

With Rustam, laid his ears back, joined the fray,  
 Bit at the dragon's shoulders, tore its hide  
 As though he were a lion, and amazed  
 The valiant paladin, who with keen glaive  
 Smote off the dragon's head; blood jetted out  
 In rivers, and its carcase hid the earth.

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The matchless one, astonished at the sight,  
 Invoked God's name and bathed him in the spring.  
 Desiring conquest through God's strength alone  
 He said: "O righteous Judge! me Thou hast given  
 Grace, might, and wisdom; what care I for lion,  
 Dív, elephant, parched desert, and blue sea?  
 When I am wroth all foes are one to me."

## § 9

## THE FOURTH COURSE

*How Rustam slew a Witch*

Thanksgivings done, he harnessed rose-cheeked Rakhsh  
 And mounting came in time where sorcerers dwelt.  
 Long had he fared and saw, as Sol declined,  
 Trees, grass, and stream—the very spot for youth.  
 There was a spring as bright as pheasant's eyes;  
 Beside it were a golden bowl of wine,  
 A roasted mountain-sheep with bread thereon,  
 And salts and sweetmeats. Rustam thanked the Lord  
 For showing him a place so opportune,  
 Dismounted from his steed, took off the saddle,  
 And marvelled at the loaves and venison.

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It was a sorcerers' meal, and when he came  
 His voice had caused those dívs to disappear.  
 He sat beside the rushy stream and brimmed  
 A jewelled cup with wine. A dainty lute

Was there, the desert seemed a banquet-hall!  
 He took the lute up, touched the chords, and sang:—

“ Oh ! Rustam is an outcast still  
 And hath no days of pleasure,  
 Marked out for every kind of ill  
 And not a moment's leisure.

“ Be where he may it is his plight  
 With battle still to harden,  
 And wilderness and mountain-height  
 Must serve him for a garden.

“ His combatings are never done  
 And there is no assuagement,  
 'Tis dragon, dív, and desert—one  
 Perpetual engagement !

“ The wine and cup, the scented rose,  
 And where lush herbage groweth—  
 Such things are not at his dispose,  
 These fortune ne'er bestoweth

“ On one that with the crocodile  
 Is still engaged in fighting,  
 Save when the leopard for a while  
 The combat is inviting.”

The sound of music reached a witch's ears ;  
 She made her cheeks like spring, although by rights  
 She was not fair, and then, perfumed and decked,  
 Approached, saluted, and sat down by Rustam,  
 Who gave God thanks at finding in the desert  
 Board, wine, and lute, and youthful boon-companion.  
 Not knowing that she was a wicked witch,  
 An Áhriman beneath her bravery,

He handed her a cup of wine, invoking  
 The Giver of all good. Now when he named  
 The Lord of love her favour changed; no soul  
 Had she for gratitude, no tongue for praise,  
 But blackened at God's name, while Rustam, flinging  
 His lasso quicker than the wind, ensnared,  
 And questioned her: "What art thou? Speak and show  
 Thy proper favour."

In the lasso's coils  
 There was a fetid hag all guile and wrinkle,  
 Calamitous. He clave her with his blade  
 And made the hearts of sorcerers afraid.

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## § 10

## THE FIFTH COURSE

*How Rustam took Úlúd captive*

He journeyed on and reached a place of gloom  
 Black as a negro's face—a murky night  
 Without a star or moon; thou wouldst have said:—  
 "The sun is captive and the stars are lassoed!"  
 He gave the rein to Rakhsh and journeyed on,  
 Not seeing height or river for the murk.  
 When he emerged to light he saw a land,  
 Like painted silk with crops, where all was verdure  
 And streams; the old world had renewed its youth.  
 His clothes were drenched, and longing for repose  
 He took off his cuirass of tiger-skin,  
 And dripping helm, to dry them in the sun,  
 Unbridled Rakhsh, and loosed him in the corn,  
 Then, donning his dried helmet and his breastplate,  
 Couched like a mighty lion in the grass,  
 His shield his pillow and his hand on hilt.  
 The watchman of the plain, on seeing Rakhsh  
 Among the crops, ran up with hue and cry;  
 He smote the hero smartly with a stick