

Produce now from thy court two men of lore,
 Of fluent tongue, and happy in discourse,
 And if in rede and wisdom they excel
 One of these men with me then I have done
 With this thy land, for wise men spurn not words ;
 Or else choose out among the warriors
 That wield in Hindústán the massive mace
 A hundred horsemen to fight one of us,
 And we, what time thy wit and worth shall stand
 Revealed, will ask not tribute from thy land."

§ 28

*How Shangul prepared a Feast for Bahrám, and how
 Bahrám displayed his Prowess*

Shangul, on hearing this, said to Bahrám :—
 "Thy counsel sorteth not with manliness.
 Abide a season and relax thyself,
 Why parley to no purpose ?"

They made ready

A splendid hall. Bahrám reposed till noon,
 And when the Crown that lighteneth the world
 Had reached its height the feast was all prepared
 According to the bidding of the king,
 And zealous servants were about the hall.
 When they had spread the board before Shangul
 He bade a servant : "Summon to the feast
 The envoy of the Íránian king, the man
 Of fluent utterance and novel aims.
 Bring his companions too and seat them where
 Ambassadors are placed."

Bahrám came quickly,

Sat at the board and oped his hand to bread,
 But shut his lips to speech. The eating done,

They set themselves to quaff and called for harpists
 And wine. The scent of musk rose from the feast,
 The hall was spread with golden carpetings.

Now when the lords were merry in their cups,
 And recked not of the future, king Shangul
 Bade two strong men attend, men fit to wrestle
 Against the Dív. These noble athletes came,
 And girt their loin-cloths round them. Those two
 youths

Contended lustily and strained and writhed
 Together. Now Bahrám took up a cup
 Of crystal and the wine confused his brain.
 He spake thus to Shangul : " O king bid me
 To gird me for a bout, for when I wrestle
 Against the strong I am away from harm
 And drunkenness."

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Shangul said smiling : " Rise,
 And, if thou shalt o'ercome them, shed their blood."

Bahrám, on hearing this, rose to his feet,
 And boldly bending down the upright form
 Of him whose waist he clutched (a lion so
 Might seize upon wild onager) he flung
 His foeman down so that his bones were broken,
 And all the colour left his cheeks. Shangul
 Was in amazement at the victor's mien,
 His stature and his shoulders and his strength,
 Invoked God in the Indian tongue and deemed
 Bahrám to be a match for forty men.

When they were all bemused with pleasant wine
 They left the hall of jewelled tracery
 And, when the vault of heaven donned musk-hued Silk,
 Both young and old slept after banqueting.
 Shangul went to his sleeping-place, the wine
 Had turned his looks and thoughts from king Bahrám.

Now when the musky-scented Veil was changed
 To gold, and in the sky the sun appeared,

The king of Indians mounted on his steed,
 And went forth to the Ground with polo-stick
 In hand. His servants bore his bow and arrows,
 And for a while he rode to please himself,
 Then ordered Sháh Bahrám to mount and take
 His royal bow in hand. Bahrám replied :—
 “ I have a number of Íránian horsemen
 With me, O king ! and they are fain to ply
 The arrow and the polo-stick when bidden
 By the most noble king.”

Shangul replied :—

“ The arrows and the bow are doubtlessly
 The mainstays of the cavalier. Do thou,
 Who hast such limbs and neck and might of hand,
 String up thy bow and shoot.”

Bahrám Gúr strung
 His bow and urged his steed with shouts. He took
 And shot an arrow that destroyed the mark.
 The sportsmen and the warriors 'gan to call
 Their blessings down upon him, one and all.

§ 29

How Shangul suspected Bahrám and kept him from Irán

Shangul, misdoubting of Bahrám, thought thus :—

“ This stature, Grace, and skill in archery
 Resemble not a mere ambassador's
 Of Hindústán, of Turkistán, or Persia,
 But, be he of the Sháh's race or a noble,
 'Twere well I call him brother,” smiled and said

C. 1565 Thus to Bahrám : “ Famed, high-born prince ! thou
 art

No doubt the Sháh's own brother, being dowered
 With vigour, strength, and skill in archery,