

That jail and nails and cage, and pit and bonds  
Are better than the throne of Núshírwán.' ”

The envoy came apace to him and told  
The words of Núshírwán. Said Búzurjmíhr  
To that good envoy : “ Fortune ne'er hath shown us  
Its face. None of us is exempt from change,  
And verily all good and ill will end.  
Enthroned and rich or grievously oppressed,  
We have no choice, we all must pack and part.  
To pass from durance is an easy thing ;  
The quaking is for them that wear the crown.”

That wise man and the executioner  
Returned and, coming to the exalted Sháh,  
Narrated everything that they had heard.  
The fear of evil fortune came upon him.  
They bore that righteous guide from that strait cage  
Back to his palace with the Sháh's consent,  
And heaven turned awhile with matters thus,  
While wrinkles filled the face of Búzurjmíhr,  
His heart grew more oppressed and worn, and both  
His eyes were darkened by anxiety,  
While since his travailing surpassed his gain  
He wasted with his care and pined with pain.

## § 2

*How the Ambassador of Cæsar came to Núshírwán  
with a locked Casket and how Búzurjmíhr was  
set at large to declare its Contents*

Now in those days it chanced that Cæsar sent  
An envoy with a letter to the Sháh,  
With gifts, with presents, and a padlocked casket,

And said : “ O king of warriors and chiefs !  
Thou hast no lack of holy archimages,  
So let them tell, not tampering with the lock,  
What is concealed therein. If they say right  
We will send tribute and our wonted gifts ;  
But if thy clever archimages' hearts  
Fail in this knowledge indispensable  
The Sháh must not ask tribute at our hands,  
Nor send an army to invade our realm.  
Such is the message that hath come from Cæsar :  
Make answer as it seemeth good to thee.”

The monarch of the world said to the envoy :—  
“ This thing is not a mystery to God,  
And by His Grace divine I will achieve it,  
Convoking holy men to give me aid.  
Abide here for a se'nnight, cheered with wine,  
Make merry in thy heart and be at ease.”

The matter proved perplexing to the Sháh :  
He called to him the great men and the wise,  
Who all examined it in every way  
To find a means whereby to loose that coil,  
Examined, as did all the archimages,  
That casket and that lock whose key was lacking,  
But could not tell and owned their ignorance.  
Now when that concourse proved of no avail  
The heart of Núshírwán, the Sháh, was grieved.  
He said : “ The intellect of Búzurjmíhr  
Will search this secret of the turning sky.”

The king of kings, in sore embarrassment,  
Gave orders to his treasurer to provide  
A change of raiment from the treasury,  
And had a choice steed saddled royal wise.  
He sent them to the sage. “ Thou must forget,”  
He said, “ the hardships that thou hast endured  
Because high heaven above us so ordained  
That thou shouldst have affliction at our hands.

Thy tongue excited my displeasure : thou  
 Hast been the author of thine own oppression.  
 I am confronted with a thankless task,  
 The elders' hearts have been perplexed thereby,  
 For Cæsar hath dispatched to us from Rúm  
 A famed priest of that land and therewithal  
 A casket with a tightly fastened lid  
 Padlocked and sealed with musk. The envoy  
 saith :—

' Thus said my lord : " Reveal this hidden thing,  
 And let the sages and the princes say  
 What lieth in this casket." ' So methought :—  
 ' No one will see through this veiled mystery  
 Unless it be the soul of Búzurjmíhr.' "

When Búzurjmíhr had listened to those words  
 His pain and former trouble were renewed ;  
 He left the prison, bathed his head and body,  
 And first approached in prayer the Lord of all.  
 Albeit innocent himself he feared  
 The Sháh, the wrathful world-lord's, tyranny.  
 He watched that day and night alike and pondered  
 According to the message of his master.  
 What time the sun was brilliant in the heavens  
 He mused upon the aspects of the stars,<sup>1</sup>  
 He laved his heart's eyes in the stream of wisdom,  
 Chose out a trusty man among the sages,  
 And said to him : " My market hath been spoiled,  
 My vision ruined by my sufferings.  
 Observe upon the road the passers by,  
 Address them, have no fear, and ask their names."

