumed an elevated rank for their wisdom and learning, among the other tribes, and there was not one of these which did not yield its assent to their superior privilege of lighting the council-fire.

But in the midst of the high tide of their prosperity, suddenly there arose a great alarm at the invasion of a ferocious band of warriors from the North of the Great Lakes; and as these bands advanced, an indiscriminate slaughter was made of men, women, and children. Destruction fell upon all alike.

The public alarm was great; and Hiawatha advised them not to waste their efforts in a desultory manner, but to call a council of all the tribes that could be gathered together, from the East to the West; and, at the same time, he appointed a meeting to take place on an eminence on the banks of the Onondaga Lake. There, accordingly, the chief men assembled, while the occasion brought together a vast multitude of men, women, and children, who were in expectation of some marvellous deliverance.

Three days elapsed, and Hiawatha did not appear. The multitude began to fear that he was not coming, and messengers were despatched for him to Tioto, who found him depressed with a presentiment that evil would follow his attendance. These fears were overruled by the eager persuasions of the messengers; and Hiawatha, taking his daughter with him, put his wonderful canoe in its element and set out for the council. The grand assemblage that was to avert the threatened danger appeared quickly in sight, as he moved rapidly along in his magic canoe; and when the people saw him, they sent up loud shouts of welcome until the venerated man landed. A steep ascent led up the banks of the lake to the place occupied by the council; and, as he walked up, a loud whirring sound was heard above, as if caused by some rushing current of air. Instantly, the eyes of all were directed upward to the sky, where was seen a dark spot, something like a small cloud, descending rapidly, and

as it approached, enlarging in its size and increasing in velocity. Terror and alarm filled the minds of the multitude and they scattered in confusion. But as soon as he had gained the eminence, Hiawatha stood still, causing his daughter to do the same—deeming it cowardly to fly, and impossible, if it was attempted, to divert the designs of the Great Spirit. The descending object now assumed a more definite aspect; and, as it came nearer, revealed the shape of a gigantic white bird, with wide-extended and pointed wings. This bird came down with ever increasing velocity, until, with a mighty swoop, it dropped upon the girl, crushing her at once to the earth.

The fixed face of Hiawatha alone indicated his consciousness of his daughter's death; while in silence he signalled to the warriors, who had stood watching the event in speechless consternation. One after the other stepped up to the prostrate bird, which was killed by its violent fall, and selecting a feather from its snow-white plumage, decorated himself therewith. [Footnote: Since this event, say the Indians of this tribe, the plumage of the white heron has been used for their decorations on the war-path.]

But now a new affliction fell upon Hiawatha; for, on removing the carcass of the bird, not a trace could be discovered of his daughter. Her body had vanished from the earth. Shades of anguish contracted the dark face of Hiawatha. He stood apart in voiceless grief. No word was spoken. His people waited in silence, until at length arousing himself, he turned to them and walked in calm dignity to the head of the council.

The first day he listened with attentive gravity to the plans of the different speakers; on the next day he arose and said: "My friends and brothers; you are members of many tribes, and have come from a great distance. We have come to promote the common interest, and our mutual safety. How shall it be accomplished? To oppose these Northern hordes in tribes singly, while we are at variance often with each other, is impossible. By uniting in a common band of brotherhood we may hope to succeed. Let this be done, and we shall drive the enemy from our land. Listen to me by tribes. You, the Mohawks, who are sitting under the shadow of the great tree, whose branches spread wide around, and whose roots sink deep into the earth, shall be the first nation, because you are warlike and mighty. You, the Oneidas, who recline your bodies against the everlasting stone that cannot be moved, shall be the second nation, because you always give wise counsel. You, the Onondagas, who have your habitation at the foot of the great hills, and are overshadowed by their crags, shall be the third nation, because you are greatly gifted in speech. You, the Senecas, whose dwelling is in the dark forest, and whose home is all over the land, shall be the fourth nation, because of your superior cunning in hunting. And you, the Cayugas, the people who live in the open country and possess much wisdom, shall be the fifth nation, because you understand better the art of raising corn and beans, and making lodges. Unite, ye five nations, and have one common interest, and no foe shall disturb and subdue you. You, the people who are the feeble bushes, and you who are a fishing people, may place yourselves under our protection, and we will defend you. And you of the South and West may do the same, and we will protect you. We earnestly desire the alliance and friendship of you all. Brothers, if we unite in this great bond, the Great Spirit will smile upon us, and we shall be free, prosperous, and happy; but if we remain as we are, we shall be subject to his frown. We shall be enslaved, ruined, perhaps annihilated. We may perish under the war-storm, and our names be no longer remembered by good men, nor be repeated in the dance and song. Brothers, those are the words of Hiawatha. I have spoken. I am done." [Footnote: Canassatego, a renowned chief of the Confederacy, in his remarkable piece of advice to the Colonial Commissioners of Lancaster in July, 1744, seems to imply that there was an error in this plan of Hiawatha, as it did not admit all nations into their Confederacy with equal rights.]

The next day his plan of union was considered and adopted by the council, after which Hiawatha again addressed the people with wise words of counsel, and at the close of this speech bade them farewell; for he conceived that his mission to the Iroquois was accomplished, and he might announce his withdrawal to the skies. He then went down to the shore, and assumed his seat in his mystical

canoe. Sweet music was heard in the air as he seated himself; and while the wondering multitude stood gazing at their beloved chief, he was silently wafted from sight, and they saw him no more. He passed to the Isle of the Blessed, inhabited by Owayneo [Footnote: A name for their Great Spirit in the dialect of the Iroquois.] and his manitos.

And they said, "Farewell forever!"
Said, "Farewell, O Hiawatha!"
And the forests, dark and lonely,
Moved through all their depths of darkness^
Sighed, "Farewell, O Hiawatha!"
And the waves upon the margin,
Rising, rippling on the pebbles,
Sobbed, "Farewell, O Hiawatha!"
And the heron, the shuh-shu-gah,
From her haunts among the fen-lands,
Screamed, "Farewell, O Hiawatha!"
Thus departed Hiawatha,
Hiawatha the Beloved,
In the glory of the sunset,
In the purple mists of evening,
To the regions of the home-wind,
Of the northwest wind, Keewaydin,
To the Islands of the Blessed,
To the kingdom of Ponemah,
To the land of the Hereafter.

[Footnote: "The Song of Hiawatha," by H. W. Longfellow.]

CHAPTER II

BEOWULF

Old King Hrothgar built for himself a great palace, covered with gold, with benches all round outside, and a terrace leading up to it. It was bigger than any hall men had ever heard of, and there Hrothgar sat on his throne to share with men the good things God had given him. A band of brave knights gathered round him, all living together in peace and joy.

But there came a wicked monster, Grendel, out of the moors. He stole across the fens in the thick darkness, and touched the great iron bars of the door of the hall, which immediately sprang open. Then, with his eyes shooting out flame, he spied the knights sleeping after battle. With his steel finger nails the hideous fiend seized thirty of them in their sleep. He gave yells of joy, and sped as quick as lightning across the moors, to reach his home with his prey.

When the knights awoke, they raised a great cry of sorrow, whilst the aged King himself sat speechless with grief. None could do battle with the monster, he was too strong, too horrible for any one to conquer. For twelve long years Grendel warred against Hrothgar; like a dark shadow of death he prowled round about the hall, and lay in wait for his men on the misty moors. One thing he could not touch, and that was the King's sacred throne.

Now there lived in a far-off land a youngster called Beowulf, who had the strength of thirty men. He heard of the wicked deeds of Grendel, and the sorrow of the good King Hrothgar. So he had made ready a strong ship, and with fourteen friends set sail to visit Hrothgar, as he was in need of help. The good ship flew over the swelling ocean like a bird, till in due time the voyagers saw shining white cliffs before them. Then they knew their journey was at an end; they made fast their ship, grasped their weapons, and thanked God that they had had an easy voyage.

Now the coastguard spied them from a tower. He set off to the shore, riding on horseback, and brandishing a huge lance.

"Who are you," he cried, "bearing arms and openly landing here? I am bound to know from whence you come before you make a step forward. Listen to my plain words, and hasten to answer me." Beowulf made answer that they came as friends, to rid Hrothgar of his wicked enemy Grendel, and at that the coastguard led them on to guide them to the King's palace. Downhill they ran together, with a rushing sound of voices and armed tread, until they saw the hall shining like gold against the sky. The guard bade them go straight to it, then, wheeling round on his horse, he said, "It is time for me to go. May the Father of All keep you in safety. For myself, I must guard the coast."

The street was paved with stone, and Beowulf's men marched along, following it to the hall, their armour shining in the sun and clanging as they went. They reached the terrace, where they set down their broad shields. Then they seated themselves on the bench, while they stacked their spears together and made themselves known to the herald. Hrothgar speedily bade them welcome. They entered the great hall with measured tread, Beowulf leading the way. His armour shone like a golden net-work, and his look was high and noble, as he said, "Hail, O King! To fight against Grendel single-handed have I come. Grant me this, that I may have this task alone, I and my little band of men. I know that the terrible monster despises weapons, and therefore I shall bear neither sword, nor shield, nor buckler. Hand to hand I will fight the foe, and death shall come to whomsoever God wills. If death overtakes me, then will the monster carry away my body to the swamps, so care not for my body, but send my armour to my King. My fate is in God's hands."

Hrothgar loved the youth for his noble words, and bade him and his men sit down to the table and merrily share the feast, if they had a mind to do so. As they feasted, a minstrel sang with a clear voice. The Queen, in cloth of gold, moved down the hall and handed the jewelled cup of mead to the King and all the warriors, old and young. At the right moment, with gracious words, she brought it

to Beowulf. Full of pride and high purpose, the youth drank from the splendid cup, and vowed that he would conquer the enemy or die.

