

Without my leave ?”

“ O paladin ! ” he answered,

“ Kharrád, son of Barzín, made me afraid.  
He said : ‘ We may not tarry ; thy delay  
Will please those only that speak ill of thee,  
For when the heroic captain of the host,  
Bahrám Chúbína, holdeth court as Sháh  
There is a fear lest thou and I be slain  
Save we return.’ ”

Bahrám Chúbína said :—

“ Just so : one must consult o’er good and ill.”  
He then restored and with advantages  
From his own treasures what the scribe had lost,  
Then said to him : “ Go thou and ponder o’er  
Thy conduct in this case and flee no more.”

§ 24

*How Hurmuzd received News of Bahrám Chúbína’s  
Doings, and how Bahrám Chúbína sent a Frail  
of Swords to Hurmuzd*

Kharrád, son of Barzín, for his part rode,  
Escaping notice, till he reached the Sháh,  
To whom he told his news, suppressing naught,  
Of wood and meadow, course of onager,  
Strait pathway and Bahrám Chúbína’s sojourn ;  
Told of the palace and the jewelled throne,  
The slave-girls and the lady with the crown :  
He told whatever he had seen and heard.  
The Sháh mused at the tale, laid it to heart,  
And sighed as he remembered what the archmage  
And fortune-teller had said : “ Bahrám Chúbína  
Will turn him from thy throne.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 107, 108.

Forthwith he summoned

The high priest, set Kharrád, son of Barzín,  
Within the room and said to him : “ Relate  
The adventures of thy journey.”

Thus enjoined

He oped his lips and told it all. The Sháh  
Said to the high priest : “ What importeth this ?  
We must consult at large. The onager  
That led him through the wood, the palace seen  
Amidst the wilderness, the lady crowned  
Upon the golden throne, the slaves in waiting  
As on a queen—the account is like a dream  
Suggested by old tales ! ”

The high priest thus

Made answer to the monarch of the world :—

“ Beneath that onager there was a dív  
Who sought to lead Bahrám Chúbína wrong,  
And make perverseness show within his heart.  
The palace, be assured, was sorcerer’s work,  
The lady on the throne an impious witch,  
Who on this wise to hearten him the more  
Displayed the crown and throne of majesty.  
All eager and bemused he went from her :  
Be sure that he will ne’er come back to hand.  
His heart was wounded by thy distaff-case,  
And going to that dív-witch made it worse.  
It was not well to send the ignoble robe  
To one so overweening, for thereby  
The Íránians were estranged and ceased to trust  
The king of kings. So now devise a scheme  
To bring the army back to court from Balkh.”

The king repented having acted so  
About the cotton and the gaudy dress,  
And asked Kharrád, son of Barzín : “ What say  
The troops there of that lady ? ”

He replied :—