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**Hakim Abu'l-Qasim  
Ferdowsi Tusi Firdowsi  
- poems -**

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# Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi Firdowsi(941 - 1020)

Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi known as Ferdowsi was a highly revered Persian poet. He was the author of the Shahnameh, the national epic of Iran and related societies.

The Shahnameh was originally composed by Ferdowsi for the princes of the Samanid dynasty, who were responsible for a revival of Persian cultural traditions after the Arab invasion of the seventh century. The Shahnameh chronicles the legendary history of the pre-Islamic kings of Iran from Keyumars to Yazdegerd III. Ferdowsi continued work on the poem after the Samanids were conquered by the Ghaznavids. The new ruler Mahmud of Ghazni, a Turk, may have lacked the interest in Ferdowsi's work shown by the Samanids, resulting in him losing favor with the royal court. In later passages of his poem, Ferdowsi complains about poverty and the ravages of old age. Ferdowsi spent over three decades (from 977 to 1010) working on the Shahnameh, which became one of the most influential works of Persian literature.

**<b>Life</b>**

**<b>Family</b>**

Ferdowsi was born into a family of Iranian landowners (dehqans) in 940 C.E. in the village of Paj, near the city of Tus in the province of Khorasan, in northeastern Iran. Ferdowsi was a Shi'a Muslim, which is attested by the Shahnameh and also confirmed by early accounts. Little is known about Ferdowsi's early life, even his precise name is in doubt. According to the 13th-century Arab translator of the Shahnameh, Bondari, the poet's full name was "al-Amir al-ʿakim Abu'l-Qasem Manʿur ibn al-ʿasan al-Ferdowsi al-ʿusi". It is not known when or why he adopted the pen name "Ferdowsi" ("man of paradise"). The poet had a wife, who was probably literate and came from the same dehqan class. He had a son, who died aged 37, and was mourned by the poet in an elegy which he inserted into the Shahnameh.

**<b>Background</b>**

Ferdowsi belonged to the class of dehqans. These were landowning Iranian aristocrats who had flourished under the Sassanid dynasty (the last pre-Islamic dynasty to rule Iran) and whose power, though diminished, had survived into the

Islamic era which followed the Arab conquests of the seventh century. The dehqans were intensely patriotic (so much so that dehقان is sometimes used as a synonym for "Iranian" in the Shahnameh) and saw it as their task to preserve the cultural traditions of Iran, including the legendary tales about its kings.

The Muslim conquests of the seventh century had been a watershed in Iranian history, bringing the new religion of Islam, submitting Iranians to the rule of the Arab caliphate and promoting Arabic culture and language at the expense of Persian. By the late 9th century, the power of the caliphate had weakened and local Iranian dynasties emerged. Ferdowsi grew up in Tus, a city under the control of one of these dynasties, the Samanids, who claimed descent from the Sassanid general Bahram Chobin (whose story Ferdowsi recounts in one of the later sections of the Shahnameh). The Samanid bureaucracy used the New Persian language rather than Arabic and the Samanid elite had a great interest in pre-Islamic Iran and its traditions and commissioned translations of Pahlavi (Middle Persian) texts into New Persian. Abu Mansur ʿAbd-al-Razzaq , a dehقان and governor of Tus, had several local scholars compile a prose Shahnameh ("Book of Kings"), which was completed in 957. Although it no longer survives, Ferdowsi used it as one of the sources of his epic. Samanid rulers were patrons of such important Persian poets as Rudaki and Daqiqi. Ferdowsi followed in the footsteps of these writers.

Details about Ferdowsi's education are lacking. Judging by the Shahnameh, there is no evidence he knew either Arabic or Pahlavi. Although New Persian was permeated by Arabic vocabulary by Ferdowsi's time, there are relatively few Arabic loan words in the Shahnameh. This may have been a deliberate strategy by the poet.

### <b>Life as a poet</b>

It is possible that Ferdowsi wrote some early poems which have not survived. He began work on the Shahnameh around 977, intending it as a continuation of the work of his fellow poet Daqiqi, who had been assassinated by a slave. Like Daqiqi, Ferdowsi employed the prose Shahnameh of ʿAbd-al-Razzaq as a source. He received generous patronage from the Samanid prince Mansur and completed the first version of the Shahnameh in 994. When the Turkic Ghaznavids overthrew the Samanids in the late 990s, Ferdowsi continued to work on the poem, rewriting sections to praise the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud. Mahmud's attitude to Ferdowsi and how well he rewarded the poet are matters which have long been subject to dispute and have formed the basis of legends about the poet and his patron (see below). The Turkic Mahmud may have been less interested in tales from Iranian history than the Samanids. The later sections of

the Shahnameh have passages which reveal Ferdowsi's fluctuating moods: in some he complains about old age, poverty, illness and the death of his son; in others, he appears happier. Ferdowsi finally completed his epic on 8 March 1010. Virtually nothing is known for sure about the last decade of his life.

### **<b>Tomb</b>**

Ferdowsi was buried in his own garden, burial in the Muslim cemetery of Tus having been forbidden by a local cleric. A Ghaznavid governor of Khorasan constructed a mausoleum over the grave and it became a revered site. The tomb, which had fallen into decay, was rebuilt between 1928 and 1934 on the orders of Reza Shah and has now become the equivalent of a national shrine.

### **<b>Legend</b>**

According to legend, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni offered Ferdowsi a gold piece for every couplet of the Shahnameh he wrote. The poet agreed to receive the money as a lump sum when he had completed the epic. He planned to use it to rebuild the dykes in his native Tus. After thirty years of work, Ferdowsi finished his masterpiece. The sultan prepared to give him 60,000 gold pieces, one for every couplet, as agreed. However, the courtier Mahmud had entrusted with the money despised Ferdowsi, regarding him as a heretic, and he replaced the gold coins with silver. Ferdowsi was in the bath house when he received the reward. Finding it was silver not gold, he gave the money away to the bathkeeper, a refreshment seller and the slave who had carried the coins. When the courtier told the sultan about Ferdowsi's behaviour, he was furious and threatened to execute him. Ferdowsi fled Khorasan, having first written a satire on Mahmud, and spent most of the remainder of his life in exile. Mahmud eventually learned the truth about the courtier's deception and had him either banished or executed. By this time, the aged Ferdowsi had returned to Tus. The sultan sent him a new gift of 60,000 gold pieces but as the caravan bearing the money arrived in Tus it met a funeral procession: the poet had died from a heart attack.

