



Ex Libris

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K. K. Venugopal

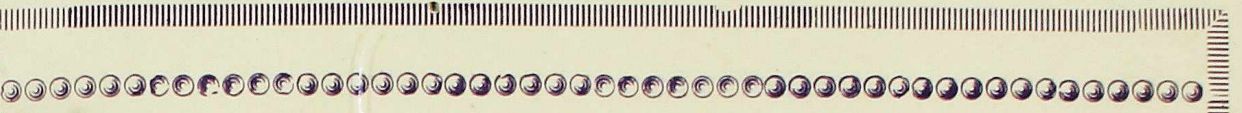
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Rubāiyāt  
of  
Omar Khayyām


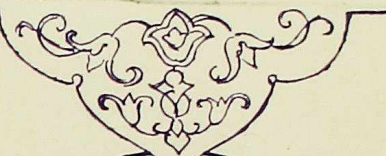
Presented to  
Mrs Jharna Hagra  
who will draw inspiration from  
as she flows from friends 0-2  
Omar Khayyam




Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears  
To-DAY of past Regrets and future Fears—  
    *To-morrow*?—Why, *To-morrow* I may be  
Myself with Yesterday's sev'n Thousand Years.



*Rubáiyat*  
OF  
OMAR KHAYYÁM



EDWARD FITZGERALD



WITH A FOREWORD  
By  
*Cecil L. Burns*



Published by  
**B. K. Khanna & Bros.**  
Calcutta

SOLE DISTRIBUTORS IN INDIA  
**The Standard Literature Co., Ltd.**  
13-1, Old Court House Street  
CALCUTTA

Printed by  
The Calcutta Phototype Co.  
6, Chowringhee, Calcutta.



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*\*The first Edition of the translation of the Rubaiyat differs so much from the fourth Edition, that it has been thought better to print it in full, instead of recording the differences.*

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## P r e f a c e

It was just one of the strangest and happiest accidents that occasionally happen in the history of letters by which Omar, an eleventh-century astronomer-poet of Persia, was raised to the pinnacle of prominence and popularity from the limbo of oblivion in which he had otherwise been destined to live.

The day must have been auspicious when sometime in eighteen-sixties two friends of Dante Gabriel Rossetti found in an obscure bookshop near Leicester Square a small volume entitled 'Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam—The Astronomer-poet of Persia'. It was anonymously published in 1859 and priced at five shillings. The friends of Rossetti bought a copy each for a penny, and when Rossetti was shown the dainty little volume he was excited beyond measure—an excitement which proved happily infectious, as Swinburne readily caught it, and what followed has been told by Swinburne himself :

“Having read it, Rossetti and I invested upwards of six pence a piece—or possibly three pence—I would not wish to exaggerate our extravagance—in copies at that not exorbitant price. Next day we thought we might get some more for presents among our friends, but the man at the stall asked two pence. We took a few, and left him. In a week or two, if I am not much mistaken, the remaining copies were sold at a guinea ; I have since—as I daresay you have—seven copies offered for still more absurd prices.....”

In this manner the *Rubaiyat* leapt into fame. • Believing that scarcely anyone would be



## *Omar Khayyam*

interested in the work, Fitzgerald had got only 250 copies printed and almost the whole lot he had given to his publisher Quaritch, who also like the public at large did not know that a great poem lay embedded in this anonymous little volume. The credit belonged to Rossetti and Swinburne for the discovery of the one poem that made Fitzgerald famous within ten years of its publication. And to-day some ninety years afterwards, the words with which Fitzgerald gave expression to the eternal passion and the eternal pain of the human soul, the words which re-interpreted the elegiac music of the ancient Persian philosopher-poet, have passed into the English speech and have been universally acclaimed to be the finest specimens of the poetry of pleasure and pessimism.

Himself a tolerable scholar in Persian, Fitzgerald was introduced to the unexplored riches of oriental poetry by his friend Prof. Cowell, who got copied for him a rare Persian manuscript from the Bodleian Library and this was the source of Fitzgerald's work. Fitzgerald instantly fell in love with Omar, whose meditative melancholy and highly sensitive response to the beauties of life and nature had the greatest fascination for him.

It has been repeated times without number that Fitzgerald's Quatrains are not faithful copies of the original—an assertion that does not at all detract from the merit of Fitzgerald's work which, in its own singular way, retains the force and beauty of the original. It is, as Fitzgerald himself remarked, "most ingeniously tessellated into a sort of Epicurean Eclogue in a Persian garden".

