

This fosterling of bane. Aim at his eyes,
 Straight, with both hands as one that worshippeth
 The tamarisk, and Destiny will bear
 The arrow thither straight. He will be blinded,
 And fortune rage at him."

Then the Símurgh,
 Embracing Zál as woof embraceth warp
 In bidding him farewell, took flight content,
 While Rustam, when he saw her in the air,
 Took order to prepare a goodly fire,
 And straightened out thereby the tamarisk wood.
 He fitted arrow-heads upon the shaft,
 And fixed the feathers to the finished haft.

§ 26

How Rustam went back to fight Asfandiyár

When dawn brake from the heights, and dark night's
 waist

V. 1708 Arched, Rustam armed himself and much invoked
 The Maker. When he reached the famous host,
 For war and vengeance on Asfandiyár,
 The hero, good at need, cried in reproach:—
 "O lion-heart! how long wilt slumber thus,
 For Rustam hath already saddled Rakhsh?
 Arouse thee from thy pleasant sleep and close
 In fight with Rustam eager for the fray."

Now when Asfandiyár heard Rustam's voice
 All earthly weapons seemed of no avail,
 And thus he said to Bishútan: "The Lion
 Adventureth not against a sorcerer.
 I did not think that Rustam would bear home
 His coat of mail, his tiger-skin, and casque,
 While as for Rakhsh, his mount, its breast was hidden
 By arrow-heads! Now I have heard that Zál,
 The devotee of sorcerers, extendeth

E'en to the sun his practices, surpasseth
 All warlocks in his wrath, and sorteth not
 With wisdom."

Bishútan replied in tears:—

"Be care and wrath thy foe's. What hath come o'er
 thee

That thou art wan to-day? Thou must have passed
 A sleepless night! What in the world can ail
 These heroes that they must increase such toils?
 Whose fortune hath gone halt I know not I
 In that it ever bringeth feud on feud!"

Asfandiyár, the hero, donned his mail,
 Advanced toward famous Rustam and, on seeing
 His face, exclaimed: "Now may thine honour perish!
 Perchance thou hast forgot, thou Sigzian!
 Thy foeman's bow and breast? Thou hast been healed
 By Zál's enchantments; otherwise the charnel
 Had sought for thine embrace. But thou hast gone,
 Hast used unholy arts, and hastenest thus
 To fight with me. Today will I so maul thee
 That Zál shall see thee living never more."

V. 1709

"O Lion never satiate of fight!"

Said Rustam, "reverence holy God, the World-lord,
 And fling not heart and wisdom to the abyss.
 I have not come today for fighting's sake,
 But for excuse, for honour, and for fame.
 Thy whole contention with me is unjust,
 And thou art closing both the eyes of wisdom.
 By just Zarduhsht and by the good religion,
 By Núsh Ázar, the Fire, and Grace divine,
 By sun, by moon, and by the Zandavasta,
 I prithee turn thy heart from mischief's path.
 Keep not in memory the words that passed,
 Though they would cause a man to burst his skin.
 Come then and see the place of mine abode,
 For thou hast lost all power upon my life.

I will unlock the door of ancient treasures,
 Which I have gotten me in my long day,
 And load them on mine own beasts. Give thou them
 All to thy treasurer to drive before him.
 Moreover I will travel by thy side
 And, if thou biddest, go before the Sháh.
 Then if he slayeth me I am content,
 Content too if he biddeth me be bound.
 Consider what the wise man said of old :—
 ‘ May none be wedded to a luckless star.’
 I will try all expedients in the hope
 That fortune may distaste thee with this strife.”

Asfandiyár replied : “ I am not one
 To use deceit in time of war or fear.
 V. 1710 Thou pratest much of hall and house, much lavest
 The face of peace. If still thou wilt live on
 First wear my chains.”

Then Rustam loosed again
 His tongue, and said : “ O prince ! renounce injustice.
 Blast not my name, degrade not thine own soul,
 For ill alone can come of this contention.
 A thousand royal jewels will I give thee,
 As well as crown with armlet and with earrings ;
 Will give to thee a thousand sweet-lipped youths
 To minister to thee by day and night ;
 Will give a thousand damsels of Khallukh
 To be the glorious graces of thy crown ;
 I will unbar for thee the treasury
 Of Sám, the son of Narímán, and Zál,
 O peerless one ! amass thee all their wealth,
 And from Kábulistán bring men withal
 To do thy will and chase thy foes in fight.
 Then like a bond-slave will I go before thee,
 Go to the presence of the wreakful Sháh ;
 But, O my prince ! put vengeance from thy heart,
 Make not thyself an ambush for the Dív.

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;