When the sun sank in the west, all the guests arose. The King bade Beowulf guard the house, and watch for the foe. "Have courage," he said, "be watchful, resolve on success. Not a wish of yours shall be left unfulfilled, if you perform this mighty deed."

Then Beowulf lay down to rest in the hall, putting off from him his coat of mail, helmet, and sword.

Through the dim night Grendel came stealing. All slept in the darkness, all but one! The door sprang open at the first touch that the monster gave it. He trod quickly over the paved floor of the hall; his eyes gleamed as he saw a troop of kinsmen lying together asleep. He laughed as he reckoned on sucking the life of each one before day broke. He seized a sleeping warrior, and in a trice had crunched his bones. Then he stretched out his hand to seize Beowulf on his bed. Quickly did Beowulf grip his arm; he stood up full length and grappled with him with all his might, till his fingers cracked as though they would burst. Never had Grendel felt such a grip; he had a mind to go, but could not. He roared, and the hall resounded with his yells, as up and down he raged, with Beowulf holding him in a fast embrace. The benches were overturned, the timbers of the hall cracked, the beautiful hall was all but wrecked. Beowulf's men had seized their weapons and thought to hack Grendel on every side, but no blade could touch him. Still Beowulf held him by the arm; his shoulder cracked, and he fled, wounded to death, leaving hand, arm, and shoulder in Beowulf's grasp. Over the moors, into the darkness, he sped as best he might, and to Beowulf was the victory.

Then, in the morning, many a warrior came from far and near. Riding in troops, they tracked the monster's path, where he had fled stricken to death. In a dismal pool he had yielded up his life.

Racing their horses over the green turf, they reached again the paved street. The golden roof of the palace glittered in the sunlight. The King stood on the terrace and gave thanks to God. "I have had much woe," he said, "but this lad, through God's might, has done the deed that we, with all our wisdom, could not do. Now I will heartily love you, Beowulf, as if you were my son. You shall want for nothing in this world, and your fame shall live forever."

The palace was cleansed, the walls hung anew with cloth of gold, the whole place was made fair and straight, for only the roof had been left altogether unhurt after the fight.

A merry feast was held. The King brought forth out of his treasures a banner, helmet, and mail coat. These he gave to Beowulf; but more wonderful than all was a famous sword handed down to him through the ages. Then eight horses with golden cheekplates were brought within the court; one of them was saddled with King Hrothgar's own saddle, decorated with silver. Hrothgar gave all to Beowulf, bidding him enjoy them well. To each of Beowulf's men he gave rich gifts. The minstrels sang; the Queen, beautiful and gracious, bore the cup to the King and Beowulf. To Beowulf she, too, gave gifts: mantle and bracelets and collar of gold. "Use these gifts," she said, "and prosper well! As far as the sea rolls your name shall be known."

Great was the joy of all till evening came. Then the hall was cleared of benches and strewn with beds. Beowulf, like the King, had his own bower this night to sleep in. The nobles lay down in the hall, at their heads they set their shields and placed ready their helmets and their mail coats. Each slept, ready in an instant to do battle for his lord.

So they sank to rest, little dreaming what deep sorrow was to fall on them.

Hrothgar's men sank to rest, but death was to be the portion of one. Grendel the monster was dead, but Grendel's mother still lived. Furious at the death of her son, she crept to the great hall, and made her way in, clutched an earl, the King's dearest friend, and crushed him in his sleep. Great was the uproar, though the terror was less than when Grendel came. The knights leapt up, sword in hand; the witch hurried to escape, she wanted to get out with her life.

The aged King felt bitter grief when he heard that his dearest friend was slain. He sent for Beowulf, who, like the King, had had his own sleeping bower that night. The youth stood before Hrothgar and hoped that all was well.

"Do not ask if things go well," said the sorrowing King, "we have fresh grief this morning. My dearest friend and noblest knight is slain. Grendel you yourself destroyed through the strength given you by God, but another monster has come to avenge his death. I have heard the country folk say that there were two huge fiends to be seen stalking over the moors, one like a woman, as near as they could make out, the other had the form of a man, but was huger far. It was he they called Grendel. These two haunt a fearful spot, a land of untrodden bogs and windy cliffs. A waterfall plunges into the blackness below, and twisted trees with gnarled roots overhang it. An unearthly fire is seen gleaming there night after night. None can tell the depth of the stream. Even a stag, hunted to death, will face his foes on the bank rather than plunge into those waters. It is a fearful spot. You are our only help, dare you enter this horrible haunt?"

Quick was Beowulf's answer: "Sorrow not, O King! Rouse yourself quickly, and let us track the monster. Each of us must look for death, and he who has the chance should do mighty deeds before it comes. I promise you Grendel's kin shall not escape me, if she hide in the depths of the earth or of the ocean."

The King sprang up gladly, and Beowulf and his friends set out. They passed stony banks and narrow gullies, the haunts of goblins.

Suddenly they saw a clump of gloomy trees, overhanging a dreary pool. A shudder ran through them, for the pool was blood-red.

All sat down by the edge of the pool, while the horn sounded a cheerful blast. In the water were monstrous sea-snakes, and on jutting points of land were dragons and strange beasts: they tumbled away, full of rage, at the sound of the horn.

One of Beowulf's men took aim at a monster with his arrow, and pierced him through, so that he swam no more.

Beowulf was making ready for the fight. He covered his body with armour lest the fiend should clutch him. On his head was a white helmet, decorated with figures of boars worked in silver. No weapon could hurt it. His sword was a wonderful treasure, with an edge of iron; it had never failed any one who had needed it in battle.

"Be like a father to my men, if I perish," said Beowulf to Hrothgar, "and send the rich gifts you have given me to my King. He will see that I had good fortune while life lasted. Either I will win fame, or death shall take me."

He dashed away, plunging headlong into the pool. It took nearly the whole day before he reached the bottom, and while he was still on his way the water-witch met him. For a hundred years she had lived in those depths. She made a grab at him, and caught him in her talons, but his coat of mail saved him from her loathsome fingers. Still she clutched him tight, and bore him in her arms to the bottom of the lake; he had no power to use his weapons, though he had courage enough. Water-beasts swam after him and battered him with their tusks.

Then he saw that he was in a vast hall, where there was no water, but a strange, unearthly glow of firelight. At once the fight began, but the sword would not bite—it failed its master in his need; for the first time its fame broke down. Away Beowulf threw it in anger, trusting to the strength of his hands. He cared nothing for his own life, for he thought but of honour.

He seized the witch by the shoulder and swayed her so that she sank on the pavement. Quickly she recovered, and closed in on him; he staggered and fell, worn out. She sat on him, and drew her knife to take his life, but his good mail coat turned the point. He stood up again, and then truly God helped him, for he saw among the armour on the wall an old sword of huge size, the handiwork of giants. He seized it, and smote with all his might, so that the witch gave up her life.

His heart was full of gladness, and light, calm and beautiful as that of the sun, filled the hall. He scanned the vast chamber, and saw Grendel lying there dead. He cut off his head as a trophy for King Hrothgar, whose men the fiend had killed and devoured.

Now those men who were seated on the banks of the pool watching with Hrothgar saw that the water was tinged with blood. Then the old men spoke together of the brave Beowulf, saying they feared they would never see him again. The day was waning fast, so they and the King went homeward. Beowulf's men stayed on, sick at heart, gazing at the pool. They longed, but did not expect, to see their lord and master.

Under the depths, Beowulf was making his way to them. The magic sword melted in his hand, like snow in sunshine; only the hilt remained, so venomous was the fiend that had been slain therewith. He brought nothing more with him than the hilt and Grendel's head. Up he rose through the waters where the furious sea-beasts before had chased him. Now not one was to be seen; the depths were purified when the witch lost her life. So he came to land, bravely swimming, bearing his spoils. His men saw him, they thanked God, and ran to free him of his armour. They rejoiced to get sight of him, sound and whole.

Now they marched gladly through the highways to the town. It took four of them to carry Grendel's head. On they went, all fourteen, their captain glorious in their midst. They entered the great hall, startling the King and Queen, as they sat at meat, with the fearful sight of Grendel's head.

Beowulf handed the magic hilt to Hrothgar, who saw that it was the work of giants of old. He spake to Beowulf, while all held their peace, praised him for his courage, said that he would love him as his son, and bade him be a help to mankind, remembering not to glory in his own strength, for he held it from God, and death without more ado might subdue it altogether. "Many, many treasures," he said, "must pass from me to you to-morrow, but now rest and feast."

Gladly Beowulf sat down to the banquet, and well he liked the thought of the rest.

When day dawned, he bade the King farewell with noble words, promising to help him in time of need. Hrothgar with tears and embraces let him go, giving him fresh gifts of hoarded jewels. He wept, for he loved Beowulf well, and knew he would never see him any more.

The coastguard saw the gallant warriors coming, bade them welcome, and led them to their ship. The wind whistled in the sails, and a pleasant humming sound was heard as the good ship sped on her way. So Beowulf returned home, having done mighty deeds and gained great honour.

In due time Beowulf himself became King, and well he governed the land for fifty years. Then trouble came.

A slave, fleeing from his master, stumbled by an evil chance into the den of a dragon. There he saw a dazzling hoard of gold, guarded by the dragon for three hundred winters. The treasure tempted him, and he carried off a tankard of gold to give to his master, to make peace with him.

The dragon had been sleeping, now he awoke, and sniffed the scent of an enemy along the rock. He hunted diligently over the ground; he wanted to find the man who had done the mischief in his sleep. In his rage he swung around the treasure mound, dashing into it now and again to seek the jewelled tankard. He found it hard to wait until evening came, when he meant to avenge with fire the loss of his treasure.

