

## BOOK ONE

### ON THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF KINGS

#### Tale One.

They tell of a king who gave the command that a captive should be executed. The unfortunate victim, in a state of despair, began to abuse the king with vile language, for it is said that he who washes his hands of life speaks all that he has in his heart.

The tongue of a desperate man sheds  
its curb as the cornered cat springs  
at the dog.

At the instant of necessity when  
flight is impossible the bare hand  
will grasp the keen blade of the sword.

The king asked "What does he say?" One of his ministers, a man of kindly disposition, replied "My Lord; he says, 'And those who restrain anger and pardon men, and Allah loves the doer of good', a verse from the Holy Quran." The king was touched with pity and pardoned him, but another minister of contradictory character said "It is not meet for those of our standing to speak aught but the truth in the presence of Kings. The man abused His Majesty."

The king's face clouded at these words and he said "That falsehood of his is more acceptable to me than the truth you have spoken, for it was a well-intentioned lie, whereas your truth was malicious. Have not the wise said: "The well-intentioned lie is better than the truth which causes mischief?"

Whomsoever advised the king as to his  
actions does ill if he advises aught  
but good.

Over the vault of Feridun was  
inscribed:

“The world, O brother, remains with  
no one, attach your heart to the  
world’s Creator—Enough!

Lean not nor rely upon the world’s  
promises for many have been reared  
by it and perished.

When it is time for the pure soul  
to leave

what matter if from a throne  
or from the naked earth?”