### **<b>Works</b>**

Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is the most popular and influential national epic in Iran and other Persian-speaking nations. The Shahnameh is the only surviving work by Ferdowsi regarded as indisputably genuine. He may have written poems earlier in his life but they no longer exist. A narrative poem, Yusof o Zolayka (Joseph and Zuleika), was once attributed to him but scholarly consensus now rejects the idea it is his. There has also been speculation about the satire Ferdowsi allegedly wrote about Mahmud of Ghazni after the sultan failed to

reward him sufficiently. Nezami Aruzi, Ferdowsi's early biographer, claimed that all but six lines had been destroyed by a well-wisher who had paid Ferdowsi a thousand dirhams for the poem. Introductions to some manuscripts of the Shahnameh include verses purporting to be the satire. Some scholars have viewed them as fabricated, others are more inclined to believe in their authenticity.

### <b>Influence</b>

Ferdowsi is one of the undisputed giants of the Persian literature. After Ferdowsi's Shahnameh a number of other works similar in nature surfaced over the centuries within the cultural sphere of the Persian language. Without exception, all such works were based in style and method on Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, but none of them could quite achieve the same degree of fame and popularity as Ferdowsi's masterpiece.

Ferdowsi has a unique place in Persian history because of the strides he made in reviving and regenerating the Persian language and cultural traditions. His works are cited as a crucial component in the persistence of the Persian language, as those works allowed much of the tongue to remain codified and intact. In this respect, Ferdowsi surpasses Nizami, Khayyam, Asadi Tusi, and other seminal Persian literary figures in his impact on Persian culture and language. Many modern Iranians see him as the father of the modern Persian language.

Ferdowsi in fact was a motivation behind many future Persian figures. One such notable figure was Reza Shah Pahlavi who established an "Academy of Culture" in Iran, in order to attempt to remove Arabic and Turkish words from the Persian language, replacing them with suitable Persian alternatives. In 1934, Reza Shah set up a ceremony in Mashad, Khorasan celebrating a thousand years of Persian literature since the time of Ferdowsi, titled "Ferdowsi's Millenary Celebration" inviting notable European as well as Iranian scholars. Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, is a university established in 1949 that also takes its name from Ferdowsi.

Ferdowsi's influence in the Persian culture is explained by the Encyclopaedia Britannica:

<i>The Persians regard Ferdowsi as the greatest of their poets. For nearly a thousand years they have continued to read and to listen to recitations from his masterwork, the Shah-nameh, in which the Persian national epic found its final and enduring form. Though written about 1,000 years ago, this work is as intelligible to the average, modern Iranian as the King James version of the Bible

is to a modern English-speaker. The language, based as the poem is on a Dari original, is pure Persian with only the slightest admixture of Arabic. </i>

# Alas For Youth

Much have I labored, much read o'er  
Of Arabic and Persian lore,  
Collecting tales unknown and known;  
Now two and sixty years are flown.  
Regret, and deeper woe of sin,  
'Tis all that youth has ended in,  
And I with mournful thoughts rehearse  
Bu Táhir Khusrawáni's verse:  
'I mind me of my youth and sigh,  
Alas for youth, for youth gone by!'

Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi Firdowsi



# How Bárbad Lamented Khusrau Parwiz

Now list the lamentation of Bárbod,  
And grow forgetful of the world at large.  
On hearing that the Sháh, not by advice  
And 'gainst his will, no longer filled the throne,  
That 'men are seeking how to murder him;  
The soldiers are renouncing fealty,'  
Bárbad came from Chahram to Taisafún  
With tearful eyes and heart o'ercharged; he came  
To that abode and saw the Sháh whereat  
His tulip-cheeks became like fenugreek.  
He bode awhile in presence of the Sháh,  
Then went with wailing to the audience-hall.  
His love flamed in his heart, his heart and soul  
Burned in his anguish for Khusrau Parwiz;  
His eyes rained like a cloud in Spring and made  
His bosom as the margent of the sea.  
He fashioned him a dirge upon the harp,  
And to that dirge he sang a mournful plaint.  
With visage wan and heart fulfilled with grief  
He thus lamented in the olden tongue:-

'O Sháh! O noble chieftan! O Khusrau!  
O great! O strong! O hero ne'er cast down!  
Where are thy mastery and greatness now,  
Where all thy Grace, thy fortune, and thy crown?

'Where that imperial circlet, towering height?  
Where are thine armlets and thine ivory throne?  
Where all thy manliness, thy Grace, and might,  
Who 'neath thy wings hadst this world for thine own?

'Oh! whither are thy dames and minstrels gone,  
Gate, audience-hall, and leaders of thy day,  
The diadem and Káwa's gonfalon,  
And all the blue-steel falchions, where are they?

'Where are the head, the crown that loved it well-  
Mate of the earrings and the throne of gold?  
Where are Shabdiz, his stirrups and his sell-

The steed that 'neath thee ever caracol'd?

'Where are thy helmet, head, and habergeon  
All golden and compacted gem to gem,  
Thy cavaliers in gold caparison,  
Whose swords made enemies the sheaths for them?

'Where all the camels for thy progresses,  
The golden litters and attendance rife.  
Led steeds, white elephants, and dromedaries?  
Have one and all grown hopeless of life?

'Where are thy fluent tongue and courteous,  
Thy heart, thy purpose, and thine ardent soul?  
Why reft of all art thou abandoned thus?  
Hast read of such a day in any roll?

'Oh! trust not to this world whose remedy  
Is weaker than its bane. 'Twas thy desire  
To have a son to aid and succour thee:  
Now through the son the gyves are on the sire!

'It is by sons that kings obtain their might,  
And are unblemished by time's travailings;  
Yet ever as his sons increased in height  
Both Grace and vigour failed the king of kings.

'None that shall lend an ear while men recall  
The story of Khusrau Parwiz must dare  
to trust the world. Account as ruined all  
Irán and as the pards' and lions' lair.

'of the Sásánian race the Sháh was head-  
One peerless in the sight of crown and state:  
The foeman's wishes are accomplishéd,  
And, like Irán, the race is desolate.

'No man possessed a larger host than he,  
Yet who had cause for justice to beseech?  
The great protector brought the misery,  
And now the wolves are making for the breach!

"O Sháh devoid of shame!" thus tell Shirwi,  
'Such conduct is not worthy of this court.  
Count not upon thy troops' fidelity  
When war is rife on all sides.' God support

'Thy soul, my master! and it is my prayer  
That He thy foemen's heads may headlong fling.  
By God and by thy life, my king! I swear  
By New Year's Day, by sun, and jocund Spring.

'If e'er this hand of mine again shall turn  
To harping may no blessing light on me;  
Mine instruments of music will I burn  
That I may ne'er behold thine enemy.'

He cut four fingers off and grasped the stumps  
Within his other palm. Returning home  
He kindled fire and burned his instruments,  
While those about Kubád both day and night  
At all that might befall them quaked with fright.

Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi Firdowsi

# How Púrándukht Ascended The Throne And Slew Pirúz

'Tis but crude policy when women rule,  
But yet there was a lady-Púrándukht-  
Surviving of the lineage of Sásán,  
And well read in the royal volume: her  
They seated on the throne of sovereignty,  
The Great strewed jewels over her, and then  
She spake upon this wise: 'I will not have  
The people scattered, and I will enrich  
The poor with treasure that they may not bide  
In their distress. God grant that in the world  
There may be none aggrieved because his pain  
Is my calamity. I will expel  
Foes from the realm and walk in royal ways.'

She made search for Pirúz, son of Khusrau,  
Who was delated by an alien.  
Whereat she chose some warriors from the host  
Who brought Pirúz before her. She exclaimed:-  
'Foul-purposed miscreant! thou shalt receive,  
As infamous, the guerdon for thy deeds.'

She bade bring from the stalls a colt unbroken,  
And bound, firm as a rock, Pirúz thereto  
Without a saddle and with yoke on neck.  
The vengeful lady had that untamed steed  
Brought to the riding-ground and thither sent,  
With lassos coiled up in their saddle-straps,  
A band of warriors to urge the colt  
To utmost speed, to strive from time to time  
To throw Pirúz and ever roll itself  
Upon the ground. That colt won much applause  
Until with skin in shreds and dripping blood  
Pirúz gave up the ghost right wretchedly.  
Why having done wrong seekest thou for justice?  
Nay, ill for ill: that is the course of right.

Púrándukht ruled the world with gentleness;  
No wind from heaven blew upon the dust,  
But when six months had passed beneath her sway

The circle of her life bent suddenly;  
For one week she was ailing, then expired,  
And took away with her a fair renown.  
Such is the process of the turning sky,  
So potent while so impotent are we!

If thine be opulence or poverty,  
If life affordeth gain or loss to thee,  
If thou shalt win what thou desirest so,  
Or disappointed be in wretchedness,  
And whether thou be one of wealth or woe,  
Both woe and wealth will pass away no less.  
Reign as a Sháh a thousand years, five score,  
For sixty years or thirty, ten or four,  
It cometh to one thing, when all is done,  
If thou hadst many years or barely one.  
Oh! may thine actions thine own comrades be,  
For they in every place will succour thee.  
Let go thy clutch upon this Wayside Inn  
Because a goodlier place is thine to win.  
If thine endeavour be to learning given  
Thou wilt by knowledge roam revolving heaven.

Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi Firdowsi

# How Shirwi Ascended The Throne

From the Shahnameh

Now when Shirwi sat on the goodly throne,  
And donned the royal crown so much desired,  
The leaders of the Iranians each drew near  
To proffer him the homage due to kings,  
Exclaiming: 'Worshipful and honoured Sháh!  
Know, God gave thee the crown, and now thou sittest  
Securely on the throne of ivory,  
And may thy sons and scions have the world.'

Kubád replied: 'Be ever conquering  
And happy. Never will we practice ill.  
How good is justice with benevolence!  
The world will we keep peaceful and cut off  
The works of Ahriman by every right,  
Ancestral precedent that greateneth  
The Glory of our Faith. I will dispatch  
A message to my sire and tell him all.  
He is in evil odour in the world  
Through his ill deeds: let him excuse his faults  
To God and turn to custom and the way.  
If he shall heed me he will not resent  
My conduct. Then will I devote myself  
To state affairs and strive to compass justice  
Both publicly and privily, do good  
Where good is due, and break no poor man's heart.  
I need two honest men of goodly speech,  
Whose memories are charged with ancient lore.'

He asked the assembly: 'Whom shall I employ?  
Who is most shrewd and honest in Iran?'

The warriors suggested by their looks  
Two men of lore if they should give consent.  
Kubád perceived whom the Iránians  
Agreed to choose: one of them was Ashtád,  
The other was Kharrád, son of Barzin,  
The old-two sages eloquent and heedful.

Kubád addressed them thus: 'O ye wise men,  
Ye chiefs experienced and veteran!  
Deem not the conduct of the world too toilsome,  
Because the Great by travail compass treasure.  
It is for you now to approach the Sháh;  
Perchance through you he may conform himself.  
Appeal to him by instance new or old  
As there is need.'

With tears unwilling  
Those sages made them ready. When Kharrád,  
Son of Barzin, and when Ashtád, who had  
Gashasp for sire, had mounted on their steeds,  
As bidden, Kubád said: 'Now with right good will  
'Tis yours to take the road to Taisafún,  
To carry to my glorious sire a message,  
And bear it all in mind from first to last.  
Say: "Twas no fault of ours nor did the Iránians  
Cause this, but having left the way of Faith  
Thou hast thyself incurred God's chastisement,  
for, first, no son legitimate will shed  
His sire's blood though impure or give assent  
Thereto and fill the hearts of upright folk  
With pain. Again, thy treasures fill the world,  
And thine exactions reach all provinces,  
While, thirdly, many horsemen brave and famed  
Within Irán who gladdened there have left  
Son, country, and their own pure kith and kin,  
Have parted, this to Chin, and that to Rúm,  
And now are scattered o'er each march and land.  
Again, when Caesar, who had done and borne  
So much for thee, had given thee a host  
And daughter too with treasure and much else.  
Desired of thee the Cross of Christ for Rúm,  
So that his land might be revived thereby,  
How did the Cross of Jesus profit so  
Thy treasures when complaisance on thy part  
Would have made Caesar glad? But thou didst not  
Restore it, hadst not wit enough for that,  
Or one to guide thee to humanity.  
Again, thy greed was such that wisdom's eye  
Was all obscured in thee, and thou didst seize

The chattels of the poor whose curses brought  
Ill on thy head. Thou slewest thy mother's brothers.  
Two loyal men who gave thy throne a lustre.  
Moreover thou hadst sixteen sons whose days  
And nights were passed in prison while no chief  
Could sleep secure from thee but hid in fear.  
Know, that which hath befall'n thee is from God:  
Reflect on thy foul deeds. As for myself,  
I am but as the instrument in all  
This wrong, am but the heading of the tale.  
By God, 'twas not my fault, no aim of mine  
To wreck the Sháh's throne! Now for all seek grace,  
And say so to these chieftains of Irán:  
Turn from ill deeds to God-the Guide to good-  
Who may abate the woes that thou hast brought  
Upon thyself."

On hearing this the twain  
Departed with their hearts all seared and sore  
Till, sorrowful and weeping, they arrived  
At Taisafùn and in that city sought  
The palace of Marúsipand for there  
The exalted king resided. Galinúsh  
Sat at the palace-gate: thou wouldst have said:-  
'Earth is convulsed before him!' He was armed  
In helm and breastplate, all the Arab steeds  
Wore bards, and all his soldiers were drawn up,  
Equipped, and sword in hand. He grasped a mace  
Of steel, his heart all fire and storm. Now when  
Kharrád, son of Barzin, and when Ashtád,  
Son of Gashasp, those ages twain, dismounted,  
He rose forthwith, rejoiced to look on them,  
And gave them place befitting, hailing them  
As famous chiefs. The eloquent Kharrád  
First laved his tongue in valour and then said  
To Galinúsh: 'Kubád the glorious  
Hath donned in peace the Kaian crown. Irán,  
Túran and Rúm have tidings that Shirwi  
Is seated on the throne of king of kings.  
Why this cuirass and helm and massive mace?  
Who is thine enemy?'