Presently the sun sank, and the dragon had his will. He set forth, burning all the cheerful homes of men: his rage was felt far and wide. Before dawn he shot back again to his dark home, trusting in his mound and in his craft to defend himself.

Now Beowulf heard that his own home had been burnt to the ground. It was a great grief to him, almost making him break out in a rage against Providence. His breast heaved with anger.

He meant to rid his country of the plague, and to fight the dragon single handed. He would have thought it shame to seek him with a large band, he who, as a lad, had killed Grendel and his kin. As he armed for the fray, many thoughts filled his mind; he remembered the days of his youth

and manhood. "I fought many wars in my youth," he said, "and now that I am aged, and the keeper of my people, I will yet again seek the enemy and do famously."

He bade his men await him on the mountain-side. They were to see which of the two would come alive out of the tussle.

There the aged King beheld where a rocky archway stood, with a stream of fire gushing from it; no one could stand there and not be scorched. He gave a great shout, and the dragon answered with a hot breath of flame. Beowulf, with drawn sword, stood well up to his shield, when the burning dragon, curved like an arch, came headlong upon him. The shield saved him but little; he swung up the sword to smite the horrible monster, but its edge did not bite. Sparks flew around him on every side; he saw that the end of his days had come.

His men crept away to the woods to save their lives. One, and one only, Wiglaf by name, sped through the smoke and flame to help his lord.

"My Lord Beowulf!" he cried, "with all your might defend life, I will support you to the utmost."

The dragon came on in fury; in a trice the flames consumed Wiglaf's shield, but, nothing daunted, he stepped under the shelter of Beowulf's, as his own fell in ashes about him. The King remembered his strength of old, and he smote with his sword with such force that it stuck in the monster's head, while splinters flew all around. His hand was so strong that, as men used to say, he broke any sword in using it, and was none the worse for it.

Now, for the third time, the dragon rushed upon him, and seized him by the neck with his poisonous fangs. Wiglaf, with no thought for himself, rushed forward, though he was scorched with the flames, and smote the dragon lower down than Beowulf had done. With such effect the sword entered the dragon's body that from that moment the fire began to cease.

The King, recovering his senses, drew his knife and ended the monster's life. So these two together destroyed the enemy of the people. To Beowulf that was the greatest moment of his life, when he saw his work completed.

The wound that the dragon had given him began to burn and swell, for the poison had entered it. He knew that the tale of his days was told. As he rested on a stone by the mound, he pondered thoughtfully, looking on the cunning work of the dwarfs of old, the stone arches on their rocky pillars. Wiglaf, with tender care, unloosed his helmet and brought him water, Beowulf discoursing the while: "Now I would gladly have given my armour to my son, had God granted me one. I have ruled this people fifty years, and no King has dared attack them. I have held my own with justice, and no friend has lost his life through me. Though I am sick with deadly wounds, I have comfort in this. Now go quickly, beloved Wiglaf, show me the ancient wealth that I have won for my people, the gold and brilliant gems, that I may then contentedly give up my life."

Quickly did Wiglaf enter the mound at the bidding of his master. On every side he saw gold and jewels and choice vases, helmets and bracelets, and over head, a marvellous banner, all golden, gleaming with light, so that he could scan the surface of the floor and see the curious treasured hoards. He filled his lap full of golden cups and platters, and also took the brilliant banner.

He hastened to return with his spoils, wondering, with pain, if he should find his King still alive. He bore his treasures to him, laid them on the ground, and again sprinkled him with water. "I thank God," said the dying King, "that I have been permitted to win this treasure for my people; now they will have all that they need. But I cannot be any longer here. Bid my men make a lofty mound on the headland overlooking the sea, and there place my ashes. In time to come men shall call it Beowulf's Barrow, it shall tower aloft to guide sailors over the stormy seas."

The brave King took from his neck his golden collar, took his helmet and his coronet, and gave them to his true knight, Wiglaf. "Fate has swept all my kinsmen away," said he, "and now I must follow them."

That was his last word, as his soul departed from his bosom, to join the company of the just.

Of all Kings in the world, he was, said his men, the gentlest to his knights and the most desirous of honour.

CHAPTER III

CHILDE HORN

There dwelt once in Southland a King named Altof, who was rich, powerful, and gentle. His Queen was named Gotthild, and they had a young son called Horn. The rain never rained, the sun never shone upon a fairer boy; his skin was like roses and lilies, and as clear as glass; and he was as brave as he was handsome. At fifteen years old his like was not to be seen in all the kingdoms around. He had a band of play-fellows, twelve boys of noble birth, but not one of them could throw the ball so high as Horn. Out of the twelve, two were his special companions, and one of them, Athulf, was the best of the company, while the other, Figold, was altogether the worst.

It came to pass one summer morning that good King Altof was riding on the sea-shore with only two attendants, and he looked out to sea and saw fifteen ships lying in the offing. It was the heathen Vikings who had come from Northland, bent on plundering Christian lands. When these saw the three Norsemen, they swarmed on to shore like a pack of wolves, all armed and full of battle fury. They slew the King and his knights, and made themselves masters of the whole land.

Queen Gotthild wept much for her lord, and more for her son, Childe Horn, who could not now ascend his father's throne. She clad herself in mourning garments, the meanest she could find, and went to dwell in a cave, where she prayed night and day for her son, that he might be preserved from the malice of his enemies, at whose mercy he and his comrades lay. At first they thought to have slain him, but one of their leaders was touched by his glorious beauty, and so he said to the boy, "Horn, you are a fair stripling and a bold, and when you come to years, you and your band here, you are like to prove too many for us, so I am going to put you all in a boat and let it drift out to sea—where may the gods preserve you, or else send you to the bottom; but, for all our sakes, you cannot remain here."

Then they led the boys down to the shore, placed them in a little skiff, and pushed it off from the land. All but Horn wrung their hands in fear. The waves rose high, and, as the boat was tossed up and down, the lads gave themselves up for lost, not knowing whither they were driven; but when the morning of the second day broke, Horn sprang up from where he sat in the forepart of the skiff, crying, "I hear the birds sing, and I see the grass growing green—we are at the land!" Then they sprang right gladly on shore, and Horn called after the boat as it floated away, "A good voyage to thee, little boat! May wind and wave speed thee back to Southland. Greet all who knew me, and chiefly the good Queen Gotthild, my mother. And tell the heathen King that some day he shall meet his death at my hand."

Then the boys went on till they came to a city, where reigned King Aylmer of Westland—whom God reward for his kindness to them. He asked them in mild words whence they came, "for in good sooth," said he, "never have I seen so well-favoured a company"; and Horn answered proudly, "We are of good Christian blood, and we come from Southland, which has just been raided by pagans, who slew many of our people, and sent us adrift in a boat, to be the sport of the winds and waves. For a day and a night we have been at sea without a rudder; and now we have been cast upon your coast, you may enslave or slay us, if but, it please thee, show us mercy."

Then the good King asked, "What is your name, my child?" and the boy answered. "Horn, at your pleasure, my Lord King; and if you need a servant, I will serve you well and truly."

"Childe Horn," said the King, "you bear a mighty name for one so young and tender.

"Over hills and valleys oft the horn has rung,
In the royal palace long the horn has hung.
So shall thy name, O Hornchild, through every land resound,
And the fame of thy wondrous beauty in all the West be found."

So Horn found great favour with the King, and he put him in charge of Athelbrus, the house-steward, that he might teach him all knightly duties, and he spared no pains with him, nor yet with his companions; but well trained as they all were, Horn was far ahead of them both in stature and noble bearing. Even a stranger looking at him could guess his lofty birth, and the splendour of his marvellous beauty lit up all the palace; while he won all hearts, from the meanest grooms to the greatest of the court ladies.

Now the fairest thing in that lordly court was the King's only daughter, Riminild. Her mother was dead, and she was well-beloved of her father, as only children are. Not a word had she ever ventured to speak to Horn when she saw him among the other knights at the great feasts, but day and night she bore his image in her heart. One night she dreamed that he entered her apartments (and she wondered much at his boldness), and in the morning she sent for Athelbrus, the house-steward, and bade him conduct Horn into her presence. But he went to Athulf, who was the pure minded and true one of Horn's two chosen companions, while Figold, the other, was a wolf in sheep's clothing, and said to him, "You shall go with me in Horn's stead to the Princess."

So he went, and she, not recognising him in the ill-lighted room, stretched out her hand to him, crying, "Oh, Horn, I have loved you long. Now plight me your troth."

But Athulf whispered to her, "Hold! I am not Horn. I am but his friend, Athulf, as unlike him as may well be. Horn's little finger is fairer than my whole body; and were he dead, or a thousand miles off, I would not play him false."

Then Riminild rose up in anger and glared upon the old steward, crying, "Athelbrus, you wicked man, out of my sight, or I shall hate you for evermore! All shame and ill befall you if you bring me not Childe Horn himself!"

"Lady and Princess," answered Athelbrus warily, "listen, and I will tell you why I brought Athulf. The King entrusted Horn to my care, and I dread his anger. Now be not angry with me, and I will fetch him forthwith."

Then he went away, but, instead of Horn, this time he called Figold, the deceiver, and said to him, "Come with me, instead of Horn, to the royal Princess. Do not betray yourself, lest we both suffer for it."

Willingly went the faithless one with him, but to Figold the maid held not out her hand—well she knew that he was false, and she drove him from her presence in rage and fury. Athelbrus feared her anger, and said to himself, "To make my peace with her I must now send her the true Horn." He found him in the hall presenting the wine cup to the King, and whispered to him, "Horn, you are wanted in the Princess's apartments"; and when Horn heard this his hand holding the full goblet so trembled that the wine ran over the edge. He went straight into the presence of the royal maiden, and as he knelt before her his beauty seemed to light up the room.

"Fair befall thee and thy maidens, O Lady!" said he. "The house-steward has sent me hither to ask thy will."

