

He wallowed in the dust and wept, exclaiming :—  
 “ Who could have slain that dragon if the World-lord  
 Had not assisted him ? ”

His soldiers too  
 Bent to the earth and praised the righteous Judge ;  
 But thus to find alive Asfandiyár,  
 Whom he thought dead, was grievous to Gurgsár.

## § 5

## THE FOURTH STAGE

*How Asfandiyár slew a Witch*

Asfandiyár pitched by the water-side  
 His tent-enclosure while the troops camped round him.  
 He set forth wine, called boon-companions,  
 Rose to his feet, and drank to Sháh Gushtásp,  
 Commanding too to bring Gurgsár who came  
 Before him, quaking. Then Asfandiyár  
 Gave him to drink three cups of royal wine,  
 Spake laughingly with him about the dragon,  
 And said : “ Thou worthless fellow ! now behold  
 How with its breath that dragon sucked us in !  
 When I go forward for another stage  
 What greater toils and troubles are in store ? ”

Gurgsár replied : “ O conquering prince ! thou hast  
 The fruit of thy good star. When thou alightest  
 Tomorrow at the stage a witch will come  
 To greet thee. She hath looked on many a host,  
 But quailed at none. She turneth waste to sea  
 At will and maketh sunset at mid day.  
 Men call her Ghúl, O Sháh ! Face not her toils  
 In these thy days of youth. Thou hast o'ercome  
 The dragon ; now turn back ; thou shouldst not bring  
 Thy name to dust.”

The atheling replied :—

“Tomorrow, knave! thou shalt recount my prowess,  
 For I will break the warlocks' backs and hearts,  
 So will I maul that witch, and trample down  
 Their heads by might of Him, the one just God.”

When day donned yellow weeds, and this world's  
 Lustre

Sank in the west, he marched on, packed the loads,  
 With prayer to God, the Giver of all good,  
 And led the army onward through the night.

When Sol had raised its golden casque, begemming  
 The Ram's face, and the champaign was all smiles,  
 The prince gave up the host to Bishútan,  
 And took a golden goblet filled with wine,  
 Called for a costly lute and, though he went  
 To battle, dight himself as for a feast.

He had in view a wood like Paradise;  
 Thou wouldst have said: “The sky sowed tulips  
 there.”

The sun saw not within it for the trees,  
 And streamlets like rose-water flowed around.

He lighted from his steed as seemed him good,  
 And, having chosen him a fountain's marge  
 Within the forest, grasped the golden goblet.

Now when his heart was gladdened with the wine  
 The hero took the lute upon his lap,  
 And out of all the fulness of his heart  
 Began to troll this ditty to himself:—

“Oh! never is it mine to see  
 Both wine and one to quaff with me,  
 But mine 'tis ever to behold  
 The lion and the dragon bold,  
 And not, from bales' clutch, liberty.

'Tis not my lot to look upon  
 On earth some glorious fay-cheeked one,  
 Yet now if God will but impart  
 A winsome breaker of the heart  
 The longing of mine own is won.”

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Now when she heard Asfandiyár the witch  
Grew like a rose in springtide, saying thus:—  
“The mighty Lion cometh to the toils  
With robe and lute and goblet filled with wine.”

Foul, wrinkled, and malevolent she plied  
Her magic arts amid the gloom and grew  
As beauteous as a Turkman maid, with cheek  
As 'twere brocade of Chín and musk-perfumed,  
Of cypress-height, a sun to look upon,  
With musky tresses falling to her feet.  
Her cheeks like rosaries, she drew anear  
Asfandiyár, with roses in her breast.  
The atheling, when he beheld her face,  
Plied song and wine and harp more ardently,  
And said: “O just and only God! Thou art  
Our Guide upon the mountain and the waste.  
I wanted even now a fay-faced maid  
Of beauteous form as my companion;  
The just Creator hath bestowed her on me,  
Oh! may my heart and pure soul worship Him.”

He plied her with musk-scented wine and made  
Her face a tulip-red. Now he possessed  
A goodly chain of steel which he had kept  
Concealed from her. Zarduhsht, who brought it  
down

From Paradise for Sháh Gushtásp, had bound it  
About the prince's arm. Asfandiyár  
Flung it around her neck; her strength was gone;  
She took a lion's form. The atheling  
Made at her with his scimitar, and said:—  
“Thou wilt not injure me though thou hast reared  
An iron mountain. Take thy proper shape,  
For now the answer that I make to thee  
Is with the scimitar.”

Within the chain  
There was a fetid hag, calamitous,

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,