Said Galinúsh:-

'O veteran! may all thy doings prosper.  
Thou art concerned about my tender frame  
Because I am in iron garniture.  
I bless thee for thy kindness: thou deservest  
That I shall sprinkle jewels over thee.  
Thy words are naught but good, and may the sun  
Be thine associate in the world. Declare  
Why thou hast come, then look for my reply.'

He thus gave answer: 'Glorious Kubád  
Commisioned me to bear Khusrau Parwiz  
A message and if now thou wilt ask audience  
I will deliver what the world-lord said-  
That monarch of the flock.'

Said Galinúsh:-

'Who can remember words so well as thou,  
O worshipful? yet nathless Sháh Kubád  
Gave me full many a counsel touching this,  
And charged me, saying: 'Let none have by day  
Or night an audience of Khusrau Parwiz  
Unless thou hearest what the messenger  
Hath got to say in Persian new or old.'

Ashtád said: 'I hold not my message secret,  
O fortunate! It is: 'The sword is fruiting,  
And nuzzling princes' heads.' In this regard  
Now ask for audience of Khusrau Parwiz  
That we may tell the message of the Sháh.'

This hearing Galinúsh arose, made fast  
His mail, went to the Sháh with folded arms,  
As servants should, and said thus: 'Love for ever,  
O Sháh! May evil never vex thy heart.  
There cometh by Ashtád and by Kharrád,  
Son of Barzin, a message from the Sháh  
From court.'

Khusrau Parwiz laughed out and said:-  
'Speak wiser words for if he be the king  
Then what am I, and why am I within

This narrow prison, and why need'st thou ask  
That I shall grant an audience unto any,  
Be their words false or true?'

So Galinúsh  
Returned to those two warriors, reported  
The answer of the paladin, and said:-  
'Now go with folded arms, declare your message,  
And hearken his reply.'

Those sages twain  
Of honest speech inswathed their visages  
In sashes brought from Chin and, when they saw  
The Sháh, did reverence and waited long  
What while he sat upon a lofty throne  
Adorned with effigies of sheep and wolves,  
Impleached with gold and gems, with under him  
A couch of yellow broidery. He leaned  
On cushions hued like lapis-lazuli,  
Held a fine quince and drowsed there all amort.  
When he beheld those chiefs supreme in wisdom  
He roused himself and secretly invoked  
God's help. He laid that fine quince on the cushions  
That he might welcome those two wayfarers.  
The quince slipped from the cushions, rolled unbruised  
Upon the couch and thence from throne to floor.  
Ashtád ran, took it up, wiped off the dust,  
And laid the quince upon his head. The world-lord  
Turned from Ashtád that he might neither see  
Nor scent the quince. they set it on the throne,  
And stood themselves. The matter of the quince  
Perturbed Khusrau Parwiz who boded ill,  
Looked up to heaven and said: 'O truthful Judge!  
Who can establish one whom Thou o'erthrowest,  
Who join what Thou hast broken? When bright fortune  
Departeth from a race it bringeth sorrow  
Because the day of joy is passed away.'

Then to Ashtád: 'Now for thine ambassador  
From mine unnatural child of ill repute,  
And from that handful of conspirators,  
My hateful and black-hearted enemies.

Malignant fools are they and in their folly  
Most wretched. Fortune will desert our race;  
None will rejoice again; the crown and throne  
Will pass to those unfit; this royal Tree  
Will be destroyed; the Base will be exalted;  
The spirits of the Great grow sorrowful.  
The majesty will bide not with our sons,  
Or with our kindred or posterity;  
Their friends all be their chiefest enemies,  
Revilers and destroyers of the race.  
This quince hath made the secret evident;  
The throng of king of kings will bear no fruit.  
Now tell to me the words that thou hast heard:  
I count his less than water in the stream.'

Then those two men released their tongues to speak,  
And told all that Kubád, his son, had said,  
Not keeping e'en a whisper back from him.  
The king of kings, when he had heard the message,  
Writhed with distress and heaved a deep, cold sigh.  
Then said he to those chiefs: 'Hear is my response,  
And bear it to the young prince, every word.  
Say: 'Quit thine own misdeeds ere blaming others'.  
What thou hast uttered are they words of thine?  
A murrain on the prompter! Speak not so  
As to rejoice thy foe with thy fool's talk.  
And let him learn that thou hast not the wisdom  
To furnish speech with knowledge from thy brains.  
If thy trust is in words that profit not  
Thou mak'st default in soul and wisdom too.  
He that shall call thee wicked, then acknowledge  
Thee to be world-lord, should not sit before thee.  
And order matters whether great or small.  
Think not in future of such messages  
Or thou wilt cause thy foemen to rejoice.  
My state hath been appointed me by God:  
My hopes are set upon the other world.  
And thou by these thy charges which are lies  
Will gain no glory in the nobles' eyes."

Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi Firdowsi

# How The Chiefs Demanded From Shirwi The Death Of Khusrau Parwiz

From the Shahnameh  
Shirwi, a timid, inexperienced youth,  
Found that the throne beneath him was a snare,  
While readers of mankind saw that 'twas time  
For men of might. those that had done the ill,  
And had produced that coil, went from the hall  
Of audience to the presence of Kubád  
To mind him of their infamous designs:-  
'We said before and now we say again  
Thy thoughts are not on government alone.  
There are two Sháh's now seated in one room,  
One on the throne and one on its degree,  
And when relations grow 'twixt sire and son  
They will behead the servants one and all.  
It may not be, so speak of it no more.'

Shirwi was frightened and he played poltroon  
Because in their hands he was as a slave.  
He answered: 'None will bring him to the toils  
Except a man whose name is infamous.  
Ye must go homeward and advise thereon.  
Inquire: 'What man is there that will abate  
Our troubles secretly?''

The Sháh's ill-wishers  
Sought for a murderer to murder him  
By stealth, but none possessed the pluck or courage  
To shed the blood of such a king and hang  
A mountain round his own neck. Everywhere  
The Sháh's foes sought until they met with one  
Blue-eyed, pale-cheeked, his body parched and hairy,  
With lips of lapis-lazuli, with feet  
All dust, and belly ravenous; the head  
Of that ill-doer was bare. None knew his name  
Midst high and low. This villain (may he never  
See jocund Paradise!) sought Farrukhzád,

And undertook the deed. 'This strife is mine,'  
He said. 'If ye will make it worth my while  
This is my quarry.'