The poem is unique in its quality of grief and doubt unspoilt by bitterness ; in its keen

## Preface

rapture of the moment, that is always sensuous and also always melancholy, that never allows us to forget the sadness of life but also never disturbs our enjoyment of life. There is melancholy, but there is no distress; there is resignation, but there is no despair. The dream is dismissed, and the reality clasped with complacency, almost with gratitude.

The very interesting account of roses growing upon the graves of Khayyam and Fitzgerald, has been taken, with certain omissions, from the *Times of India*, and for this we are much indebted to the writer, Mr. Cecil L. Burns, and the authorities of the said journal.



THE ROSES ON OMAR KHAYYAM'S  
TOMB AND FITZGERALD'S GRAVE

BY

CECIL L. BURNS

So long as English literature survives, so long will Fitzgerald's paraphrase of the Quatrains of Omar Khayyam link with indissoluble bonds the name of the shy, sensitive poet of East Anglia, to that of the genial philosopher and astronomer of Persia. Surely it was almost beyond the scope of imagination to conceive that two poets apparently so dissimilar in race and character, separated so widely by time and space, should at last come together in so perfect a collaboration. It is idle to attempt to apportion the degrees of indebtedness of each to the other as regards the estimation in which the "Rubaiyat" is held by modern readers; for it is almost impossible to think of them except as one. That their paths should have crossed at just that period of the World's development when the philosophy of the Persian poet would make its most potent appeal to men and women, already becoming restive under the pressure of the mechanical monotony of daily life, and racked by the cares incidental to the fierce struggle for existence, is certainly remarkable. But this is no more wonderful than that the message Omar had to deliver, should find an interpreter in so exquisite and imaginative a master of the most widely distributed language known in the World's history. Those best who know their writings can feel the close spiritual relationship amounting

almost to identity which bound the Persian thinker and his modern interpreter. It overstepped the physical obstacle of a gap of nearly a thousand years, separating their earthly pilgrimages, and surmounting the vast differences of their individual environments. Especially is this sentiment uppermost when standing in the churchyard of the quiet Suffolk hamlet of Boulge, where Fitzgerald was born, where he passed a great part of his life, and where his resting place is marked by a flat granite stone. For at the head of this stone is a memorial which expresses in a beautiful manner this feeling of the identity of Omar and Fitzgerald, and is a simple act of homage to them jointly. It takes the form of a rose bush, of a not uncommon variety, or of any special character, but its origin, history, and the circumstances under which it was planted at the head of Fitzgerald's grave, mark it as the embodiment of the romance of hero-worship. Its presence there is due to the veneration for the Persian and English poets held by two men, William Simpson and Edward Clodd.

\* \* \* \*

Simpson was as untiring a traveller as he was a prolific draughtsman, and it was in the course of one of his expeditions, as artist for the "Illustrated London News," attached to the Afghan Boundary Commission in 1884, that he found himself at Naishapur. Shortly before this, Fitzgerald's paraphrase of the "Rubaiyat" had begun to issue from the obscurity which marked its first publication. Simpson had read it, and had been immensely impressed by its beauty. He was not acquainted with the Persian original, and probably knew as little of Fitzgerald as the rest of the world, outside a very restricted circle of old

## Omar Khayyam

personal friends of the Suffolk recluse. Knowing, however, that Omar Khayyam was buried at Naishapur, he searched out his tomb. Of it, he made a sketch, and plucked some leaves and seed pods from a rose bush growing close by. Tendrils of this rose overhung the poet's resting place, thus fulfilling Omar's desire expressed to his pupil Nizami "My tomb shall be in a spot where the North wind may scatter roses on it". Omar died in A.D. 1123, and was buried at Naishapur by a rose garden, and when Nizami visited the place some years after, he found the trees had stretched their boughs over the wall, and dropped their blossoms on the tomb. The leaves and seed pods gathered by Simpson were enclosed in the following letter to Quaritch, the publisher of Fitzgerald's version of the "Rubaiyat".

Naishapur

October 27th, 1884.