Then Riminild stood up, her cheeks red as the dawn, and told him of her love; and Horn took counsel with himself how he should answer her.

"May God in heaven bless him whom thou weddest, whoever he may be," he said. "I am but a foundling, and the King's servant to boot—it would be against all rule and custom were he to wed me with thee."

When Riminild heard this her heart died within her, and she fell fainting on the floor; but Horn lifted her up, and advised her to request her father that he might now receive knighthood. "An then," said he, "I will win you by my brave deeds."

When she heard that, she recovered herself and said, "Take my ring here to Master Athelbrus, and bid him from me ask the King to make you a knight."

So Horn went and told all to Athelbrus, who sought the King forthwith, and said, "To-morrow is a festival; I counsel thee to admit Horn to knighthood." And the King was pleased, and said, "Good! Horn is well worthy of it. I will create him a knight to-morrow, and he himself shall confer it on his twelve companions."

The next day the newly knighted one went to Riminild's bower, and told her that now he was her own true knight, and must go forth to do brave deeds in her name, and she said she would trust him evermore, and she gave him a gold ring with her name graven on it, which would preserve him from all evil. "Let this remind thee of me early and late," she said, "and thou canst never fall by treachery." And then they kissed each other, and she closed the door behind him, with tears.

The other knights were feasting and shouting in the King's hall, but Horn went to the stable, armed from head to foot. He stroked his coal-black steed, then sprang upon his back and rode off, his armour ringing as he went. Down to the seashore he galloped, singing joyously and praying God soon to send him the chance to do some deed of knightly daring, and there he met a band of pagan marauders, who had just landed from their pirate-ship. Horn asked them civilly what they wanted there, and one of the pagans answered insolently, "To conquer the land and slay all that dwell in it, as we did to King Altof, whose son now serves a foreign lord."

Horn, on hearing this, drew his sword and struck off the fellow's head; then he thought of his dead father and of his mother in her lonely cave; he looked on his ring and thought of Riminild, and dashed among the pirates, laying about him right and left, till, I warrant you, there were few of them left to tell the tale. "This," he cried, "is but the foretaste of what will be when I return to my own land and avenge my father's death!"

Then he rode back to the palace and told the King how he had slain the invaders, and "Here," he said, "is the head of the leader, to requite thee, O King, for granting me knighthood."

The next day the King went a-hunting in the forest, and the false Figold rode at his side, but Horn stayed at home. And Figold spoke to the King out of his wicked heart and said, "I warn thee, King Aylmer, Horn is plotting to dishonour thee—to rob thee of thy daughter and of thy kingdom to boot. He is even now plotting with her in her bower."

Then the King galloped home in a rage, and burst into Riminild's bower, and there, sure enough, he found Horn, as Figold had said. "Out of my land, base foundling!" he cried. "What have you to do with the young Queen here?"

And Horn departed without a word. He went to the stable, saddled his horse, then he girded on his sword and returned to the palace; he crossed the hall and entered Riminild's apartments for the last time. "Lady," he said, "I must go forth to strange lands for seven years; at the end of that time I will either return or send a messenger; but if I do neither, you may give yourself to another, nor wait longer for me. Now kiss me a long farewell."

Riminild promised to be true to him, and she took a gold ring from her finger, saying, "Wear this above the other which I gave you, or if you grow weary of them, fling them both away, and watch to see if its two stones change colour; for if I die, the one will turn pale, and if I am false, the other will turn red."

"Riminild," said Childe Horn, "I am yours for evermore! There is a pool of clear water under a tree in the garden—go there daily and look for my shadow in the water. If you see it not, know that I am unaltered; and if you see it, know that I no longer love thee."

Then they embraced and kissed each other, and Horn parted from her, and rode down to the coast, and took passage on a ship bound for Ireland. When he landed there, two of its King's sons met him, and took him to their father, good King Thurstan, before whom Horn bowed low, and the King bade him welcome, and praised his beauty, and asked his name.

"My name is Good Courage," said Horn boldly, and the King was well pleased.

Now, at Christmas, King Thurstan made a great feast, and in the midst of it one rushed in crying, "Guests, O King! We are besieged by five heathen chiefs, and one of them proclaims himself ready to fight any three of our knights single handed to-morrow at sunrise."

"That would be but a sorry Christmas service," said King Thurstan; "who can advise me how best to answer them?" Then Horn spoke up from his seat at the table, "If these pagans are ready to fight, one against three, what may not a Christian dare? I will adventure myself against them all, and one after another they shall go down before my good sword."

Heavy of heart was King Thurstan that night, and little did he sleep. But "Sir Good Courage" rose early and buckled on his armour. Then he went to the King and said, "Now, Sir King, come with me to the field, and I will show you in what coin to pay the demands of these heathen." So they rode on together in the twilight, till they came to the green meadow, where a giant was waiting for them. Horn greeted him with a blow that brought him to the ground at once, and ran another giant through the heart with his sword; and when their followers saw that their leaders were slain, they turned and fled back to the shore, but Horn tried to cut them off from their ships, and in the scrimmage the King's two sons fell. At this Horn was sore grieved, and he fell upon the pagans in fury, and slew them right and left, to avenge the King and himself.

Bitterly wept King Thurstan when his sons were brought home to him on their biers; there was great mourning for the young princes, who were buried with high honours in the vault under the church. Afterwards the King called his knights together and said to Horn, "Good Courage, but for you we were all dead men. I will make you my heir; you shall wed my daughter Swanhild, who is bright and beautiful as the sunshine, and shall reign here after me."

So Horn lived there for six years, always under the name of Good Courage, but he sent no messenger to Riminild, not wishing any man to know his secret, and consequently Riminild was in great sorrow on his account, not knowing whether he was true to her or not. Moreover, the King of a neighbouring country sought her hand in marriage, and her father now fixed a day for the wedding.

One morning, as Horn was riding to the forest, he saw a stranger standing in the wayside, who, on being questioned said, "I come from Westland, and I seek the Knight Sir Horn. Riminild the maiden is in sore heaviness of spirit, bewailing herself day and night, for on Sunday next she is to be married to a King."

Then was Horn's grief as great as that of Riminild. His eyes overflowed with tears. He looked at his ring with its colored stones; the one had not turned red, but it seemed to him that the other was turning pale. "Well knew my heart that you would keep your troth with me, Riminild," said he to himself, "and that never would that stone grow red; but this paling one bodes ill. And you doubtless have often looked in the garden pool for my shadow, and have seen naught there but your own lovely image. *That* shadow shall never come, O sweet love, Riminild, to prove to you that your love is false, but he himself shall come and drive all shadows away.

"And you, my trusty messenger," he said aloud, "go back to maid Riminild and tell her that she shall indeed wed a King next Sunday, for before the church bells ring for service I will be with her."

The Princess Riminild stood on the beach and looked out to sea, hoping to see Horn coming in his helmet and shield to deliver her; but none came, save her own messenger, who was washed up on the shore—drowned! And she wrung her hands in her anguish.

Horn had gone immediately to King Thurstan, and, after saluting him, told him his real name and his present trouble. "And now, O King," said he, "I pray you to reward me for all my services by helping me to get possession of Riminild. Your daughter, Swanhild, will I give to a man the best and faithfullest ever called to the ranks of knighthood."

Then said the King, "Horn, follow your own counsel"; then he sent for his knights, and many of them followed Horn, so that he had a thousand or more at his command. The wind favoured their course, and in a few hours the ships cast anchor on the shore of Westland. Horn left his forces in a wood while he went on to learn what was doing. Well did he know the way, and lightly did he leap

over the stones. As he went he met a pilgrim, and asked him the latest news, who answered, "I come from a wedding feast—but the bride's true love is far away, and she only weeps. I could not stay to see her grief."

"May God help me!" said Horn: "but this is sorrowful news. Let us change garments, good pilgrim. I must go to the feast, and once there I vow. I will give them something by which to remember Horn!" He blackened his eyebrows, and took the pilgrim's hat and staff, and when he reached the gate of the palace, the porter was for turning him back, but Horn took him up and flung him over the bridge, and then went on to the hall where the feast was being held. He sat down among the lowest, on the beggar's bench, and glowered round from under his blackened eyebrows. At a distance he saw Riminild sitting like one in a dream; then she rose to pour out mead and wine for the knights and squires, and Horn cried out, "Fair Queen, if ye would have God's blessing, let the beggar's turn come next."

She set down the flagon of wine, and poured him out brown beer in a jug, saying: "There, drink that off at a draught, thou boldest of beggar men!" But he gave it to the beggars, his companions, saying "I am not come to drink jugs of beer, but goblets of wine. Fair Queen," he cried, "thou deemest me a beggar, but I am rather a fisherman, come to haul in my net, which I left seven years ago hanging from a fair hand here in Westland." Then was Riminild much troubled within herself, and she looked hard at Horn. She reached him the goblet and said, "Drink wine then, fisherman, and tell me who thou art."

He drank from the goblet, and then dropped into it the gold ring, and said, "Look, O Queen, at what thou findest in the goblet, and ask no more who I am." The Queen withdrew into her bower with her four maidens, and when she saw the gold ring that she had given to Horn, she was sore distressed, and cried out, "Childe Horn must be dead, for this is his ring."

She then sent one of her waiting-maids to command the stranger to her presence, and Horn, all unrecognised, appeared before her. "Tell me, honest pilgrim, where thou gottest this ring?" she asked him.

"I took it," said he, "from the finger of a man whom I found lying sick unto death in a wood. Loudly he was bewailing himself and the lady of his heart, one Riminild, who should at this time have wedded him." As he spoke he drew his cap down over his eyes, which were full of tears.

Then Riminild cried, "Break, heart, in my bosom! Horn is no more—he who hath already caused thee so many tender pangs." She threw herself on her couch and called for a knife, to kill the bridegroom and herself.