'Go and do it then  
If thou art able,' Farrukhzád replied.  
'Moreover open not thy lips herein.  
I have a purse full of dinárs for thee,  
And I will look upon thee as my son.'

He gave the man a dagger keen and bright,  
And then the murderer set forth in haste.  
The miscreant, when he approached the Sháh,  
Saw him upon the throne, a slave attending.  
Khusrau Parwiz quaked when he saw that man,  
And shed tears from his eyelids on his cheeks  
Because his heart bare witness that day  
Of heaviness was near. He cried: 'O wretch!  
What is thy name? Thy mother needs must wail thee.'

The man replied: 'They call me Mihr Hurmuzd,  
A stranger here with neither friend nor mate.'

Thus said Khusrau Parwiz: 'My time hath come,  
And by the hand of an unworthy foe,  
Whose face is not a man's, whose love none seeketh.'

He bade a boy attending him: 'Go fetch,  
My little guide! an ewer, water, musk,  
And ambergris, with cleaner, fairer robes.'

The boy-slave heard, unwitting what was meant,  
And so the little servant went away,  
And brought a golden ewer to the Sháh  
As well as garments and a bowl of water,  
Whereon Khusrau Parwiz made haste to go,  
Gazed on the sacred twigs and muttered prayers:  
It was no time for words or private talk.  
The Sháh put on the garments brought, he made  
Beneath his breath confession of his faults,  
And wrapped a new simarre about his head  
In order not to see his murderer's face.

Then Mihr Hurmuzd, the dagger in his hand,  
Made fast the door and coming quickly raised  
The great king's robe and pierced his liverstead.

Such is the process of this whirling world,  
From thee its secret keeping closely furled!  
The blameless speaker and the boastful see  
That all its doings are but vanity,  
For be thou wealthy or in evil ease  
This Wayside Inn is no abiding-place;  
Yet be offenceless and ensue right ways  
If thou desirest to receive just praise.

When tidings reached the highways and bázars:-  
'Khusrau Parwiz was slaughtered thus,' his foes  
Went to the palace-prison of the sad,  
Where fifteen of his noble sons were bound,  
And slew them there, though innocent, what time  
The fortune of the Sháh was overthrown.  
Shirwi, the world-lord, dared say naught and hid  
His grief though he wept sorely at the news,  
And afterwards sent twenty of his guards  
To keep his brothers' wives and children safe  
Now that the Sháh had been thus done to death.

So passed that reign and mighty host away,  
Its majesty, its manhood, and its sway  
Such as no kings of kings possessed before,  
Or heard of from the men renowned of yore.  
It booteth nothing what the wise man saith  
When once his head is in the dragon's breath.  
Call this world 'crocodile' for it doth gnaw  
The prey that it hath taken with its claw.  
The work of Sháh Khusrau Parwiz is done;  
His famous hoards and throne and host are gone.  
To put one's trust in this world is to be  
In quest of dates upon a willow-tree.  
Why err in such a fashion from the way  
Alike by darksome night and shining day?  
Whate'er thy gains let them suffice thee still  
As thou art fain to save thy soul from ill,  
And in thy day of strength hold thyself weak;

For kindly impulses and justice seek,  
And be intent on good. For what is thine  
To give or spend do as thou dost incline;  
All else is pain and toil. How goodlier  
Than we are friends whose faithfulness is clear!  
Such faithfulness of friends is greatly dear.

Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi Firdowsi

# The Death Of Yazdagird

From the Shahnameh

There was a paladin, a Turk by race,  
A man of influence and named Bizhan;  
He dwelt within the coasts of Samarkand  
Where he had many kin. Ill-starred Mahwi,  
Becoming self-assertive, wrote to him:-  
'Thou prosperous scion of the paladins!  
A strife hath risen that will bring thee profit:  
The Sháh is of all places here at Marv  
And with no troops! His head and crown and state,  
Wealth, throne, and host, are thine if thou wilt come.  
Recall the vengeance owing to thy sires,  
And give this unjust race its just reward.'

Bizhan, considering the letter, saw  
That insolent Mahwi would win the world,  
Then spake thus to his minister: 'Thou chief  
Of upright men! what sayest thou to this?  
If I lead forth a host to aid Mahwi  
'Twill be my ruin here.'

The minister  
Replied: 'O lion-hearted warrior!  
'Twere shame to help Mahwi and then withdraw.  
Command Barsám to set forth with a host  
To aid upon this scene of strife. The sage  
Will term thee daft to go and fight in person  
At the insistence of this man of Súr.'

Bizhan replied: 'Tis well, I will not go  
Myself.'

He therefore bade Barsám to lead  
Ten thousand valiant cavaliers and swordsmen  
To Marv with all the implements of war  
If haply he might take the Sháh. That host  
Went like a flying pheasant from Bukhárá  
To Marv within one week. One night at cock-crow



The sound of tymbals went up from the plain.  
How could the king of kings suspect Mahwi  
Of Súr to be his enemy? Shouts rose.  
A cavalier reached Yazdagird at dawn  
To say: 'Mahwi said thus: 'A host of Turks  
Hath come. What is the bidding of the Sháh?  
The Khán and the Faghfúr of Chin command:  
Earth is not able to support their host!''

The Sháh wroth donned his mail. The armies ranged.  
He formed his troops to right and left, and all  
Advanced to battle. Spear in hand he held  
The center, and the whole world was bedimmed  
With flying dust. He saw how lustily  
The Turks engaged, unsheathed his sword, and came,  
As 'twere an elephant before his troops.  
Earth Nile-wise flowed. Like thundering cloud he charged,  
But not a warrior supported him;  
All turned their backs upon that man of name,  
And left him mid the horsemen of the foe.  
The world's king, when Mahwi withdrew, perceived  
The practice hid till then-the intent and plan  
To capture him-yet played the man in fight,  
Displaying valour, strength, and warriorship,  
Slew many at the centre, but at length  
Fled in despair, with falchion of Kábul  
In hand, pursued by many Turks. He sped  
Like lightning mid night's gloom and spied a mill  
On the canal of Zark. Alighting there  
The world's king lay in hiding from his foes  
Within the mill. The horsemen searched for him;  
All Zark was hue and cry. The Sháh abandoned  
His gold-trapped steed, his mare, and scimitar  
With golden sheath. The Turks with loud shouts sought him,  
Excited by that steed and equipage.  
The Sháh within the mill-house lurked in hay.  
With this false Hostel thus it ever is:  
The ascent is lofty and profound the abyss.  
With Yazdagird, while fortune slumbered not,  
A throne enskied by heaven was his lot,  
And now it was a mill! Excess of sweet  
Bred bane for him and, if thou art discreet,

Affect not this world for its end is ill.  
Whiles a tame serpent to the touch it still  
At whiles will bite, and hot that bite will be.  
Why then affect this cozening hostelry  
While like a drum the signal to be gone  
Thou hearest, bidding: 'Bind the baggage on.  
And for sole throne the grave's floor look upon?'

