

In gentle accents by the chiefs of Chín,  
 Replied : " The Khán is great, wise, worshipful,  
 Desireth kinship with us through his child,  
 And illustrateth thus his own good will.  
 The man whom understanding maketh wise  
 Will look upon affairs with wisdom's eye ;  
 We will take order, will advise us well,  
 And make response to all that he hath said  
 On this condition—that the Khán of Chín  
 Shall give our heart the liberty of choice.  
 I will dispatch a wise man who shall look  
 On all his women-folk and shall select  
 The most illustrious and dear to him,  
 See what her own maternal grandsire was,  
 And her own quality of royal birth.  
 When what we name shall have been done the Khán  
 Will have performed his portion of the pact."

C. 1700

The envoys called down praises, saying thus :—  
 " The Khán of Chín rejoiceth in the Sháh,  
 And were his ladies' bower a cloud of jewels  
 He would withhold it not from Núshírwán.  
 Select among the sages one to go  
 Before the Khán whose ladies shall not fail  
 In that one's sight their faces to unveil."

## § 9

*How Núshírwán answered the Letter, and sent Mihrán  
 Sitád to see and fetch the Daughter, of the Khán*

The king of kings heard what they said ; the age,  
 Outworn, revived for him. He called a scribe,  
 Spake of the Khán at large, and bade indite  
 An answer couched in choice and gracious terms.

He first gave praises to almighty God,  
 "The World-lord, Conqueror, and Nourisher.  
 The world is 'stablished by His ordinance ;  
 He is our Guide to good. He giveth worth  
 To whom He will and from abasement raiseth  
 Such to high heaven, the while another man  
 Is left in luckless case because unfavoured  
 By Him to Whom I own that thanks are due  
 For every blessing, and of Whom my heart  
 Is fearful when I do amiss. I would  
 That life should cease within my heart if I  
 E'er should desist from hope and fear in Him.  
 The worshipful ambassador hath come,  
 And brought a gracious message from the Khán.  
 Heard have I what was said about a league,  
 And of the virtuous daughters of his house :  
 My heart would joy to be allied to him,  
 And in especial through his own chaste child.  
 Lo ! I have sent to thee a prudent man,  
 A man whose mind esteemeth wisdom dear.  
 On coming he will tell thee all my views  
 As touching this alliance first and last.  
 C. 1701 Mayst thou for ever have a reverent mind,  
 Be happy-hearted and our warm friend still."

The writer, when the pen was out of work,  
 Embellished all the paper, rolled it up,  
 And, when the last tears of the pen were dry,  
 Affixed a seal of musk. The Sháh bestowed  
 A robe of honour on the ambassadors,  
 Such as amazed the company, and chose  
 A wise old chief, by name Mihrán Sitád,  
 And five score famed Íránian cavaliers,  
 All men renowned, discreet, and eloquent,  
 And said thus to Mihrán Sitád : "Go forth  
 Glad and triumphant, and with love and justice.  
 Be thine the fluent tongue of chiefs, be wisdom

Thy guide, thy heart all lovingkindliness.  
Scan well the women's quarters of the Khán,  
And throughly search out all their good and ill.  
They must not fool thee with a mere display  
Of countenance, of grace, and ornament.  
The Khán hath many daughters stately, tall,  
And crowned, behind his curtains, and of these  
The offspring of his slaves are not for me,  
Although they have a king to father them ;  
Look thou for one that is both meek and good,  
Whose mother is descended from the Kháns.  
If she hath gifts according to her birth  
She will rejoice the world and live in joy."

Mihrán Sitád, when he had heard, invoked  
Much blessing on the crown and throne, and left  
The portal of the world-illuming Sháh  
At a propitious season on the day  
Khurdád. News of his coming reached the Khán,  
Who sent out troops to welcome him, and when  
He reached the presence of the Khán he kissed  
The ground and proffered praise. On seeing him  
That world-aspiring king received him well,  
Assigning him an honourable room,  
But, being much concerned at the affair,  
Withdrew to the apartments of the queen,  
Declared to her the words of Núshírwán,  
Spake of his treasures and his host, and "This  
Sháh Núshírwán," he told her, "is still young,  
And wary, and his fortune is young also.  
Fain am I to bestow on him a daughter  
To magnify our worship in his sight.  
One such I have, concealed behind the veil—  
A Crown upon the head of lady-hood,  
The fairest of the fair throughout the world,  
And many a chief hath sought her at my hands.  
I love her so that never would I cease

To gaze upon her face. I have four others—  
The offspring of my slaves, themselves both slaves  
And handmaids, clever girls—and one of them  
Will I bestow on him, and rest from warfare,  
And from dispute.”