Forth from his house went Búzurjmíhr and met  
 A woman hasting, beautiful of face.  
 That wise man vigilant informed the sage  
 Of all things that were hidden from his eyes,  
 And he as feeling for his way rejoined :—

<sup>1</sup> Couplet omitted and reading with P.

" Ask if this Moon be wedded."

Said the lady :—

" I have a spouse and child withal at home."

The sage on his white roadster, when he heard  
 Her answer, started. Then another woman  
 Appeared and, seeing her, his agent asked :—  
 " O woman hast thou got a child and spouse,  
 Or, being single, only wind in hand ? "

" I have a husband if no child," she said,  
 " Thou hast mine answer, suffer me to pass."

Just then another woman came—the third.  
 Her too the friend approached. " My Fair ! " said he,  
 " What mate hast thou who hast such goodly  
 carriage  
 And daintiness ? "

" I never had a husband,"

She said, " I would not one should see my face."

Now mark the inference of Búzurjmíhr  
 On hearing these replies. He hurried on  
 With anxious mien. They brought him to the Sháh, C. 1756  
 Who ordered that he should approach the throne,  
 But was exceeding troubled in his heart  
 Because he missed the sage's piercing glance,  
 And heaved full many a deep and chilling sigh,  
 Excused himself for having wronged the guiltless,  
 Then talked of Cæsar and of Rúm, and spake  
 Of casket and of padlock. Búzurjmíhr  
 Made answer to the monarch of the world :—  
 " Be lustre thine so long as heaven shall turn.  
 Now must we hold a session of the wise,  
 Of Cæsar's envoy, and the archimages,  
 And have the casket laid before the Sháh,  
 Before the Great, the seekers of the way ;  
 Then in God's strength, who gave me intellect,  
 And made the right the business of my soul,  
 I will declare the casket's whole contents,

And lay no hand on it or on its lock.  
 Although mine eyes be dim my heart is bright ;  
 The breastplate of my soul withal is knowledge."

The king joyed at the words. His heart grew  
 fresh

As roses in the Spring. Anxiety  
 Bent him no longer, and he called for envoy  
 And casket, summoned all the archimages  
 And mighty men, and seated many a sage  
 With Búzurjmíhr, then told the ambassador :—  
 " Repeat thy message and demand an answer."

The Rúman, hearing, loosed his tongue and thus  
 Told Cæsar's words: " From the victorious world-  
 lord

We look for wisdom, knowledge, and renown,  
 And thou, O master of the world ! hast Grace,  
 And stature, greatness, lore, and might of hand.  
 The wise archimages—seekers of the way—  
 The chiefs and heroes that attend upon thee,  
 Are either all assembled at thy court,  
 Or are thy lieges still where'er they be.  
 If these shrewd-hearted sages shall behold  
 This casket with its lock and seal and stamp,  
 And state distinctly what is there concealed,  
 So that their statement shall accord to wisdom,  
 Then by this token I will send to thee  
 The tribute that my realm can well afford ;  
 But if in any wise they fail herein  
 Ask not for tribute from our land again."

Whenas the sage had heard the speaker's words  
 He loosed his tongue and offered praise and said :—  
 " Oh ! be the world's Sháh Sháh for evermore,  
 May he be eloquent and fare with fortune !  
 Praise to the Master of the sun and moon,  
 Who showeth to the soul the path to knowledge,  
 And knoweth all things manifest and hidden ;

I covet knowledge, He is past all need.<sup>1</sup>  
 Within the casket are three lustrous pearls,  
 And greater coverture than I have said.<sup>2</sup>  
 One pearl is pierced, the second is half pierced,  
 The third hath had no intercourse with iron."