With mouth untasting and with tearful eyes  
The Sháh abode until the sun arose,  
And then the miller oped the mill-house door.  
He bore a truss of grass upon his back.  
A low-born man was he, by name Khusrau,  
Poor, foolish, unrespected, purposeless.  
He lived upon the profits of his mill,  
Which gave him full employment. He beheld  
A warrior, like a lofty cypress, sitting  
In dolour on the ground with kingly crown  
Upon his head and with brocade of Rúm  
Bright on his breast; his eyes a stag's, his chest  
And neck a lion's; of beholding him  
The eye ne'er tired. He was unique in form;  
Wore golden boots; his sleeves were fringed with pearls  
And gold. Khusrau looked, stood astound, and called  
On God, then said: 'O man of sunlike mien!  
Say in what sort thou camest to this mill?  
Why didst thou take it for thy resting-place  
Full as it is of wheat and dust and hay?  
Who art thou with such form, such Grace and looks?  
Sure, heaven never saw the like of thee!'

The Sháh replied: 'I am Iránian-born,  
In flight before the army of Túrán.'

The miller said, abashed: 'I have no comrade  
Save penury, but still, if barley-bread,  
With some poor cresses from the river-bank,  
Will serve thee I will bring them; naught have I  
Besides: a man so straitened well may wail.'

Through stress of fight the Sháh had rested not,  
Or eaten, for three days and so replied:-

'Bring what thou hast, that and the sacred twigs  
Will serve my turn.'

The poor and lowly miller  
Brought him the cresses and the barley-bread,  
Made haste to fetch the sacred twigs and, reaching  
The toll-house on the way, crossed to the chief  
Of Zark to make request for them. Máhwi  
Had sent men on all sides to find the Sháh,  
And so the chieftain asked the miller: 'Friend!  
For whom need'st thou the sacred twigs?'

Khusrau replied: 'There is a warrior at the mill,  
And seated on the hay, a cypress slim  
In height, a sun in looks, a man of Grace,  
With eyebrows arched and melancholy's eyes:  
His mouth is full of sighs, his soul is sad.  
I set stale fare before him-barley-bread,  
Such as I eat myself-but he is fain  
To take the sacred twigs while muttering grace.  
Thou well mayst muse at him.'

The chief rejoined:-  
'Go and inform Máhwi of Súr hereof,  
For that foul miscreant must not reveal  
His proper bent when he shall hear of this.'

Forthwith he charged a trusty man to take  
The miller to Máhwi who asked of him,  
Then anxious for himself; 'For whom dost thou  
Require the sacred twigs? Tell me the truth.'

The miller all a-tremble made reply:-  
'I had been out to fetch a load and flung  
The mill-door open roughly, when know this:  
The sun was in mine eyes, but his are like  
Those of a startled fawn; his locks are dark  
As the third watch of night; his breath suggesteth  
Musk, and his face embellisheth his crown.  
One that hath never seen the Graces of God  
Should take the mill-house key. His diadem  
Is full of uncut jewels, and his breast

Bright with the brocade of Rúm. The mill hath grown  
As 'twere a sun through him, and yet his food  
Is barley-bread, his seat upon the hay!  
'Spring,' thou wouldst say, 'in Paradise is he:  
Nothane e'er set so tall a cypress-tree."

Now when Mahwi had taken thought he knew:-  
'Tis none but Yazdagird!' and bade the miller:-  
'Haste and cut off his head forthwith or I  
Will cut thine own off presently and leave  
None of thy stock alive.'

The chiefs, the nobles,  
And mighty men heard this and all the assembly  
Were filled with wrath at him; their tongues were charged  
With words, their eyes with tears. An archimage,  
By name Rádwi, whose mind wore wisdom's bridle,  
Said to Máhwi: 'O thou malignant one!  
Why hath the Div confused thine eyes? This know:  
The royal and prophetic offices  
Are two gems set within one finger-ring.  
To break one is to trample life and wisdom  
Beneath thy feet. Reflect upon thy words,  
And then forbear. Be not the Maker's foe.  
First will disaster come on thee herefrom,  
Then thou wilt leave a seed-plot for thy child,  
With fruit of colocynth and leafage blood.  
Ere long thou wilt behold thy head abased;  
Thy villainy will be exposed; thy sons  
Will reap what thou hast sown. This deed of thine  
Will wreck the Faith of God, and crown and throne  
Will curse thee.'

Then a devotee devout,  
Who never put his hand forth to injustice,  
By name Hurmuzd, son of Kharrád, a man  
Who rested in the Faith, said to Máhwi:-  
'O thou oppressor! quit not thus the way  
Of holy God. I see thy heart and sense  
Bedimmed. We see thy breast a tomb. Though strong  
Thou hast no brain; thy mind is weak; thou seekest  
The smoke and not the fire. I see that thou

Wouldst have the malediction of the world,  
And, when thou quit'st it, travail, smart, and anguish.  
Now will thy lifetime prove a wretched one,  
And fire thy dwelling-place when thou departest.'

He sat. Shahrán rose and addressed Máhwi:-  
'Why this audacity? Thou hast opposed  
The king of kings and cottoned with the Khán  
And the Faghfúr. Full many of this race  
Have proved of no account yet men ne'er hasted  
To slay them. Shed not, as thou art a slave,  
The blood of Sháhs because thou wilt be cursed  
Till Doomsday.'

This he said, and sat down weeping  
In anguish with heart full and eyes all gall.  
Then Mihr-i-Núsh stood forth in deep distress,  
With lamentation, and addressed Máhwi:-  
'O evil man of evil race, who art  
Not well advised or just! a crocodile  
Respecteth royal blood, a leopard finding  
A slain king doth not rend him. O thou worse  
In love and instinct than the beasts of prey!  
Thou covetest the Sháh's crown! When Jamshid  
Was slaughtered by Zahhák did that affect  
Heaven's will? Nay, when Zahhák had won the earth  
Abtin appeared, the glorious Faridún  
Was born, the fashion of the world was changed,  
And thou hast heard what tyrannous Zahhák  
Brought on himself as sequel of his crimes.  
For though he lived above a thousand years  
Still in the end the avenger came to him.  
Then, secondly, when Túr, the exalted one,  
Afflicted by his longing for Irán,  
Slew in his folly virtuous Iraj,  
On whom the very dust looked pityingly,  
dispatched him to the hero Faridún,  
And gave the world to sorrow, Minúchihr,  
One of the race, appeared and undid all  
Those bonds. When, thirdly, princely Siyáwush  
Went forth to war, albeit reluctantly,  
Afrásiyáb, inspired by Garsiwaz,