*Dear Mr. Quaritch,*

*From the association of your name with that of Omar Khayyam I feel sure that what I enclose in this letter will be acceptable. The rose leaves I gathered to-day at this place, and the seeds are from the same bushes on which the leaves grew. In all probability they are the particular kind of roses Omar Khayyam was so fond of watching as he pondered and composed his verses. I hope you will be able to grow them in England.*

Yours very truly,  
WILLIAM SIMPSON

William Simpson's professional engagements during the succeeding years took him to all parts of the world, and the incident, together

with the fate of the seeds sent to Quaritch, appear to have been forgotten. During the intervals between his many journeys, Simpson occupied rooms in Lincoln's Inn Fields; and while in London he became acquainted with Edward Clodd. In the course of a conversation between them, the subject of Omar Khayyam came up, when Simpson recalled his visit to Naishapur, and related the incident of his plucking leaves and seeds from the rose bushes growing by the tomb of the Persian poet. He told the story of their despatch to Quaritch, expressing some curiosity as to whether the seeds had ever been sown, and if so, with what success. His hearer, Edward Clodd, was, in his own way, a man as remarkable, in character and attainments, as Simpson. Being an intense admirer of Fitzgerald's genius, Simpson's story of the rose leaves and seeds plucked from Omar's tomb, fired the sympathetic imagination of Edward Clodd. Simpson left England soon after, but Clodd with characteristic ardour and enthusiasm, took up the quest of the missing seeds. Quaritch remembered having received them, and having forwarded them to Kew. The aid of Sir Thistleton Dyer, the Director of the Royal Gardens, was enlisted. His researches resulted in the discovery that the seeds had been sown, and that from them, certain attenuated plants had sprung. These were identified and cuttings were grafted on to sweet briar stocks, which in a few years attained sturdy growth.

Meanwhile the years as they passed had seen the whole English speaking world captured by the spell of Fitzgerald's paraphrase. Wherever the English language was read the "Quatrains" had become a classic. Innumerable editions had been published, together with literal

## *Omar Khayyam*

translations side by side with the Persian original, whereby the least learned or judicial could see how little of the mere transcript there was in the version of the English poet. In England, the Dominions, and America, Societies and Clubs were established to honour the memory of the two poets. The most important of these was one which numbered among its members many of the better known English writers, of the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, including Edward Clodd. When therefore the facts concerning the plucking of the seeds from the rose bushes growing by Omar's tomb by Simpson, the tracing of them by Clodd, and the raising of the plants at Kew, became known, the proposal to plant what Grant Allen aptly and appropriately termed "these flowers of Iran on an English stock," upon Fitzgerald's grave, met with the enthusiastic approval of the members. With due ceremony a pilgrimage was made to the lonely churchyard at Boulge, and the bushes were reverently planted. There they continue to flourish. Thus, the summer sun in its course colours the blooms on the ancient rose bushes whose petals the North wind scatters over the tomb of Omar at Naishapur, and ere its course is completed the descendants of these roses cast delicate patterns of light and shade upon the Suffolk resting place of him who re clothed old Omar's thoughts in immortal English verse. To the casual visitor knowing nothing of their origin the rose bushes in Boulge churchyard have no special significance; but to the pilgrim to whom the history of this touching memorial has been revealed, not only do they transport his thoughts to far off Naishapur, but fragrant as their scent, is the testimony they bear to the imagination and reverent enthusiasm of the



*The Grave of Edward Fitzgerald ;  
Boulge, Suffolk.*

THE ROSES OF  
EDWARD FITZGERALD

*"Long with a double fragrance let it bloom  
This Roses of Iran on the English stock."*





*The Tomb of Omar Khayyam ;  
Naisapur*

## THE ROSES OF OMAR KHAYYAM

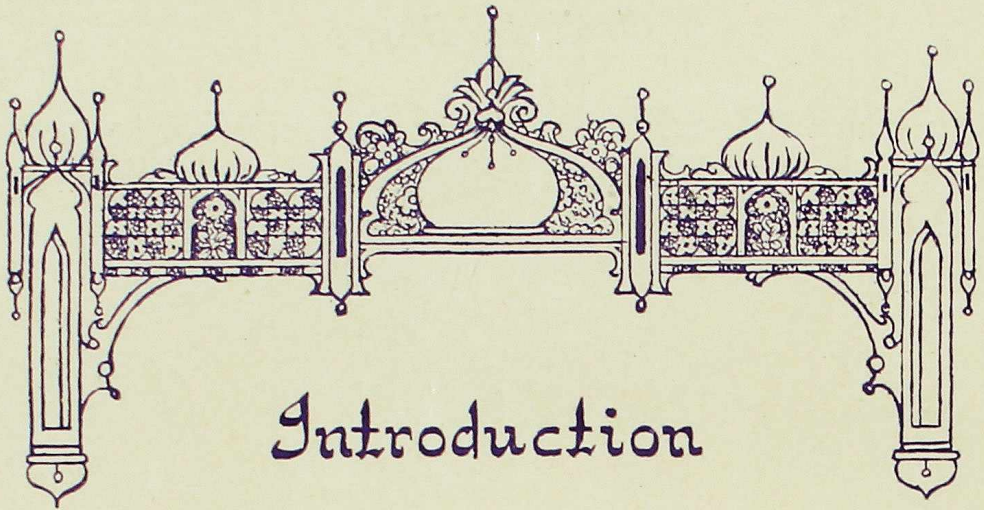
*"My tomb shall be in a spot, where the north wind  
may scatter roses on it."*

