

## § 2

*How the Sorcery of Zúrán and the Jew in the Matter of Mahbúd  
was discovered, and how both were slain by Command of  
Núshírwán*

The Sháh, the world-lord, purposed, as it chanced,  
To hunt the wolf and bade that many a steed,  
Used in the chase, should pass before his eyes,  
Scanned them, and saw the brand-mark of Mahbúd.  
His cheeks flamed at those Arab horses, love  
Still had a place within him, and he burned.  
He wept for pain and with heart sorely seared  
Recalled to mind Mahbúd, and thus he said :—  
“ How much the wicked Dív made to transgress  
That man of counsel and of high degree !  
With that devotion and that rectitude  
Why did his spirit seek the path of loss ? <sup>1</sup>  
The Master of the world alone can tell  
The hidden truth beneath the outward show.”

He thence departed to the hunting-ground,  
Seared at his heart and followed by his men.  
Upon the route he talked with all and cheered  
His heart with words. He took full many a minstrel,  
And with their fascinations docked the way.  
Now as the Sháh's chief minister and scribes  
Were journeying with Zúrán in company  
Their converse ran on spells and magic arts,  
On witchcraft and pernicious Áhriman.  
The king said to the archmages : “ Trouble not  
Your hearts concerning sorcery, but let  
Your talk be all of God and of the Faith ;  
Look not for marvels in black arts and magic.”

Zúrán said : “ Live for ever, and may wisdom  
Feed on thy words. All that they say of witchcraft

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

Is true, though this is known but to adepts.  
 If food have milk therein they by a look  
 Can from a distance turn it into bane."

On hearing this a bygone time recurred  
 To Núshírwán. He thought upon Mahbúd,  
 And those two sons of his, and deeply sighed.  
 He looked upon Zúrán but held his peace,  
 And quickly urged his prancing charger on.  
 His mind was in a fume with thought because  
 Zúrán had been the foeman of Mahbúd.

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He said : " I know not what this miscreant  
 Had done upon the day whereon I slew  
 Mahbúd, and that great house was overthrown.  
 Would that almighty God would make all plain,  
 And give my heart and brain tranquillity,  
 Because I spy this fellow's marks hereon,  
 And am fulfilled with sorrow for the past."

He journeyed on with sad and aching heart,  
 With lowering visage and with tearful eyes,  
 And, having reached the ending of the stage,  
 Set up his camp-enclosure by a stream.  
 Now when Zúrán had reached the tent they cleared  
 The place of strangers and the converse ran  
 Upon the means of witching milk and honey.  
 " It is my favourite subject," said Zúrán.

The Sháh then questioned him about Mahbúd,  
 And by what means his sons were done to death,  
 And heard the quaver in Zúrán's reply.  
 His crime became apparent. Núshírwán  
 Addressed him, saying : " Tell to me the truth,  
 Conceal it not and act not knavishly,  
 For knavery but causeth evil deeds,  
 And evil comrades will corrupt good hearts."

Zúrán told all the truth, revealed the secret,  
 Threw all the blame upon the Jew, and made  
 As though he were possessed by grief and anguish.

The great king, having listened, fettered him,  
 And sent to that enchanter of a Jew,  
 As swift as smoke, a rider with two steeds.  
 Whenas the Jew had reached the lofty court  
 The exalted monarch questioned him with mildness,  
 And said : " Inform me how the matter went,  
 And lie not to me touching this affair."

The Jew asked for protection from the world-lord  
 If he revealed the mystery of black art,  
 And then told what Zúrán had said with all  
 The matter of their secret conference.  
 The world-lord heard with wonder and convoked  
 The marchlords, potentates, and archimages,  
 And in their presence for the second time  
 Investigated every circumstance.  
 The evil-minded Jew told everything  
 Till naught was hidden from the chiefs. The Sháh  
 Then bade the deathsman rear two lofty gibbets,  
 From each whereof a twisted lasso hung,  
 Before the palace-portal in the presence  
 Of all the host. The executioner  
 Haled to the gibbets and suspended there  
 Zúrán on one, the Jew upon the other,  
 In savage wise. 'Neath showers of stones and arrows  
 They gave their heads up for bewitching milk.  
 Tread not the world for evil, for it will,  
 Past doubt, befall the practiser of ill.

The Sháh long sought for kindred of Mahbúd,  
 If so he might find one that had escaped,  
 And found one damsel of unsullied name,  
 And three men eminent and excellent.  
 To these he gave all that Zúrán possessed,  
 As well as all the fortune of the Jew.  
 His soul kept burning on Mahbúd's account,  
 And in the night he wept till it was day,  
 Would pray to God for pardon and pour forth

His heart's blood on his bosom. He bestowed  
 Much largess on the mendicants and made  
 His tongue moreover prayerful unto God  
 That He might pardon what was done amiss,  
 And call him not tyrannic and unjust.

The worshipper of God, the pure of heart,  
 Will in no evil doings bear a part,  
 For though ill actions are not hard to do,  
 Yet in the end the heart is sure to rue.  
 Although thy heart shall be a flinty stone,  
 Yet in the end its secret will be known,  
 And low soever as thy voice may be  
 Time also will reveal the mystery,  
 While, even if the world shall not regard,  
 Good done in secret is its own reward.  
 If thou art innocent and pure of rede  
 A portion in both worlds will be thy meed.

### § 3

*In Praise of the Wisdom of Núshírwán, and how he  
 built the City of Súrsán*

The matter of Zúrán and of the Jew  
 Is done, to wisdom now thy praise is due.  
 Just though thou art here is no tarrying ;  
 Thy fame will be thy memory, O king !  
 The unjust sovereign, when all is done,  
 Will have but sepulchre and malison,  
 But if in heart thou dealest righteously  
 Know that the world hath gained new grace by thee ;  
 So if, O chief ! thou wilt have praise in death  
 Let wisdom be thy leaf that flourisheth.  
 Thus, through my words, though Núshírwán is dead,  
 His justice hath achieved fresh lustihead.