

## § 3

## THE SECOND STAGE

*How Asfandiyár slew two Lions*

As for Gurgsár his portion was chagrin  
 About those fierce wolves and Asfandiyár,  
 Who bade the prisoner be brought before him.  
 They brought him quaking, with his face all tears.  
 The prince bestowed on him three cups of wine,  
 And asked: "What wonder shall I next behold  
 By thine account?"

He answered thus the chief:—

"O monarch crowned and leonine of heart!  
 Upon the next stage lions will assail thee,  
 Such as no crocodile would dare encounter;  
 The lusty eagle, valiant though it be,  
 Will fly not in their path."

Asfandiyár

Laughed with light heart, and said: "O feckless Turk-  
 man!

Tomorrow thou shalt see a valiant man  
 Address the lion with the scimitar."

When night grew dark the monarch gave command,  
 And they resumed the march. He led the host  
 Apace amid the gloom, blood in his eyes,  
 V. 1591 Despite at heart, and when the sun had doffed  
 Its dusky cloak and donned brocade of gold  
 He reached the station for the brave—the plain  
 Where he must fight the lions. He commanded  
 That Bishútan should come to him, advised him  
 At large, and said: "I go to fight in person,  
 Committing this exalted host to thee."

He went his way, and drawing near the lions  
 Turned all the world to darkness in their hearts.

There were a lion and a lioness,  
 And bravely both came forth to fight with him,  
 The lion first. He smote it with his sword ;  
 Its face grew coral-hued ; 'twas cloven from head  
 To midriff, which appalled the lioness,  
 Yet, like her mate, she came on savagely.  
 The chieftain smote her on the head, which fell  
 And rolled upon the sand. Her paws and breast  
 Were tulip-hued with blood. He bathed himself  
 And, looking to all-holy God alone  
 As his Protector, said : " O righteous Judge !  
 Thou hast destroyed these creatures by my hand."

Meanwhile the troops came up, and Bishútan  
 Surveyed the lions' breasts and limbs while all  
 Acclaimed Asfandiyár. That valiant leader  
 Thereafter went to his pavilion where  
 They served to that pure prince delicious fare.

## § 4

## THE THIRD STAGE

*How Asfandiyár slew a Dragon*

Asfandiyár then ordered to his presence  
 The luckless and malevolent Gurgsár,  
 Gave him three goblets filled with rosy wine,  
 And, when the wine had cheered that Áhriman,  
 Addressed him thus and said : " Ill-fated wretch  
 Tell what thou knowest of tomorrow's sight."

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Gurgsár returned reply : " High-minded king  
 May evil-doers ne'er approach to harm thee.  
 Gone hast thou into battle like a fire,  
 And made a shift to over-pass these bales,  
 But know'st not what will come on thee tomorrow.  
 Have mercy then upon thy wakeful fortune,