*Omar Khayyam.*

*Cecil L. Burns*

two men to whom this delicate tribute owes its origin, William Simpson and Edward Clodd.





## Introduction

OMAR KHAYYAM was born at Naishapur in Khorassan in the latter half of our Eleventh, and died within the First Quarter of our Twelfth Century. The slender story of his Life is curiously twined about that of two other very considerable Figures in their Time and Country: one of whom tells the Story of all Three. This was Nizam ul Mulk, Vizier to Alp Arslan the Son, and Malik Shah the Grandson, of Toghrul Beg the Tartar, who had wrested Persia from the feeble Successor of Mahmud the Great, and founded that Seljukian Dynasty which finally roused Europe into the Crusades. This Nizam ul Mulk, in his *Wasiyat*, or *Testament*—which he wrote and left as a Memorial for future Statesmen—relates the following, as quoted in the *Calcutta Review*, No. lix, from Mirkhond's *History of the Assassins*:

“One of the greatest of the wise men of Khorassan was the Imam Mowaffak of Naishapur, a man highly honoured and revered—may God rejoice his soul; his illustrious years exceeded eighty-five, and it was the universal belief that every boy who read the Koran or studied the traditions in his presence, would assuredly attain to honour and happiness. For this cause did my father send me from Tus to Naishapur with Abd-us-samad, the Doctor of Law, that I might employ myself in study and learning under the guidance of that illustrious

teacher. Towards me he ever turned an eye of favour and kindness, and as his pupil I felt for him extreme affection and devotion, so that I passed four years in his service. When I first came there, I found two other pupils of mine own age newly arrived, Hakim Omar Khayyam, and the illfated Ben Sabbah. Both were endowed with sharpness of wit and the highest natural powers; and we three formed a close friendship together. When the Imam rose from his lectures, they used to join me, and we repeated to each other the lessons we had heard. Now Omar was a native of Naishapur, while Hasan Ben Sabbah's father was one Ali, a man of austere life and practice, but heretical in his creed and doctrine. One day Hasan said to me and to Khayyam, "It is a universal belief that the pupils of the Imam Mowaffak will attain to fortune. Now, even if we *all* do not attain thereto, without doubt one of us will; what then shall be our mutual pledge and bond?" We answered, "Be it what you please."—"Well," he said, "let us make a vow, that to whomsoever this fortune falls, he shall share it equally with the rest, and reserve no pre-eminence for himself."—"Be it so," we both replied, and on those terms we mutually pledged our words. Years rolled on, and I went from Khorassan to Transoxiana, and wandered to Ghazni and Cabul; and when I returned, I was invested with office, and rose to be administrator of affairs during the Sultanate of Sultan Alp Arslan.'

"He goes on to state, that years passed by, and both his old school friends found him out, and came and claimed a share in his good fortune, according to the schooldayvow. The Vizier was generous and kept his word. Hasan demanded a place in the government, which

the Sultan granted at the Vizier's request ; but, discontented with a gradual rise, he plunged into the maze of intrigue of an Oriental Court, and, failing in a base attempt to supplant his benefactor, he was disgraced and fell. After many mishaps and wanderings, Hasan became the head of the Persian sect of the *Ismailians*,— a party of fanatics who had long murmured in obscurity, but rose to an evil eminence under the guidance of his strong and evil will. In A.D. 1090, he seized the Castle of Alamut, in the province of Rudbar, which lies in the mountainous tract south of the Caspian Sea ; and it was from this mountain home he obtained that evil celebrity among the crusaders as the OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAINS, and spread terror through the Mohammedan world ; and it is yet disputed whether the word *Assassin*, which they have left in the language of modern Europe as their dark memorial, is derived from the *hashish*, or opiate of hemp-leaves (the Indian *bhang*), with which they maddened themselves to the sullen pitch of Oriental desperation, or from the name of the founder of the dynasty, whom we have seen in his quiet collegiate days, at Naishapur. One of the countless victims of the Assassin's dagger was Nizam ul Mulk himself, the old school-boy friend.\*