Her maidens shrieked with fear, but Horn flung his arms around her and pressed her to his heart. Then he cast away hat and staff, and wiped the brown stain from his face, and stood up before his love in his own fair countenance, asking, "Dear love, Riminild, know thou me not now? Away with your grief and kiss me—I am Horn!—Horn, your true lover and born slave."

She gazed into his eyes. At first she could not believe that it was he, but at last she could doubt no longer; she fell upon his neck, and in the sweet greetings that followed were two sick hearts made whole.

"Horn, you miscreant! how could you play me such a trick?"

"Have patience, sweet love, maid Riminild, and I will tell you all. Now let me go and finish my work, and when it is done I will come and rest at your side."

So he left her, and went back to the forest, and Riminild sent for Athulf, who met her with a doleful countenance. "Athulf!" she cried, "rejoice with me! Horn has come—I tell you Horn is here!"

"Alas!" said Athulf, "that cannot be. Who hath brought thee such an idle tale? Day and night have I stood here watching for him, but he came not, and much I fear me the noble Horn is dead."

"I tell you he is living," she said—"aye, and more alive than ever. Go to the forest and find him—he is there with all his faithful followers."

Athulf made haste to the forest, still unbelieving, but soon his heart bounded for joy, for there rode Horn in his shining armour at the head of his troops. Athulf rode to his side, and they returned together to the city, where Riminild was watching them from her turret. And Horn pointed to her and cried to his company, "Knights, yonder is my bride—help me to win her!"

Then was there a fierce storming of the gate—the shock of it shook Riminild's tower—and Horn and his heroes burst, all unheralded, into the King's hall. Fierce and furious was the bridal dance that followed; the tumult of it rose up to Riminild, and she prayed, "God preserve my lover in this wild confusion!"

Right merrily danced her dancer, and all unscathed he flashed through the hall, thanks to his true love and God's care. King Aylmer and the bridegroom confronted him and the younger, the bridegroom King, asked him what he sought there. "I seek my bride," said he, "and if you do not give her up to me I will have your life."

"Better thou should have the bride than that," said the other; "though I would sooner be torn in pieces than give thee either." And he defended himself bravely, but it availed him naught. Horn struck off his head from his shoulders, so that it bounded across the hall. Then cried Horn to the other guests, "The dance is over!" after which he proclaimed a truce, and, throwing himself down on a couch, spake thus to King Aylmer: "I was born in Southland, of a royal race. The pagan Vikings slew King Altof, my father, and put me out to sea with my twelve companions. You did train me for the order of knighthood, and I have dishonoured it by no unworthy deeds, though you did drive me from your kingdom, thinking I meant to disgrace you through your daughter. But that which you credited me with I never contemplated. Accept me then, O King, for your son-in-law. Yet will I not claim my bride till I have won back my kingdom of Southland. That will I accomplish quickly, with the help of my brave knights and such others as I pray you to lend me, leaving in pledge therefor the fairest jewel in my crown, until King Horn shall be able to place Queen Riminild beside him on his father's throne."

As he spoke Riminild entered, and Horn took her hand and led her to her father, and the young couple stood before the old King—a right royal pair. Then King Aylmer spoke jestingly, "Truly I once did chide a young knight in my wrath, but never King Horn, whom I now behold for the first time. Never would I have spoken roughly to King Horn, much less forbidden him to woo a Princess."

Then all the knights and lords came offering their good wishes to the happy pair; and the old house-steward, Athelbrus, would have bent the knee to his former pupil, but Horn took the old man in his arms and embraced him, thanking him for all the pains he had taken with his breeding.

Horn's twelve companions came also, and did him homage as their sovereign, and he rejoiced to see them all, but especially Athulf the brave and true. "Athulf," he told him, "thou hast helped me to win my bride here, now come with me to Southland and help me to make a home for her. And you, too, shall win a lady—I have already chosen her; her name is Swanhild, and she will look fair even beside Riminild." Then did Athulf rejoice, but Figold, the traitor, was ready to sink into the ground with shame and envy.

Then Horn returned to his ship, taking Athulf with him, but Figold he left behind. Truly it is ill knowing what to do with a traitor, whether you take him to the field or leave him at home.

On went the ship before a favouring wind; the voyage lasted but four days. Horn landed at midnight, and he and Athulf went inland together. On the way they came upon a noble looking knight asleep under his shield, upon which a cross was painted, and Horn cried to him, "Awake, and tell us what they are doing here. Thou seemest to be a Christian, I trow, else would I have hewn thee in pieces with my sword!"

The good knight sprang up aghast, and said, "Against my will I am serving the heathen who rule here. I am keeping a place ready for Horn, the best loved of all heroes. Long I have wondered why he does not bestir himself to return and fight for his own. God give him power so to do till he slay every one of these miscreants. They put him out to sea, a tender boy, with his twelve playmates,

one of whom was my only son, Athulf. Dearly he loved Horn, and was beloved by him. Could I but see them both once more, I should feel that I could die in peace."

"Then rejoice," they told him, "for Horn and Athulf are here!"

Joyfully did the old man greet the youths; he embraced his son and bent the knee to Horn, and all three rejoiced together.

"Where is your company?" asked the old knight. "I suppose you two have come to explore the land. Well, your mother still lives, and if she knew you to be living would be beside herself with joy."

"Blessed be the day that I and my men landed here," said Horn. "We will catch these heathen dogs, or else tame them. We will speak to them in our own language."

Then Horn blew his horn, so that all on board the ship heard it and came on shore. As the young birds long for the dawn, so Horn longed for the fight that should free his country from her enemies. From morning to night the battle raged, till all the heathen, young and old, were slain, and young King Horn himself slew the pirate King. Then he went to church, with all his people, and an anthem was sung to the glory of God, and Horn gave thanks aloud for the restoration of his kingdom, after which he sought the place where his mother dwelt. How his heart wept for joy when he saw her! He placed a crown on her head, and arrayed her in rich robes, and brought her up to the palace. "Thou art glad to have thy child again," he said to her in the joy of his heart, "but I will make thee gladder still by bringing thee home a daughter, one who will please thee well." And he thought of his love, Riminild, with whom, however, things were just then going very much amiss.

For as soon as Horn had departed, the treacherous Figold had collected a great army of workmen and made them build him a tower in the sea, which could only be reached when the tide was out. Now about this time Horn had a dream, in which he saw Riminild on board a ship at sea, which presently went to pieces, and she tried to swim ashore, steering with her lily-white hand, while Figold, the traitor, sought to stop her with the point of his sword. Then he awoke and cried, "Athulf, true friend, we must away across the sea. Unless we make all speed some evil will befall us." And in the midst of a storm they set sail.

In the meantime Figold had left his tower and appeared in the presence of King Aylmer. Cunningly, out of his false heart spoke the traitor, "King Aylmer, Horn has sent me word that he would have his bride handed over to my care. He has regained his crown and realm and would fain have her there to be his Queen."

"Very well," said the King, "let her go with thee."

But Riminild was much displeased at the thought of being put into the hands of Figold, whom in her soul she would not trust.

"Why comes not Horn for me himself?" she asked. "I know not the way to his kingdom either by land or by sea."

"But I know it," said Figold, "and I will soon bring thee thither, most beautiful queen." But his wicked smile made her uneasy at heart.

"If Horn could not come himself," she said, "why did he not send Athulf, his faithful friend?" But this question pleased the traitor so little that he gave her no answer.

Her father blessed her, and she set forth, wringing her white hands.

Meanwhile, Horn, sailing from the south, was driven in shore by a storm, and he beheld Figold's high tower, and asked who had built such an ugly thing. He thought he heard a low murmuring as his ship flew past it before the wind, but knew not what it might be. Soon he saw the battlements of King Aylmer's palace rising in the distance; there Riminild should be, looking out for him, but all was bare and empty. It seemed to him as though a star were missing from heaven; and as he crossed the threshold the ill news was told him how Figold had carried off Riminild. Horn had no mind to linger with the King. "Come, Athulf, true friend," said he, "and help me to search for her." So they searched far and near, in vain, till at last Horn remembered that strange tower in the sea, and set sail for the lonely fortress where Figold had the fair princess in his evil keeping. "Now, my eleven

companions, and you, too, Athulf," said he, "abide here while I go up alone with my horn. God hath shown me how to order this attempt."

He left his sword on the ship, and took only a fishing line with a long hook. Then round and round the tower he walked, and he blew a loud blast out into the raging storm, until a head appeared out of a hole in the wall of the tower—it was that wicked knave Figold's; and Horn cast his line, and hauled the writhing traitor clean out of the tower. He whirled round the sea wolf at the end of the line, and swung him over the water by the sheer force of his arm, so that he was cast over to Athulf in the ship; and sore afraid was the traitor when the true men on board seized him.

Then Horn took up his bugle once more and sounded it so loudly that at the first blast the door was uncovered; at the second he could enter the tower; the third was heard as he led Riminild forth. Lightly did he clasp her round the waist and swing her into his boat, and then pulled for the ship.

He brought Riminild on board his ship, and called to his band, "Ho there, my trusty eleven! Our voyage is ended, and we will now go merrily home. And you, Athulf, my chosen and tried friend, shall now have your guerdon; I will bring you to your bride Swanhild, and Riminild and I will be wedded at the same time—the same wedding feast shall serve us both.

"And Riminild, my sweet pearl, whom I have rescued from the deep, not all that I have suffered on your account grieves me like the perfidy this false one wrought on you, my loving heart. Through him the goodly tale of my twelve followers is broken; now when they gather round the table, one seat will ever be empty. Must it ever be that no dozen of men can be got together but one will prove a traitor?"