C. 1702.

The queen replied to him :—

“None in the world will oust thee, thou’rt so wise !”

In such discourse they passed the night away  
Until the sun ascended o’er the mountains,  
And then Mihrán Sitád arrived, drew near  
The throne, and gave the letter. When the Khán  
Had read he smiled upon the union  
And goodly choice proposed, gave up the key  
That oped his ladies’ bower, and said : “Go look  
On what is hidden there.”

Four trusty slaves

Came to accompany Mihrán Sitád,  
Who, when he heard the Khán, went with the key  
And them withal. He oped the doors. They entered,  
The slaves protesting to him : “Never star  
And sun and moon have seen the sight that thou  
Art on thy way to see !”

The ladies’ bower

Was Paradise adorned—all Suns and Moons  
And goodly havings—while upon the throne  
Five fay-faced maidens sat crowned and arrayed  
In treasures, save the daughter of the queen,  
Who wore no crown or bracelet, torque or jewel,  
But only had on her a well-worn robe,  
And for a crown her musky locks divine.  
Her cheeks were made not up : she only wore  
What God had given her—a Cypress she,  
Surmounted by a new moon that diffused  
A lustre o’er the new throne where she sat.  
Now when Mihrán Sitád came and beheld  
He saw none like to her, and, being shrewd

Of heart and counsel, knew that king and queen  
 Were fooling him. The damsel used her hands  
 As kerchief for her eyes. Mihrán Sitád  
 Grew wroth anew and told the slaves : " The Sháh  
 Hath many a bracelet, crown, and throne, and I  
 Choose her that lacketh crown and ornament,  
 For these will make her still more beautiful.  
 I came to show discretion in my choice ;  
 I came not to procure brocade of Chín."

The queen replied : " Old man ! thou speakest not  
 One gracious word and art not well advised  
 If thou preferrest such a child as this  
 To these princesses who are gracious, fair,  
 And wise, have reached a marriageable age,  
 And kindle hearts—girls tall as cypress-trees,  
 With cheeks like spring and very well aware  
 Of all the worship that is due to kings."

Mihrán Sitád said : " If the Khán shall act  
 Unfairly in this matter let him know  
 That Núshírwán, the monarch of the world,  
 Will term me an old knave. The one that sitteth,  
 All unadorned by bracelet, torque, and crown,  
 Upon the ivory throne best pleaseth me ;  
 But, if your Highnesses will not consent,  
 With your permission I will go my ways."

C. 1703

The queen observed his words. His policy  
 And conduct made her muse. The crafty envoy  
 Then left her, went back to the Khán, and told  
 All that had passed. The Khán saw him perturbed,  
 And knew : " This shrewd old man is great and apt  
 For delicate affairs."

The prudent king  
 Sat with his counsellors, put forth the throng,  
 And, when the place for conclave had been cleared,  
 The readers of the stars who bore in hand  
 Their Rúman astrolabes, the mighty men,

And all the chiefs, attended. Then the Khán  
 Commanded every loyal liege to mark  
 The aspect of the sky. The sages scanned  
 The stars to find out how the Khán should act,  
 And as to his alliance with the Sháh,  
 And at the last said thus : " Let not, O king !  
 Thy heart be vexed by evil any whit,  
 Because this matter can but end in good,  
 And time will count thy foemen's counsels ill.  
 This is the purpose of high heaven herein—  
 The horoscope and prosperous event—  
 That from the daughter of the Khán and from  
 The Sháh's loins a throne-gracing prince will come ;  
 The country of Írán,<sup>1</sup> the men of name  
 And worth in Chín, his praises shall proclaim."

## § 10

*How the Khán sent his Daughter, escorted by Mihrán,  
 with a Letter and Treasures to Núshírwán*

The Khán, on hearing this, was glad of heart,  
 Smiled too the sunlike queen. When they had purged  
 Their hearts of artifice they set the envoy  
 Before them and told all that he should know  
 About the queen's child kept secluded thus,  
 Whom from her sire Mihrán Sitád received  
 On the victorious king of kings' behalf.  
 The deputy received, the Khán bestowed,  
 The only daughter that the queen had borne.  
 The handmaids came with gifts, came joyfully  
 Before the king, and afterwards a treasure,  
 Comprising goods of all sorts, was prepared—  
 Dínárs, gems, torques, and crowns, a turquoise litter,

<sup>1</sup> Reading with P.