“Omar Khayyam also came to the Vizier to claim his share ; but not to ask for title or office. ‘The greatest boon you can confer on me,’ he said, ‘is to let me live in a corner under the shadow of your fortune, to spread wide the advantages of Science, and pray for your long life and prosperity.’ The Vizier tells us that,

\* Some of Omar's Rubaiyat warn us of the danger of Greatness, the instability of Fortune, and while advocating Charity to all Men, recommending us to be too intimate with none. Attar makes Nizam ul Mulk use the very words of his friend Omar [Rub. xxviii.], “When Nizam ul Mulk was in the Agony (of Death) he said, ‘Oh God ! I am passing away in the hand of the Wind.’”

when he found Omar was really sincere in his refusal, he pressed him no further, but granted him a yearly pension of 1,200 *mithkals* of gold, from the treasury of Naishapur.

“At Naishapur thus lived and died Omar Khayyam, ‘busied,’ adds the Vizier, ‘in winning knowledge of every kind, and especially in Astronomy, wherein he attained to a very high pre-eminence. Under the Sultanate of Malik Shah, he came to Merv, and obtained great praise for his proficiency in Science, and the Sultan showered favours upon him.’

“When Malik Shah determined to reform the Calendar, Omar was one of the eight learned men employed to do it; the result was the *Jalali* era (so called from *Jalal-ud-din*, one of the king’s names)—‘a computation of time,’ says Gibbon, ‘which surpasses the Julian, and approaches the accuracy of the Gregorian style.’ He is also the author of some astronomical tables, entitled *Ziji-Malikshahi*,” and the French have lately republished and translated an Arabic Treatise of his on Algebra.

“His Takhallus or poetical name (Khayyam) signifies a Tentmaker, and he is said to have at one time exercised that trade, perhaps before Nizam ul Mulk’s generosity raised him to independence. Many Persian poets similarly derive their names from their occupations; thus we have Attar, ‘a druggist,’ Assar, ‘an oil presser,’ etc.\* Omar himself alludes to his name in the following whimsical lines:—

“Khayyam, who stitched the tents of Science,  
Has fallen in grief’s furnace and been suddenly  
burned;  
The shears of Fate have cut the tent ropes of  
his life,

\* Though all these, like our Smiths, Archers, Millers, Fletchers, etc., may simply retain the Surname of an hereditary calling.

## Omar Khayyam

And the broker of Hope has sold him for nothing !”

“ We have only one more anecdote to give of his life, and that relates to the close ; it is told in the anonymous preface which is sometimes prefixed to his poems ; it has been printed in the Persian in the Appendix to Hyde’s *Veterum Persarum Religio*, p. 499 ; and D’Herbelot alludes to it in his *Bibliothèque*, under *Khiam*\* :

“ It is written in the chronicles of the ancients that this King of the Wise, Omar Khayyam, died at Naishapur in the year of the Hegira 517 (A.D. 1123) ; in Science he was unrivalled,—the very paragon of his age. Khwajah Nizami of Samarcand, who was one of his pupils, relates the following story : “ I often used to hold conversations with my teacher Omar Khayyam, in a garden ; and one day he said to me, ‘ My tomb shall be in a spot where the North wind may scatter roses over it.’ I wondered at the words he spake, but I knew that his were no idle words.† Years after, when I chanced to revisit Naishapur, I went to his final resting-place, and lo ! it was just outside a garden,

\* “ *Philosophe Musulman qui a vécu en Odeur de Sainteté dans sa Religion, vers la Fin du premier et le Commencement du second Siècle.*” no part of which, except the “ *Philosophe*,” can apply to our Khayyam.

