

Thou hast another power than that of bonds ;
 Thou art my monarch and thou servest God.
 Doth ill become thee, for thy bonds would shame me
 For ever ? ”

But Asfandiyár replied :—

“ How long wilt thou talk idly ? ‘ Quit,’ thou sayest,
 ‘ God’s path and what the veteran Shah commandeth.’
 But he that goeth from the Shah’s behest
 Defraudeth God. Choose either fight or bond,
 And cease to utter words that are but fond.”

§ 27

How Rustam shot Asfandiyár in the Eyes with an Arrow

When Rustam knew that humbleness availed not V. 1711
 Before Asfandiyár he strung his bow,
 And set therein the shaft of tamarisk
 With baneful points, and said : “ O Lord of sun
 And moon, who makest knowledge, Grace, and strength
 To wax ! Thou seest my mind pure in intent,
 My soul, and self control, for much I toil
 To turn Asfandiyár from strife. Thou knowest
 That his contention is unjust, and how V. 1712
 His traffic with me is all fight and prowess ;
 So visit not my crime with retribution,
 O Maker of the moon and Mercury ! ”

Asfandiyár perceived him tarrying long
 From strife, and said to him : “ O famous Rustam !
 Thy soul is satiate of fight, but now
 Thou shalt behold the arrows of Gushtásp,
 Luhrásp’s own arrow-heads and lion-heart.”

Then Rustam quickly fitted to his bow
 The tamarisk-shaft as the Símurgh had bidden ;
 He struck Asfandiyár full in the eyes,
 And all the world grew dark before that chief ;

The straight-stemmed Cypress bent, intelligence
 And Grace abandoned him. The pious prince
 Fell prone, his bow of Chách dropped from his hands.
 He clutched his black steed by the mane and crest ;
 The battlefield was reddened with his blood.
 Said Rustam : "Thou hast brought this evil seed
 To fruit ! Thou art the man who said'st : ' My form
 Is brazen, and I dash high heaven to earth.'
 Yet through one arrow hast thou turned from strife,
 And fallen swooning on thy noble charger.
 Moreover now thy head will come to dust,
 And thy fond mother's heart will burn for thee."

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Meanwhile the famous prince had tumbled headlong
 Down from his black steed's back and lay awhile
 Till he recovered consciousness, sat up
 Amid the dust, and-listened. Then he seized
 The arrow by its end and drew it out,
 Drew it out soaked in blood from point to feather."

When presently the tidings reached Bahman :—
 "The Grace divine of empire is obscured,"
 He went to Bishútan and said : "Our war
 Hath wedded woe, the mighty Elephant's body
 Hath come to dust, and this distress hath turned
 The world to an abyss for us."

They both

Ran from the army to the paladin.
 They saw the warrior with his breast all blood,
 And with a gory arrow in his hand.
 Then Bishútan cast dust upon his head
 And rent his raiment, uttering loud cries ;
 Bahman rolled in the dust and rubbed his cheeks
 Upon the yet warm blood.

Said Bishútan :—

"What chief or noble knoweth this world's secrets
 Since an Asfandiyár, who for the Faith
 So bravely drew the scimitar of vengeance,