Then he bade them "Set the traitor in the boat and let it drift out to sea, as we poor children were made to do aforetime. Let the waves bear away treachery as once they bore innocence—our ship will make better speed; and as for him, let him drift till he find a land where no traitors are."

CHAPTER IV

SIR GALAHAD

My good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
The horse and rider reel:
They reel, they roll in changing lists,
And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favours fall!
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall:
But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine:
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns:
Then by some secret shrine I ride;
I hear a voice but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
I find a magic bark;
I leap on board: no helmsman steers:
I float till all is dark.

A gentle sound, an awful light!
Three angels bear the Holy Grail:
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.
Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
And star-like mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
Thro' dreaming towns I go,
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, spins from brand and mail;
But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
And gilds the driving hail.

I leave the plain, I climb the height;
No branchy thicket shelter yields;
But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease,
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odors haunt my dreams;
And, stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony
Swells up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear:
"O just and faithful knight of God!
Ride on! the prize is near."
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
Until I find the Holy Grail.

CHAPTER V

RUSTEM AND SOHRAB

Give ear unto the combat of Sohrab against Rustem, though it be a tale replete with tears.

It came about that on a certain day Rustem arose from his couch, and his mind was filled with forebodings. He bethought him therefore to go out to the chase. So he saddled Rakush and made ready his quiver with arrows. Then he turned him unto the wilds that lie near Turan, even in the direction of the city of Samengan. And when he was come nigh unto it, he started a herd of asses and made sport among them till that he was weary of the hunt. Then he caught one and slew it and roasted it for his meal, and when he had eaten it and broken the bones for the marrow, he laid himself down to slumber, and Rakush cropped the pasture beside him.

Now while the hero was sleeping there passed by seven knights of Turan, and they beheld Rakush and coveted him. So they threw their cords at him to ensnare him. But Rakush, when he beheld their design, pawed the ground in anger, and fell upon them as he had fallen upon the lion. And of one man he bit off the head, and another he struck down under his hoofs, and he would have overcome them all, but they were too many. So they ensnared him and led him into the city, thinking in their hearts, "Verily a goodly capture have we made." But Rustem when he awoke from his slumbers was downcast and sore grieved when he saw not his steed, and he said unto himself:

"How can I stand against the Turks, and how can I traverse the desert alone?"

And his heart was full of trouble. Then he sought for the traces of the horse's hoofs, and followed them, and they led him even unto the gates of the city. Now when those within beheld Rustem, and that he came before them on foot, the King and the nobles came forth to greet him, and inquired of him how this was come about. Then Rustem told them how Rakush was vanished while he slumbered, and how he had followed his track even unto these gates. And he swore a great oath, and vowed that if his courser were not restored unto him many heads should quit their trunks. Then the King of Samengan, when he saw that Rustem was beside himself with anger, spoke words of soothing, and said that none of his people should do wrong unto the hero; and he begged him that he would enter into his house and abide with him until that search had been made, saying:

"Surely Rakush cannot be hid."

And Rustem was satisfied at these words, and cast suspicion from his spirit, and entered the house of the King, and feasted with him, and beguiled the hours with wine. And the King rejoiced in his guest, and encompassed him with sweet singers and all honour. And when the night was fallen the King himself led Rustem unto a couch perfumed with musk and roses, and he bade him slumber sweetly until the morning. And he declared to him yet again that all was well for him and for his steed.

Now when a portion of the night was spent, and the star of morning stood high in the arch of heaven, the door of Rustem's chamber was opened, and a murmur of soft voices came in from the threshold. And there stepped within a slave bearing a lamp perfumed with amber, and a woman whose beauty was veiled came after her. And as she moved musk was scattered from her robes. And the women came nigh unto the bed of the hero heavy with wine and slumber. And he was amazed when he saw them. And when he had roused him somewhat he spake and said:

"Who are thou, and what is thy name and thy desire, and what seekest thou from me in the dark night?"

Then the Peri-faced answered him, saying, "I am Tahmineh, the daughter of the King of Samengan, the race of the leopard and the lion, and none of the princes of this earth are worthy of my hand, neither hath any man seen me unveiled. But my heart is torn with anguish, and my spirit is tossed with desire, for I have heard of thy deeds of prowess, and how thou fearest neither Deev nor lion, neither leopard nor crocodile, and how thy hand is swift to strike, and how thou didst venture

alone into Mazinderan, and how wild asses are devoured of thee, and how the earth groaneth under the tread of thy feet, and how men perish at thy blows, and how even the eagle dareth not swoop down upon her prey when she beholdeth thy sword. These things and more have they told unto me, and mine eyes have yearned to look upon thy face. And now hath God brought thee within the gates of my father, and I am come to say unto thee that I am thine if thou wilt hear me, and if thou wilt not, none other will I espouse. And consider, O Pehliva, how that love has obscured mine understanding and withdrawn me from the bosom of discretion, yet peradventure God will grant unto me a son like to thee for strength and valour, to whom shall be given the empire of the world. And if thou wilt listen unto me, I will lead forth before thee Rakush thy steed, and I will place under thy feet the land of Samengan."

Now while this moon of beauty was yet speaking, Rustem regarded her. And he saw that she was fair, and that wisdom abode in her mind; and when he heard of Rakush, his spirit was decided within him, and he held that this adventure could not end save gloriously. So he sent a Mubid unto the King and demanded the hand of Tahmineh from her father. And the King, when he heard the news, was rejoiced, and gave his daughter unto the Pehliva, and they concluded an alliance according to custom and the rites. And all men, young and old, within the house and city of the King were glad at this alliance, and called down blessings upon Rustem.

Now Rustem, when he was alone with the Peri-faced, took from his arm an onyx that was known unto all the world. And he gave it to her, and said:

"Cherish this jewel, and if Heaven cause thee to give birth unto a daughter, fasten it within her locks, and it will shield her from evil; but if it be granted unto thee to bring forth a son, fasten it upon his arm, that he may wear it like his father. And he shall be strong as Keriman, of stature like unto Saum the son of Neriman, and of grace of speech like unto Zal, my father."

The Peri-faced, when she had heard these words, was glad in his presence. But when the day was passed there came in unto them the King her father, and he told Rustem how that tidings of Rakush were come unto his ears, and how that the courser would shortly be within the gates. And Rustem, when he heard it, was filled with longing after his steed, and when he knew that he was come he hastened forth to caress him. And with his own hands he fastened the saddle, and gave thanks unto Ormuzd, who had restored his joy between his hands. Then he knew that the time to depart was come. And he opened his arms and took unto his heart Tahmineh the fair of face, and he bathed her cheek with his tears and covered her hair with kisses. Then he flung him upon Rakush, and the swift-footed bare him quickly from out of her sight. And Tahmineh was sorrowful exceedingly, and Rustem too was filled with thoughts as he turned him back unto Zaboulistan. And he pondered this adventure in his heart, but to no man did he speak of what he had seen or done.

Now when nine moons had run their course there was born unto Tahmineh a son in the likeness of his father, a babe whose mouth was filled with smiles, wherefore men called him Sohrab. And when he numbered but one month he was like unto a child of twelve, and when he numbered five years he was skilled in arms and all the arts of war, and when ten years were rolled above his head there was none in the land that could resist him in the games of strength. Then he came before his mother and spake words of daring. And he said:

"Since I am taller and stouter than my peers, teach unto me my race and lineage, and what I shall say when men ask me the name of my sire. But if thou refuse an answer unto my demands, I will strike thee out from the rolls of the living."

When Tahmineh beheld the ardour of her son, she smiled in her spirit because that his fire was like to that of his father. And she opened her mouth and said:

"Hear my words, O my son, and be glad in thine heart, neither give way in thy spirit to anger. For thou art the offspring of Rustem, thou art descended from the seed of Saum and Zal, and Neriman was thy forefather. And since God made the world it hath held none like unto Rustem, thy sire."

Then she showed to him a letter written by the Pehliva, and gave to him the gold and jewels Rustem had sent at his birth. And she spake and said:

"Cherish these gifts with gratitude, for it is thy father who hath sent them. Yet remember, O my son, that thou close thy lips concerning these things; for Turan groaneth under the hand of Afrasiyab, and he is foe unto Rustem the glorious. If, therefore, he should learn of thee, he would seek to destroy the son for hatred of the sire. Moreover, O my boy, if Rustem learned that thou wert become a mountain of valour, perchance he would demand thee at my hands, and the sorrow of thy loss would crush the heart of thy mother."

But Sohrab replied, "Nought can be hidden upon earth for aye. To all men are known the deeds of Rustem, and since my birth be thus noble, wherefore hast thou kept it dark from me so long? I will go forth with an army of brave Turks and lead them unto Iran, I will cast Kai Kaous from off his throne, I will give to Rustem the crown of the Kaianides, and together we will subdue the land of Turan, and Afrasiyab shall be slain by my hands. Then will I mount the throne in his stead. But thou shalt be called Queen of Iran, for since Rustem is my father and I am his son no other kings shall rule in this world, for to us alone behoveth it to wear the crowns of might. And I pant in longing after the battlefield, and I desire that the world should behold my prowess. But a horse is needful unto me, a steed tall and strong of power to bear me, for it beseemeth me not to go on foot before mine enemies."

Now Tahmineh, when she had heard the words of this boy, rejoiced in her soul at his courage. So she bade the guardians of the flocks lead out the horses before Sohrab her son. And they did as she had bidden, and Sohrab surveyed the steeds, and tested their strength like as his father had done before him of old, and he bowed them under his hand, and he could not be satisfied. And thus for many days did he seek a worthy steed. Then one came before him and told of a foal sprung from Rakush, the swift of foot. When Sohrab heard the tidings he smiled, and bade that the foal be led before him. And he tested it and found it to be strong. So he saddled it and sprang upon its back, and cried, saying:

"Now that I own a horse like thee, the world shall be made dark to many."