The Rúman sage, on hearing, brought the key  
 To Núshírwán who looked. Concealed within  
 There was a pyx, and in the pyx a veil  
 Of painted silk, and in the silk three jewels,  
 Just as the wise man of Írán had said,  
 Because of those three gems the first was pierced,  
 The second half pierced and the third intact.  
 Then all the archimages praised the sage  
 And showered gems on him. The king of kings  
 Became of joyful countenance and filled  
 The mouth of Búzurjmíhr with lustrous pearls.  
 His conduct in the past oppressed his heart,  
 He writhed, his face grew furrowed : why had he  
 Dealt so oppressively with Búzurjmíhr  
 From whom he had experienced love and faith ?  
 The sage, when he beheld the Sháh's shrunk face,  
 And grief-pierced soul, revealed what had been  
 hidden,

Declared all that had passed to Núshírwán,  
 Told of the armlet, of the sable bird,  
 The liege's care, the slumber of the Sháh,  
 And added : " This was doomed to come to pass,  
 And sorrow and remorse will profit not.  
 When heaven is intending good or ill  
 What are Sháh, archimage, or Búzurjmíhr ?  
 God hath implanted in the stars the seed,  
 And we must write the sentence on our heads ;  
 So let the heart of Núshírwán, the Sháh,  
 Rejoice exempt from pain and grief for ever.  
 Exalted though the Sháh be yet his state

<sup>1</sup> Reading with P.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

Is made more gracious by his minister.  
 The chase, war, pleasure, largess, justice, feast,  
 These are the business of the king of kings.  
 He knoweth what Sháhs did in days of yore,  
 So by that token let him do the same.  
 To gather treasure, to provide the host,  
 To chide, speak, hear the suppliant, and take  
 thought  
 For rule and treasure, these things are a care,  
 That, heart and soul, the minister must bear."

## § 8

*Discourse on the Responses of Núshírwán*

Thus was it at the time of Núshírwán :  
 He was at once the Sháh and paladin,  
 At once a warrior and archimage,  
 The Fire-priest and the captain of the host.  
 He had his emissaries everywhere,  
 And trusted not the world to ministers.  
 None could conceal from him in great or small  
 The good and evil of the world's estate.

One day a loyal archmage of his agents  
 Took on himself to put this to the Sháh :—  
 "One time without reproof thou passest by  
 A fault. Another time the same offender  
 Is hung howe'er much he excuse himself !"

The Sháh replied : "When one doth own his  
 fault

I am as leech, he is as wretched patient  
 That would avoid the dose and sheddeth tears ;  
 If that dose fail I leech his soul no more."

Another archmage said to him : "Be blest,  
 And sheltered from all ill on every side !

The captain of the host went from Gurgán  
 With privacy, and entering a wood,  
 There for a while he slumbered. The Gurkíls  
 Bore off his baggage ! He was left unfurnished,  
 And, further, turneth back on that account !"  
 The Sháh made answer thus : "We do not need  
 That militarist. How can he guard troops  
 Who cannot guard himself ?"<sup>1</sup>

Another said :—

"Live happy evermore with archimages  
 To sit, to banquet, and repose with thee !  
 There is a famous chieftain present here,  
 Whose treasure passeth thine !"

The Sháh replied :—

"Yea, rightly, for he is our empire's crown.  
 I tender both his treasures and his life,  
 And toil to magnify him."

Said another :—

"Great king ! live ever and unscathed by ill !  
 Among the captives carried off from Rúm  
 Are many babes unweaned."

He gave this sentence :—

"The little ones must not be reckoned captives.  
 We will dispatch them glad and in good case  
 To their own mothers."

People wrote to him :—

"A hundred wealthy Rúmans offer ransom."  
 "If they are doing it through fear," he said,  
 "Sell each chief for a cup of wine and ask  
 No more because we do not lack their goods.  
 I will require their jewels, purses, slaves,

<sup>1</sup> Mohl translates :—"Le Sipehbed est sorti un jour de Gourgan en secret, est entré dans un bois et y a dormi pendant quelque temps ; ses bagages étaient sur un autre steppe, il n'avait rien avec lui et fut obligé de s'en revenir pour rejoindre ses bagages." Nouschirwan répondit par cette sentence : "Je n'avais pas besoin d'une escorte ; celui qui veille sur l'armée ne s'inquiète pas pour lui-même."