Washed shame and honour from his mind and wits,  
And slew the youthful and right royal prince,  
So that the world became his enemy.  
Sprung from that prince the world-lord Kai Khusrau  
Came and filled all the world with hubbub, clave  
Asunder with his scimitar his grandsire,  
And frayed all those that else had sought revenge.  
the fourth count is the feud against Arjásp,  
The slayer of Luhrásp. Asfandiyár  
Went forth to fight with him and took swift wreak.  
Fifth, is the vengeance ta'en for Sháh Hurmuzd.  
Khusrau Parwiz, whenas he felt confirmed  
In heart and power, dealt in the way we know  
both with Bandwi and Gustaham. The sky,  
Which then revolved, revolveth still. Forgetting  
What they had done for him, when his sire's blood  
And love and family appealed to him,  
He in his day of strength abated theirs.  
One may not scorn the occasion of revenge,  
For such a time will quickly come to thee,  
And thou wilt suffer for thine evil thoughts.  
Thy son will reap what thou hast sown, and fate  
Will not rest long from vengeance; so refrain  
From all this treasure-hoard, this heritage  
Of crown and precious things. Thou art revolting  
Because the Div enjoineth, and abjuring  
The way of God. The Div, as thou wilt learn,  
Is tempting thee with things not for thine honour.  
Burn not thy soul and body in Hell-fire;  
Dim not this world-illuming crown but gather  
Thy scattered troops; recant what thou hast said;  
Go ask the Sháh to pardon thee and when  
Thou seest him renew thy fealty.  
From there prepare to battle with the foe;  
Be instant both in counsel and excuse,  
For not to hearken to the words of sages  
Will mark thee out as evil in both worlds.  
Men bring to naught things done a day too late.  
Wilt thou treat Yazdagird, the king of kings,  
Worse than malignant Turks, for in the fray  
He is a lion, on the throne a Sháh  
As bright as sun and moon, a memory

Of the Sásánians? None is girdle-girt  
Like him. From sire to sire his ancestors  
Were mighty men and compassers of wisdom  
From Núshirwán, the Sháh, back to Ardshir,  
While, seventh backward from Ardshir, Sásán,  
The world-lord, had the crown, for God entrusted  
To him the Kaian crown, and all the kings  
Were of that glorious race. Now many a man  
Hath been thy better, but they ne'er conceived  
Designs like these. As for Bahrám Chúbina,  
Three hundred thousand skilful cavaliers  
On barded steeds fled at one shaft of his,  
And left the field of fight to him; but when  
His heart grew weary of the race of Sháhs  
The hear of his resplendent fortune fell.  
So Faráyin, who sought the throne of kings  
Unworthily and bathed his hands in blood,  
Was in like manner miserably slain:  
This age endureth not such mockeries.  
Fear Him, the Lord, the Maker of the world,  
For He created throne and crown and signet.  
Defame not thine own person wantonly  
Because ere long such things will rise against thee.  
Know that whoever speaketh not the truth  
To thee is thy soul's foe. Now thou art sick  
While I am as the leech, a leech that wailleth,  
And sheddeth drops of blood. Thou art thyself  
Less than the slave of slaves. Be not ambitious  
In thy heart's thoughts. Leave strife to holy God,  
And seek in honour's way the throne of greatness.'

The shepherd-born had set his heart upon  
The throne: the archimages' rede was hard.  
So hath it ever been; 'tis no new thing:  
The flouts of fortune are past reckoning.  
Exalting to the sky above this one,  
And making that vile, wretched, and undone,  
Not leagued with that, on war with this not bent.  
But void of wit, shame, Faith, and precedent.

The archmages all, till the world gloomed and moon  
Succeeded sun, warned that vindictive man,

Who was not one hair better for their talk,  
And said when night came: 'Ye must leave me now  
O sages! I will ponder this tonight,  
And take all kinds of wisdom to my breast.  
We will call twenty wise men from the host  
That we may well need not to deplore this ill.'

The prudent archimages went their ways,  
The men of war arrived. Máhwi held session  
With his confederates and said: 'What think ye  
Herein? If Yazdagird remain alive  
Troops will collect to him from every side;  
My secret purposes have been exposed,  
And all, both great and small, have heard thereof!  
My life will end through his hostility,  
And neither folk nor field and fell be left.'

A wise man said: 'Thou shouldest not have acted  
At first so. If the monarch of Irán  
Be ill-disposed toward thee then past doubt  
Ill will befall thee from him, yet 'tis ill  
To shed his blood for then God will avenge him.  
To left and right are cares and pains of all kinds:  
Consider how thou need'st must act herein.'

Máhwi's son said to him: 'Well counselled sire!  
Since thou hast made the Sháh thine enemy  
Be rid of him; troops from Máchin and Chin  
Will come to him and earth grow strait for us.  
Hold this no trifle. Since thou hast prevailed  
Tempt not the maws of lions. Thou and all  
Thy host will be uprooted from the world  
If standard-wise the Sháh's skirt be unfurl'd.'

Thereat the shameless, infamous Máhwi  
Turned fiercely to the miller, saying: 'Up!  
Take cavaliers and shed my foeman's blood.'

The miller, hearing, knew not what to do.  
But when at night the moon assumed her throne  
Departed mill-ward to the Sháh and when  
He left the court-gate of Máhwi his eyes



Were charged with tear-drops and his heart was full.  
Forthwith Máhwi dispatched some cavaliers  
To follow swift as smoke, instructing them:-  
'See that ye sully not the crown and earrings,  
The signet and the royal robes with blood.  
And strip the Sháh when lifeless.'

With his eyes  
All tearful and cheeks yellow as the sun  
The miller went, exclaiming: 'Judge almighty,  
Who art above the process of time!  
Wring presently his heart and soul for this  
Abhorred behest!'

With heart all shame and qualm,  
With wetted cheeks and tongue all charged with dust,  
He reached the Sháh and drawing nigh with caution,  
As one would speak a secret in the ear,  
Stabbed with a dirk his middle. At the blow  
The Sháh cried: 'Ah!' Then tumbled head and crown,  
And barley-bread before him, to the dust!  
He that abideth when he might depart  
From this world hath no wisdom in his heart,  
And wisdom is not in the turning sky,  
Whose love is as its stress and enmity.  
'Tis well to look not on the world and so  
From these its doings love and wrath not know.  
The planets weary of their fosterlings,  
And guiltless folk like Yazdagird are slain;  
None else hath perished thus of all the kings,  
Nor of his host a plier of the rein.  
The horsemen of accursed Máhwi, on seeing  
That royal Tree thus laid to rest afar  
From palace and his scenes of ease, drew near,  
Gazed, one and all, upon his face, removed  
His cincture, violet robe, and coronet,  
His torque and golden boots, and left him there  
In miserable case upon the ground-  
The monarch of Irán flung on the dust,  
Blood-boltered, with gashed side! Those emissaries,  
When they arose, all framed their tongues to curse:-  
'Oh! may Máhwi himself fare, prostrate thus,

All gory on earth's face.'