Then he made ready for war against Iran, and the nobles and warriors flocked around him. And when all was in order Sohrab came before his grandsire and craved his counsel and his aid to go forth into the land of Iran and seek out his father. And the King of Samengan, when he heard these wishes, deemed them to be just, and he opened the doors of his treasures without stint and gave unto Sohrab of his wealth, for he was filled with pleasure at this boy. And he invested Sohrab with all the honours of a King, and he bestowed on him all the marks of his good pleasure.

Meantime a certain man brought news unto Afrasiyab that Sohrab was making ready an army to fall upon Iran, and to cast Kai Kaous from off his throne. And he told Afrasiyab how the courage and valour of Sohrab exceeded words. And Afrasiyab, when he heard this, hid not his contentment, and he called before him Human and Barman, the doughty. Then he bade them gather together an army and join the ranks of Sohrab, and he confided to them his secret purpose, but he enjoined them tell no man thereof. For he said:

"Into our hands hath it been given to settle the course of the world. For it is known unto me that Sohrab is sprung from Rustem the Pehliva, but from Rustem must it be hidden who it is that goeth out against him, then peradventure he will perish by the hands of this young lion, and Iran, devoid of Rustem, will fall a prey into my hands. Then we will subdue Sohrab also, and all the world will be ours. But if it be written that Sohrab fall under the hand of Tehemten, then the grief he shall endure when he shall learn that he hath slain his son will bring him to the grave for sorrow."

So spake Afrasiyab in his guile, and when he had done unveiling his black heart he bade the warriors depart unto Samengan. And they bare with them gifts of great price to pour before the face of Sohrab. And they bare also a letter filled with soft words. And in the letter Afrasiyab lauded Sohrab for his resolve, and told him how that if Iran be subdued the world would henceforth know peace,

for upon his own head should he place the crown of the Kaianides; and Turan, Iran, and Samengan should be as one land.

When Sohrab had read this letter, and saw the gifts and the aid sent out to him, he rejoiced aloud, for he deemed that now none could withstand his might. So he caused the cymbals of departure to be clashed, and the army made them ready to go forth. Then Sohrab led them into the land of Iran. And their track was marked by desolation and destruction, for they spared nothing that they passed. And they spread fire and dismay abroad, and they marched on unstayed until they came unto the White Castle, the fortress wherein Iran put its trust.

Now the guardian of the castle was named Hujir, and there lived with him Gustahem the grave, but he was grown old, and could aid no longer save with his counsels. And there abode also his daughter Gurdafrid, a warlike maid, firm in the saddle, and practised in the fight. Now when Hujir beheld from afar a dusky cloud of armed men he came forth to meet them. And Sohrab, when he saw him, drew his sword, and demanded his name, and bade him prepare to meet his end. And he taunted him with rashness that he was come forth thus unaided to stand against a lion. But Hujir answered Sohrab with taunts again, and vowed that he would sever his head from his trunk and send it for a trophy unto the Shah. Yet Sohrab only smiled when he heard these words, and he challenged Hujir to come near. And they met in combat, and wrestled sore one with another, and stalwart were their strokes and strong; but Sohrab overcame Hujir as though he were an infant, and he bound him and sent him captive unto Human.

But when those within the castle learned that their chief was bound they raised great lamentation, and their fears were sore. And Gurdafrid, too, when she learned it, was grieved, but she was ashamed also for the fate of Hujir. So she took forth burnished mail and clad herself therein, and she hid her tresses under a helmet of Roum, and she mounted a steed of battle and came forth before the walls like to a warrior. And she uttered a cry of thunder, and flung it amid the ranks of Turan, and she defied the champions to come forth to single combat. And none came, for they beheld her how she was strong, and they knew not that it was a woman, and they were afraid. But Sohrab, when he saw it, stepped forth and said:

"I will accept thy challenge, and a second prize will fall into my hands."

Then he girded himself and made ready for the fight. And the maid, when she saw he was ready, rained arrows upon him with art, and they fell quick like hail, and whizzed about his head; and Sohrab, when he saw it, could not defend himself, and was angry and ashamed. Then he covered his head with his shield and ran at the maid. But she, when she saw him approach, dropped her bow and couched a lance, and thrust at Sohrab with vigour, and shook him mightily, and it wanted little and she would have thrown him from his seat. And Sohrab was amazed, and his wrath knew no bounds. Then he ran at Gurdafrid with fury, and seized the reins of her steed, and caught her by the waist, and tore her armour, and threw her upon the ground. Yet ere he could raise his hand to strike her, she drew her sword and shivered his lance in twain, and leaped again upon her steed. And when she saw that the day was hers, she was weary of further combat, and she sped back unto the fortress. But Sohrab gave rein unto his horse, and followed after her in his great anger. And he caught her, and seized her, and tore the helmet off her head, for he desired to look upon the face of the man who could withstand the son of Rustem. And lo! when he had done so, there rolled forth from the helmet coils of dusky hue, and Sohrab beheld it was a woman that had overcome him in the fight. And he was confounded. But when he had found speech he said:

"If the daughters of Iran are like to thee, and go forth unto battle, none can stand against this land."

Then he took his cord and threw it about her, and bound her in its snare, saying:

"Seek not to escape me, O moon of beauty, for never hath prey like unto thee fallen between my hands."

Then Gurdafrid, full of wile, turned unto him her face that was unveiled, for she beheld no other means of safety, and she said unto him:

"O hero without flaw, is it well that thou shouldst seek to make me captive, and show me unto the army? For they have beheld our combat, and that I overcame thee, and surely now they will gibe when they learn that thy strength was withstood by a woman. Better would it beseem thee to hide this adventure, lest thy cheeks have cause to blush because of me. Therefore let us conclude a peace together. The castle shall be thine, and all it holds; follow after me then, and take possession of thine own."

Now Sohrab, when he had listened, was beguiled by her words and her beauty, and he said:

"Thou dost wisely to make peace with me, for verily these walls could not resist my might."

And he followed after her unto the heights of the castle, and he stood with her before its gates. And Gustahem, when he saw them, opened the portal, and Gurdafrid stepped within the threshold, but when Sohrab would have followed after her she shut the door upon him. Then Sohrab saw that she had befooled him, and his fury knew no bounds. But ere he was recovered from his surprise she came out upon the battlements and scoffed at him, and counselled him to go back whence he was come; for surely, since he could not stand against a woman, he would fall an easy prey before Rustem, when the Pehliva should have learned that robbers from Turan were broken into the land. And Sohrab was made yet madder for her words, and he departed from the walls in his wrath, and rode far in his anger, and spread terror in his path. And he vowed that he would yet bring the maid into subjection.

In the meantime Gustahem the aged called before him a scribe, and bade him write unto Kai Kaous all that was come about, and how an army was come forth from Turan, at whose head rode a chief that was a child in years, a lion in strength and stature. And he told how Hujir had been bound, and how the fortress was like to fall into the hands of the enemy; for there were none to defend it save only his daughter and himself and he craved the Shah to come to their aid.

Albeit when the day had followed yet again upon the night, Sohrab made ready his host to fall upon the castle. But when he came near thereto he found it was empty, and the doors thereof stood open, and no warriors appeared upon its walls. And he was surprised, for he knew not that in the darkness the inmates were fled by a passage that was hidden under the earth. And he searched the building for Gurdafrid, for his heart yearned after her in love and he cried aloud:

"Woe, woe is me that this moon is vanished behind the clouds!"

Now when Kai Kaous had gotten the writing of Gustahem, he was sore afflicted and much afraid, and he called about him his nobles and asked their counsels. And he said:

"Who shall stand against this Turk? For Gustahem doth liken him in power unto Rustem, and saith he resembleth the seed of Neriman."

Then the warriors cried with one accord, "Unto Rustem alone can we look in this danger!"

And Kai Kaous hearkened to their voice, and he called for a scribe and dictated unto him a letter. And he wrote unto his Pehliva, and invoked the blessings of Heaven upon his head, and he told him all that was come to pass, and how new dangers threatened Iran, and how to Rustem alone could he look for help in his trouble. And he recalled unto Tehemten all that he had done for him in the days that were gone by, and he entreated him once again to be his refuge. And he said:

"When thou shalt receive this letter, stay not to speak the word that hangeth upon thy lips; and if thou bearest roses in thy hands, stop not to smell them, but haste thee to help us in our need."

Then Kai Kaous sent forth Gew with this writing unto Zaboulistan, and bade him neither rest nor tarry until he should stand before the face of Rustem. And he said—

"When thou hast done my behest, turn thee again unto me; neither abide within the courts of the Pehliva, nor linger by the roadside."

And Gew did as the Shah commanded, and took neither food nor rest till he set foot within the gates of Rustem. And Rustem greeted him kindly, and asked him of his mission; and when he had read the writing of the Shah, he questioned Gew concerning Sohrab. For he said:

"I should not marvel if such an hero arose in Iran, but that a warrior of renown should come forth from amid the Turks, I cannot believe it. But thou sayest none knoweth whence cometh this knight. I have myself a son in Samengan, but he is yet an infant, and his mother writeth to me that he rejoiceth in the sports of his age, and though he be like to become a hero among men, his time is not yet come to lead forth an army. And that which thou sayest hath been done; surely it is not the work of a babe. But enter, I pray thee, into my house, and we will confer together concerning this adventure."

Then Rustem bade his cooks make ready a banquet, and he feasted Gew, and troubled his head with wine, and caused him to forget cares and time. But when morn was come Gew remembered the commands of the Shah that he tarry not, but return with all speed, and he spake thereof to Rustem, and prayed him to make known his resolve. But Rustem spake, saying:

"Disquiet not thyself, for death will surely fall upon these men of Turan. Stay with me yet another day and rest, and water thy lips that are parched. For though this Sohrab be a hero like to Saum and Zal and Neriman, verily he shall fall by my hands."

