

With head and hair like snow, and black of face.
 With trenchant sword he smote her on the head, V. 1597
 Which with her body came down to the dust.
 Sight failed, so loured the sky when that witch died,
 While blast and black cloud veiled the sun and moon.
 The atheling clomb to a hill and shouted
 As 'twere a thunder-clap. Then Bishútan
 Came quickly with the host, and said: "Famed prince!
 No crocodile or witch, wolf, pard and lion,
 Can stand thy blows, and by that token thou
 Wilt be exalted still. Oh! may the world
 Desire thy love!"

The head-piece of Gurgsár
 Flamed at these triumphs of Asfandiyár.

§ 6

THE FIFTH STAGE

How Asfandiyár slew the Símurgh

The atheling laid face upon the ground
 Awhile before the Maker of the world,
 Then pitched his camp-enclosure in the wood.
 They spread the board in fitting mode and then
 Asfandiyár gave orders to the deathsman:—
 "Bring hither in his bonds that wretch Gurgsár."
 They brought him to the prince who, seeing him,
 Gave him three cups of royal wine. Now when
 The ruddy wine had gladdened him thus said
 Asfandiyár: "Thou wretched Turkman! mark
 Upon the tree the head of that old witch,
 'Who turneth,' so thou saidst, 'the plain to sea,
 And doth exalt her o'er the Pleiades.'
 And now what marvel shall I see next stage,

Judged by the standard of this witch?"

He answered:—

“O Elephant of war in battle-time!
 Upon this stage thou hast a harder task:
 Be more than ever cautious and alert.
 V. 1598 Thou wilt behold a mount, with head in air,
 And thereupon a bird imperious,
 One like a flying mountain, combative,
 And called Símurgh by merchants. With its claws
 It beareth off the elephant at sight,
 The pard on land, the crocodile from water,
 And feeleth not the effort. Weigh it not
 With wolf and witch. Upon its mountain-home
 It hath two young,¹ their wills to hers affined,
 And when it flieth the earth is impotent,
 The sun is put to shame. 'Twill profit thee
 To turn back for thou canst not strive against
 Símurgh and mountain-height.”

The hero laughed.

“A wonder!” he exclaimed. “I will sew up
 Its shoulders with mine arrows, cleave its breast
 With Indian scimitar, and bring its head
 From height to dust.”

When bright Sol showed its back,
 Which ruffled all the bosom of the west,
 The chief of warriors led the army forth,
 And pondered that account of the Símurgh.
 Thus he and host fared onward all the night.

Whenas the shining sun rose o'er the mountains
 The Lamp of time gave freshness to the earth,
 Transforming dale and plain. Asfandiyár
 Gave up the army to its chief² and took
 To steed and box and break. He sped along,
 Like an imperious blast, and spying in air
 A peak stayed in its shadow break and steed,

¹ “Il a deux petits qui sont grands comme lui” (Mohl). ² Bishútan.

Absorbed in contemplation. The Símurgh
 Marked from the mount the box, the troops behind it,
 And all their trumpeting, and, swooping down
 Like some dark cloud obscuring sun and moon,
 Essayed to seize the chariot with its talons,
 As leopard seizeth quarry, but transfixed
 Its legs and pinions with the swords, and all
 Its might and glory passed away. It beat
 Awhile with claws and beak while strength remained, V. 1599
 And then was still. On seeing this its young
 Flew off with screams and weeping tears of blood
 Down from the eyry, blurring every eye
 Beneath their shade. When the Símurgh thus sank
 With all its wounds and bathed steeds, box, and break
 In blood, Asfandiyár, all armed and shouting,
 Emerged and hewed to pieces with his sword
 That bird now mastered, once so masterful;
 Then prayed thus to the Maker who had given
 Such mastery to him in good and ill,
 And said: "O righteous Judge! Thou hast bestowed
 Upon me wisdom, puissance, and prowess,
 Hast driven out the sorcerers and been
 My Guide to every good."

With that arose

The sound of clarions, and Bishútan
 Set forward with the host. None could behold
 The desert for the bird, but only saw
 Its form and talons bathed in blood which covered
 The earth from range to range, and thou wouldst say:
 "The plain was lost in plumes!" Men saw the prince
 Blood-boltered, 'twas a sight to fray the moon,
 And all the captains, cavaliers of war,
 And mighty men applauded him. Anon
 Gurgsár heard tidings of that famed chief's triumph,
 Quaked, paled, and fared with tears and heart all
 anguish.

V. 1600 The world's king had the tent-enclosure pitched,
 His joyous warriors round him. Then to dine
 They spread brocade, took seat, and called for wine.

§ 7

THE SIXTH STAGE

How Asfandiyár passed through the Snow

Asfandiyár, the illustrious prince, then bade
 Gurgsár to come and gave him in succession
 Three cups of wine whereat his cheeks became
 Like bloom of fenugreek, and then the prince
 Addressed him: "Miscreant in mind and body!
 Observe the doings of this whirling world!
 Evanished are Símurgh and lion, wolf
 And dragon sharp of claw and valorous!"

Gurgsár then lifted up his voice and said:—
 "O famous, glorious Asfandiyár!
 God is thy Helper, O most fortunate!
 The royal Tree hath come to fruit; howbeit
 Tomorrow there confronteth thee a task
 That none in war expecteth. Thou wilt take
 No thought of mace or bow or sword, and see
 No opening for fight, no way of flight,
 For snow, a spear's length deep, will come upon thee,
 A crisis will confront thee, thou with all
 Thy famous army wilt be lost therein,
 O glorious Asfandiyár! No marvel
 If thou turn back, nor need my words offend thee;
 Thou wilt be guiltless of this army's blood,
 And quit this road for other. Sure am I
 That earth will rive beneath a mighty blast,
 The trees be levelled. E'en if thou shalt make
 At last thy way through to the plain beyond
 The next stage will be thirty leagues across,