They told Máhwi:-

'The exalted Sháh hath passed away from throne,  
From battle and delights,' and he commanded  
To take, when it was night, the monarch's corpse,  
And fling it in the stream. The miller took  
The body of the Sháh forth from the mill,  
And flung it (mark the horror!) in the water,  
And there it floated with a bobbing head!

When it was day and people went abroad  
Two men of worship visited the spot.  
One of these men austere and sober reached  
The river-bank and, when he saw the corpse  
All naked in the water, hurried back  
In consternation to the monastery,  
And told the other monks what he had seen:-  
'The Sháh, the master of the world, is drowned,  
And naked in the water-way of Zark!'

Then many of those holy men-the chief  
And others of all ranks-set forth. A cry  
Of anguish rose from them: 'O noble man,  
And royal crown-possessor! none e'er saw  
The wearer of it in such a plight as this,  
Or ever heard before the time of Christ  
A case like this king's through his wicked slave,  
This misbegotten dog, this reprobate,  
Who fawned upon his master till ill came;  
Máhwi's just portion is to be accursed.  
Woe for the head and crown, the height and mien!  
Woe for the breast and arms, the hands and mace!  
Woe for the last descendant of Ardshir!  
Woe for that cavalier so young and goodly!  
Strong wast thou; thou hadst wisdom in thy soul,  
And thou hast gone to bear the news hereof  
To Núshirwán that, though thy face was moonlike,  
And though thou wast a king and soughtest crowns,  
Yet in the mill they pierced thy liverstead,  
And flung thy naked body in the stream!'

Four of the monks went stripped into the water,  
Seized the bare body of the youthful king,  
That grandson of the world-lord Núshirwán,  
And drew it to the bank while young and old  
Lamented greatly. They prepared for him  
Within the garth a charnel-house and raised  
Its summit to the clouds. They sealed his wound  
With gum, with pitch, with camphor, and with musk,  
And then arrayed him in brocade of gold,  
With fine Egyptian linen underneath,  
And dark-blue Russian cloth o'er all. They decked  
His place of rest with wine and gum and camphor,  
With musk and with rose-water.

When the form  
Was hidden of that noble Cypress-tree  
What said that honoured thane of Marv? 'In secret  
A guerdon waiteth him that after travail  
Departeth with good conscience from the world.'

Another said: 'Though man may laugh, yet know  
That he is of the sufferers, for he  
Will find the falseness of the turning sky,  
Which will reveal to him both rise and fall.'

Another said: 'Call not him one of wit  
That serveth his own form with princes' blood,  
And seeketh wealth, despite of infamy,  
With soul unfearful of an evil end.'

Another said: 'Since the Sháh's lips are closed  
I see not crown or royal seat or signet,  
Or courtiers or a realm or diadem,  
Or throne or helmet, and if these possess  
No moment in themselves why this expense  
Of toil and time?'

'Thy good report, I see,'  
Another said, 'will win thee worthy praise.  
Thou in the garth of Paradise didst set  
A cypress: now thy soul beholdeth it.'

Another said: 'God took thy soul and gave  
Thy body to the care of the devout.  
Hereby thy soul is profited, hereby  
Will harm betide the foe. The Sháh hath now  
His work in Paradise; his foeman's soul  
Is on the road to Hell.'

Another said:-

'Wise, knowledge-loving Sháh sprung from Ardshir!  
Thou reapest now the crop that thou didst sow:  
The lamp of sovereignty is still alight.'

Another said: 'Though thou'rt asleep, young king!  
Thy spirit is awake. Thy lips are mute,  
And with full many a groan thy spirit passed  
And left thy body free. Thy work is done:  
Thy soul is busy now. Thy foeman's head  
Is on the stake. Although thy tongue is tied  
Thy spirit speaketh, and thy soul is purged  
Although thy form is pierced, while if thy hand  
Have dropped the reins thy spirit still will wield  
The spear in battle.'

Said another one:-

'O famous warrior! thou hast departed  
With thine own works as guide. Thy royal seat  
Is now in Paradise; this earth of bale  
Is now another's share.'

'The man that slew  
One such as thee,' another said, 'will look  
Upon harsh days anon.'

The prelate said:-

'Thy slaves are we and laud thy holy soul.  
Be this, thy charnel, as a garth all tulips,  
This bier thine upland and thy plain of joy.'

They spake, took up the bier and carried it  
From waste to mausoleum. Thither came  
The hapless Sháh, crown, throne, and casque at end.  
O man of many years, whose words still run!

Turn from the path of greed, break off thy strain.  
What shall we say hereof? Was justice done  
Or vengeance by the seven planets ta'en,  
On Yazdagird? The sage, if unresolved  
Upon the point, could make me no reply,  
Or if he spake 'twould be in words involved  
That keep the answer still a mystery.  
If thou hast means, good man! indulge thy heart;  
Trust not to what the morrow promiseth,  
Because the world and thou perforce must part,  
And time accounteth for thine every breath;  
Thou shouldest sow not any save good seed  
In what remaineth of thy mortal strife;  
Control the door of appetite and greed;  
He that provided will provide through life,  
And life itself will but produce for thee  
Fair fame and happiness, good friend! Then still  
With all thy might eschew iniquity,  
For from a wise man should proceed no ill.  
Bring wine; our day is nearly o'er and hence  
We must away, for what hath been will be.  
Had I incomings balancing expense  
Then time would be a brother unto me.  
The hail this year like death on me hath come,  
Though death itself were better than the hail,  
And heaven's lofty, far-extending dome  
Hath caused my fuel, wheat, and sheep to fail.

Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi Firdowsi

# When The Sword Of Sixty Comes Nigh His Head

When the sword of sixty comes nigh his head  
give a man no wine, for he is drunk with years.  
Age claps a stick in my bridle-hand:  
substance spent, health broken,  
forgotten the skill to swerve aside from the joust  
with the spearhead grazing my eyelashes.

The sentinel perched on the hill top  
cannot see the countless army he used to see there:  
the black summit's deep in snow  
and its lord himself sinning against the army.  
He was proud of his two swift couriers:  
lo! sixty ruffians have put them in chains.

The singer is weary of his broken voice,  
one drone for the bulbul alike and the lion's grouching.

Alas for flowery, musky sappy thirty  
and the sharp Persian sword!  
The pheasant strutting about the briar,  
pomegranate-blossom and cypress sprig!  
Since I raised my glass to fifty-eight  
I have toasted only the bier and the burial-ground.

I ask the just Creator  
so much refuge from Time  
that a tale of mine may remain in the world  
from this famous book of the ancients  
and they who speak of such matters weighing their words  
think of that only when they think of me.

Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi Firdowsi