And he made ready yet another banquet, and three days they caroused without ceasing. But on the fourth Gew arose with resolve, and came before Rustem girt for departure. And he said:

"It behoveth me to return, O Pehliva, for I bethink me how Kai Kaous is a man hard and choleric, and the fear of Sohrab weigheth upon his heart, and his soul burneth with impatience, and he hath lost sleep, and hath hunger and thirst on this account. And he will be wroth against us if we delay yet longer to do his behest."

Then Rustem said, "Fear not, for none on earth dare be angered with me."

But he did as Gew desired, and made ready his army, and saddled Rakush, and set forth from Zaboulistan, and a great train followed after him.

Now when they came nigh unto the courts of the Shah, the nobles came forth to meet them, and do homage before Rustem. And when they were come in, Rustem gat him from Rakush and hastened into the presence of his lord. But Kai Kaous, when he beheld him, was angry, and spake not, and his brows were knit with fury; and when Rustem had done obeisance before him, he unlocked the doors of his mouth, and words of folly escaped his lips. And he said:

"Who is Rustem, that he defieth my power and disregardeth my commands? If I had a sword within my grasp I would spilt his head like to an orange. Seize him, I command, and hang him upon the nearest gallows, and let his name be never spoken in my presence."

When he heard these words Gew trembled in his heart, but he said, "Dost thou set forth thy hand against Rustem?"

And the Shah when he heard it was beside himself, and he cried with a loud voice that Gew be hanged together with the other; and he bade Tus lead them forth. And Tus would have led them out, for he hoped the anger of the Shah would be appeased; but Rustem broke from his grasp and stood before Kai Kaous, and all the nobles were filled with fear when they saw his anger. And he flung reproaches at Kai Kaous, and he recalled to him his follies, and the march into Mazinderan and Hamaveran, and his flight into Heaven; and he reminded him how that but for Rustem he would not now be seated upon the throne of light. And he bade him threaten Sohrab the Turk with his gallows, and he said:

"I am a free man and no slave, and am servant alone unto God; and without Rustem Kai Kaous is as nothing, And the world is subject unto me, and Rakush is my throne, and my sword is my seal, and my helmet my crown. And but for me, who called forth Kai Kobad, thine eyes had never looked upon this throne. And had I desired it I could have sat upon its seat. But now am I weary of thy follies, and I will turn me away from Iran, and when this Turk shall have put you under his yoke I shall not learn thereof."

Then he turned him and strode from out the presence-chamber. And he sprang upon Rakush, who waited without, and he was vanished from before their eyes ere yet the nobles had rallied from their astonishment. And they were downcast and oppressed with boding cares, and they held counsel

among themselves what to do; for Rustem was their mainstay, and they knew that, bereft of his arm and counsel, they could not stand against this Turk. And they blamed Kai Kaous, and counted over the good deeds that Rustem had done for him, and they pondered and spake long. And in the end they resolved to send a messenger unto Kai Kaous, and they chose from their midst Gudarz the aged, and bade him stand before the Shah. And Gudarz did as they desired, and he spake long and without fear, and he counted over each deed that had been done by Rustem; and he reproached the Shah with his ingratitude, and he said how Rustem was the shepherd, and how the flock could not be led without its leader. And Kai Kaous heard him unto the end, and he knew that his words were the words of reason and truth, and he was ashamed of that which he had done, and confounded when he beheld his acts thus naked before him. And he humbled himself before Gudarz, and said:

"That which thou sayest, surely it is right."

And he entreated Gudarz to go forth and seek Rustem, and bid him forget the evil words of his Shah, and bring him back to the succor of Iran. And Gudarz hastened forth to do as Kai Kaous desired, and he told the nobles of his mission, and they joined themselves unto him, and all the chiefs of Iran went forth in quest of Rustem. And when they had found him, they prostrated themselves into the dust before him, and Gudarz told him of his mission, and he prayed him to remember that Kai Kaous was a man devoid of understanding, whose thoughts flowed over like to new wine that fermenteth. And he said:

"Though Rustem be angered against the King, yet hath the land of Iran done no wrong that it should perish at his hands. Yet, if Rustem save it not, surely it will fall under this Turk."

But Rustem said, "My patience hath an end, and I fear none but God. What is this Kai Kaous that he should anger me? and what am I that I have need of him? I have not deserved the evil words that he spake unto me, but now will I think of them no longer, but cast aside all thoughts of Iran."

When the nobles heard these words they grew pale, and fear took hold on their hearts. But Gudarz, full of wisdom, opened his mouth, and said:

"O Pehliva! the land, when it shall learn of this, will deem that Rustem is fled before the face of this Turk; and when men shall believe that Tehemten is afraid, they will cease to combat, and Iran will be downtrodden at his hands. Turn thee not, therefore, at this hour from thy allegiance to the Shah, and tarnish not thy glory by this retreat, neither suffer that the downfall of Iran rest upon thy head. Put from thee, therefore, the words that Kai Kaous spake in his empty anger, and lead us forth to battle against this Turk. For it must not be spoken that Rustem feared to fight a beardless boy."

And Rustem listened, and pondered these words in his heart, and knew that they were good. But he said:

"Fear hath never been known of me, neither hath Rustem shunned the din of arms, and I depart not because of Sohrab, but because that scorn and insult have been my recompense."

Yet when he had pondered a while longer, he saw that he must return unto the Shah. So he did that which he knew to be right, and he rode till he came unto the gates of Kai Kaous, and he strode with a proud step into his presence.

Now when the Shah beheld Rustem from afar, he stepped down from off his throne and came before Pehliva, and craved his pardon for that which was come about. And he said how he had been angered because Rustem had tarried in his coming, and how haste was his birthright, and how he had forgotten himself in his vexation. But now was his mouth filled with the dust of repentance. And Rustem said:

"The world is the Shah's, and it behoveth thee to do as beseemeth thee best with thy servants. And until old age shall my loins be girt in fealty unto thee. And may power and majesty be thine for ever!"

And Kai Kaous answered and said, "O my Pehliva, may thy days be blessed unto the end!"

Then he invited him to feast with him, and they drank wine till far into the night, and held counsel together how they should act; and slaves poured rich gifts before Rustem, and the nobles rejoiced, and all was well again within the gates of the King.

Then when the sun had risen and clothed the world with love, the clarions of war were sounded throughout the city, and men made them ready to go forth in enmity before the Turks. And the legions of Persia came forth at the behest of their Shah, and their countless thousands hid the earth under their feet, and the air was darkened by their spears. And when they were come unto the plains where stood the fortress of Hujir, they set up their tents as was their manner. So the watchman saw them from the battlements, and he set up a great cry. And Sohrab heard the cry, and questioned the man wherefore he shouted; and when he learned that the enemy were come, he rejoiced, and demanded a cup of wine, and drank to their destruction. Then he called forth Human and showed him the army, and bade him be of good cheer, for he said that he saw within its ranks no hero of mighty mace who could stand against himself. So he bade his warriors to a banquet of wine, and he said that they would feast until the time was come to meet their foes in battle. And they did as Sohrab said.

Now when night had thrown her mantle over the earth, Rustem came before the Shah and craved that he would suffer him to go forth beyond the camp that he might see what manner of man was this stripling. And Kai Kaous granted his request, and said that it was worthy a Pehliva of renown. Then Rustem went forth disguised in the garb of a Turk, and he entered the castle in secret, and he came within the chamber where Sohrab held his feast. Now when he had looked upon the boy he saw that he was like to a tall cypress of good sap, and that his arms were sinewy and strong like to the flanks of a camel, and that his stature was that of a hero. And he saw that round about him stood brave warriors. And slaves with golden bugles poured wine before them, and they were all glad, neither did they dream of sorrow. Then it came about that while Rustem regarded them, Zindeh changed his seat and came nigh unto the spot where Rustem was watching. Now Zindeh was brother unto Tahmineh, and she had sent him forth with her son that he might point out to him his father, whom he alone knew of all the army, and she did it that harm might not befall if the heroes should meet in battle. Now Zindeh, when he had changed his seat, thought that he espied a watcher, and he strode toward the place where Rustem was hid, and he came before him and said—

"Who art thou? Come forth into the light that I may behold thy face."

But ere he could speak further, Rustem had lifted up his hand and struck him, and laid him dead upon the ground.

Now Sohrab, when he saw that Zindeh was gone out, was disquieted, and he asked of his slaves wherefore the hero returned not unto the banquet. So they went forth to seek him, and when they had found him in his blood, they came and told Sohrab what they had seen. But Sohrab would not believe it; so he ran to the spot and bade them bring torches, and all the warriors and singing girls followed after him. Then when Sohrab saw that it was true he was sore grieved; but he suffered not that the banquet be ended, for he would not that the spirits of his men be damped with pity. So they went back yet again to the feast.

Meanwhile Rustem returned him to the camp, and as he would have entered the lines he encountered Gew, who went around to see that all was safe. And Gew, when he saw a tall man clad in the garb of a Turk, drew his sword and held himself ready for combat. But Rustem smiled and opened his mouth, and Gew knew his voice, and came to him and questioned him what he did without in the darkness. And Rustem told him. Then he went before Kai Kaous also and related what he had seen, and how no man like unto Sohrab was yet come forth from amid the Turks. And he likened him unto Saum, the son of Neriman.

Now when the morning was come, Sohrab put on his armour. Then he went unto a height whence he could look down over the camp of the Iranians. And he took with him Hujir, and spake to him, saying:

"Seek not to deceive me, nor swerve from the paths of truth. For if thou reply unto my questions with sincerity, I will loosen thy bonds and give thee treasures; but if thou deceive me, thou shalt languish till death in thy chains."

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