

Arjásþ hath titled 'Battlestead.' One route  
Will take thy troops three months, the second two.  
The first hath water, grass, and towns, and chiefly  
Pertaineth to the chieftains of Túrán.

The second road, that which will take two months,  
Will furnish for the troops but little provand ;  
There is no grass or water for the beasts,  
And thou wilt find no camping-grounds. The third  
Will occupy but seven days ; the troops  
Will reach the Brazen Hold upon the eighth,  
But that road is all lions, wolves, and dragons,  
And none can scape their claws ; yet mightier  
Than lion, wolf, and savage dragon are  
A witch's charms, who raiseth from the deep  
One to the moon and flingeth to the abyss  
Another headlong. There are wastes, símurghs,  
And bitter frosts which rise like blasts and cut  
The trees. Then will appear the Brazen Hold,  
And none e'er saw, or heard of, such another.

It toppeth the dark cloud-rack. Arms and troops  
Abound within it. Waters and a river—  
A sight to cheer the soul—environ it.

V. 1588

The monarch crosseth to the plain by boat  
When he will hunt, but should he stay within  
For five score years the plain could furnish naught  
That he would need, because inside the hold  
Are tilth and pasture, fruit-trees and a mill."

Asfandiyár, on hearing this, was troubled  
Awhile and sighed, but said : " There is no way  
For us save this ; the short road is the best  
In this world," and Gurgsár retorted thus :—  
" O king ! none e'er by puissance and pains  
Hath made the passage of the Seven Stages  
Without foregoing life."

The chieftain answered :—  
If thou art with me thou shalt see the heart

And strength of Áhrimán. What, sayest thou,  
Will meet me first? What must I fight for passage?"

Gurgsár replied: "O famed and fearless man!  
Two wolves, each like a lusty elephant,  
A male and female, having horns like stags  
And all a-gog to make a fight of lions,  
Broad in the neck and breast and thin of flank,  
With monstrous elephants' tusks, first will confront  
thee."

Asfandiár then bade lead back Gurgsár  
Bound as he was in miserable plight,  
And blithe himself assumed his Kaian casque,  
And held his court.

When Sol displayed its crown  
On high, and heaven showed earth its mysteries,  
The din of drums rose from the royal tent,  
Earth turned to iron, air to ebony,  
While in high spirits and with fair array  
The prince set forward toward the Seven Stages,  
And toward Túrán. When he approached the First  
He chose a veteran among the host,

v. 1589 A watchful man, hight Bishútan, who guarded  
The army from the foe, and said to him:—  
"Maintain good discipline among the troops.  
I am disturbed by what Gurgsár hath said,  
And will go on. If evil shall befall me  
It must not come upon my followers."

He went and armed; they girthed his night-hued  
steed.

The chief, when he had drawn anigh the wolves,  
Sat firmly like a mighty elephant.  
The wolves beheld his breast and neck, his waist,  
His warrior-handgrip, and his iron mace,  
And like grim elephants and keen for fight  
Made at him from the plain. The hero strung  
His bow and, roaring like a rending lion,

Rained arrows down upon those Áhrimans,  
 And hardily employed the horsemen's sleights.<sup>1</sup>  
 The steel-tipped shafts disabled both the beasts,  
 And neither could approach unscathed. With joy  
 Asfandiyár perceived them growing weak  
 And sore distressed, unsheathed his watered glaive,  
 And charged. He hacked their heads and made the  
 dust

Mire with their blood, lit from his noble steed,  
 Acknowledging his helplessness to God,  
 And washed the wolves' gore from his arms and person,  
 Then sought a spot that had not been defiled<sup>2</sup>  
 Upon the sand and turning toward the sun,  
 With troubled heart and cheeks besmirched with dust,  
 Exclaimed: "O righteous Judge! Thou hast bestowed  
 Upon me strength, Grace, prowess. Thou hast laid  
 These beasts upon the dust and to all good  
 Art Guide."

V. 1590

When Bishútan came with the host  
 They saw the hero at the place of prayer.  
 The warriors were astonished at his exploit,  
 And all the troops thought: "Shall we call these wolves  
 Or lusty elephants? May such a heart  
 And sword and hand live ever! Never may  
 The throne of kingship, majesty, and feast,  
 And host lack him."

The wary warriors  
 Approached and pitched the tent-enclosure round him;  
 They set a golden board whereat to dine,  
 Partook of victuals and called out for wine.

<sup>1</sup> "et se précipita dans le danger qui *jusque-là* avait accablé tous les cavaliers" (Mohl).

<sup>2</sup> "Un endroit pur *de sang*" (*Id.*).