

At the accession of a lawful Sháh
 The high priest with three sages used to go
 To him, enthrone him, and felicitate
 The throne, then bring the crown of gold—the source
 Of glory, right, and Grace—and, crowning him,
 Would press both cheeks upon his breast in joy.
 The Sháh then would bestow on suppliants
 All gifts presented to him. So they put
 The crown and throne in charge of the high priest, C. 1486
 And from the city fortunate Bahrám
 Departed to the waste. Brave Gustaham
 Had two fierce lions which he gave in chains
 To the high priest. They dragged the savage beasts
 Along, the draggers seeming mad with fright,
 And to the footings of the ivory throne
 Chained them, and set the crown within a nook
 Upon it. All the world—spectator there
 Of crown and throne—watched how the prince would
 fare.

§ 13

*How Bahrám and Khusrau went to the Waste, and how Bahrám
 slew the Lions and took his Seat upon the Throne*

Bahrám Gúr and Khusrau went on the waste,
 And with full hearts approached the lions. Khusrau,
 On seeing the fierce beasts with the crown between
 them,

Said to the archimages: "He that seeketh
 The sovereignty should be the first to try.
 Moreover he is young and I am old—
 Too feeble to resist fierce lions' claws—
 So let him use his youth and vigour first."

Bahrám made answer, saying: "Good, 'tis well.
 We will not blink fair words."

With that he took

An ox-head mace while the world wondered at him.
 An archmage said : " O wise and holy king !
 Who biddeth thee fight lions ? Canst thou have
 More than the sovereignty ? So in its quest
 Give not thy life and person to destruction
 Thus wantonly. Herein no blame attacheth
 To us, 'tis thine own act, the world is thine."

Bahrám said : " O explorer of the Faith !
 Thou and the other folk are not to blame.
 I am the man to fight these savage lions ;
 'Tis my delight to battle with the brave."

The archmage answered : " Refuge then with God,
 And, if thou needs must go, first purge thy heart
 Of sin."

He did according to that word,
 Repented, purged his heart, bathed in a stream,
 And sought upon the plain a place of prayer.
 Then as he prayed before all-holy God,
 And laid his cheeks upon the dusky ground,
 He said : " Almighty ! let Thy servants triumph.
 If I—Thy servant—justly seek to cleanse
 The world of evil give my soul assurance
 In this strife, let me overcome the lions."

C. 1487

Thence came the wise Sháh and at once set forth
 Upon his way, armed with the ox-head mace.
 Now when the valiant lions saw him coming,
 One on the instant snapped its chain and charged
 The exalted king. That hero smote its head,
 And dimmed its eyes, then going to the other
 Smote its head whence the blood ran down its breast,
 Then took his seat upon the ivory throne,
 Placed on his head the heart-delighting crown,
 And put his trust in God who is our Refuge,
 The Guider of the lost. Khusrau drew near,
 Did homage, and thus said : " Exalted Sháh !
 Blest be thy sitting on the throne, and may

The heroes of the world be slaves before thee.
Thou art the Sháh, we are thy slaves and further
Thy good in everything."

The mighty men

Showered jewels over him, invoking blessings
Upon his crown. A universal shout
Ascended from the world. That jubilance
Was on Surúsh's day in month Ázar
Whereon Bahráam assumed the sovereignty,
And won fruition of the crown and Grace.

A cloud hath risen and the moon's obscured ;
From that dark cloud a shower of Milk is poured ;
No river, plain, or upland can I spy,
The raven's plumes are lost against the sky ;
In one unceasing stream egg-apples¹ fall :
What is high heaven's purpose in it all ?
No fire-wood, salted meat, or barley-grain
Are left me, naught till harvest come again !
Amid this gloom, this day of tax and fear,
When earth with snow is like an ivory sphere,
All mine affairs in overthrow will end
Unless my hand is grasped by some good friend.²

Now will I tell to thee so strange a tale
That in the wonder wonder's self will fail.

¹ The fruit of the egg-plant (*Solanum esculentum*), of which there are two varieties—a white and a purple.

² Reading with P.