† The Rashness of the Words, according to D’Herbelot, consisted in being so opposed to those in the Koran : “ No Man knows where he shall die.”—This story of Omar reminds me of another so naturally—and when one remembers how wide of his humble mark the noble sailor aimed—so pathetically told by Captain Cook—not by Doctor Hawkesworth—in his *Second Voyage* (i, 374). When leaving Ulietea, “ Oreo’s last request was for me to return. When he saw he could not obtain that promise, he asked the name of my *Marai* (burying-place). As strange a question as this was, I hesitated not a moment to tell him ‘ Stepney ’ ; the parish in which I live when in London. I was made to repeat it several times over till they could pronounce it ; and then ‘ Stepney Marai no Toote ’ was echoed through an hundred mouths at once. I afterwards found the same question had been put to Mr. Forster by a man on shore ; but he gave a different, and indeed more proper answer, by saying, ‘ No man who used the sea could say where he should be buried.’ ”

and trees laden with fruit stretched their boughs over the garden wall, and dropped their flowers upon his tomb, so that the stone was hidden under them.”

Thus far—without fear of Trespass—from the *Calcutta Review*. The writer of it, on reading in India this story of Omar's Grave, was reminded, he says, of Cicero's Account of finding Archimedes' Tomb at Syracuse, buried in grass and weeds. I think Thorwaldsen desired to have roses grow over him; a wish religiously fulfilled for him to the present day, I believe. However, to return to Omar.

Though the Sultan “shower'd Favours upon him,” Omar's Epicurean Audacity of Thought and Speech caused him to be regarded askance in his own Time and Country. He is said to have been especially hated and dreaded by the Sufis, whose Practice he ridiculed, and whose Faith amounts to little more than his own, when stript of the Mysticism and formal recognition of Islamism under which Omar would not hide. Their Poets, including Hafiz, who are (with the exception of Firdausi) the most considerable in Persia, borrowed largely, indeed, of Omar's material, but turning it to a mystical Use more convenient to Themselves and the People they addressed; a People quite as quick of Doubt as of Belief; as keen of Bodily Sense as of Intellectual; and delighting in a cloudy composition of both, in which they could float luxuriously between Heaven and Earth, and this World and the Next, on the wings of a poetical expression, that might serve indifferently for either. Omar was too honest of Heart as well as of Head for this. Having failed (however mistakenly) of finding any Providence but Destiny, and any World but This, he set about making the most of it; preferring rather



## Omar Khayyam

to soothe the Soul through the Senses into Acquiescence with Things as he saw them, than to perplex it with vain disquietude after what they *might* be. It has been seen, however, that his Worldly Ambition was not exorbitant; and he very likely takes a humorous or perverse pleasure in exalting the gratification of Sense above that of the Intellect, in which he must have taken great delight, although it failed to answer the Questions in which he, in common with all men, was most vitally interested.

For whatever Reason, however, Omar, as before said, has never been popular in his own Country, and therefore has been but scantily transmitted abroad. The MSS. of his Poems, mutilated beyond the average Casualties of Oriental Transcription, are so rare in the East as scarce to have reached Westward at all, in spite of all the acquisitions of Arms and Science. There is no copy at the India House, none at the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris. We know but of one in England: No. 140 of the Ouseley MSS. at the Bodleian, written at Shiraz, A.D. 1460. This contains but 158 Rubaiyats. One in the Asiatic Society's Library at Calcutta (of which we have a Copy) contains (and yet incomplete) 516, though swelled to that by all kinds of Repetition and Corruption. So Von Hammer speaks of *his* Copy as containing about 200, while Dr. Sprenger catalogues the Lucknow MS. at double that number.\* The Scribes, too, of the Oxford and Calcutta MSS. seem to do their Work under a sort of Protest; each beginning with a Tetrastich (whether genuine or not), taken out of its alphabetical order; the Oxford with one of Apology; the Calcutta with one of

\* "Since this Paper was written" (adds the Reviewer in a note), "we have met with a Copy of a very rare Edition, printed at Calcutta in 1836. This contains 438 Tetrastichs, with an Appendix containing 54 others not found in some MSS."

*Edward Fitzgerald*

Expostulation, supposed (says a Notice prefixed to the MS.) to have arisen from a Dream, in which Omar's mother asked about his future fate. It may be rendered thus—

“Oh Thou who burn'st in Heart for those  
  who burn  
In Hell, whose fires thyself shall feed in turn ;  
    How long be crying, ‘Mercy on them, God !’  
Why, who art Thou to teach, and  
  He to learn ?”

The Bodleian Quatrain pleads Pantheism by way of Justification.

“If I myself upon a looser Creed  
    Have loosely strung the Jewel of Good deed,  
    Let this one thing for my Atonement plead :  
    That One for Two I never did mis-read.”

The Reviewer,\* to whom I owe the Particulars of Omar's life, concludes his Review by comparing him with Lucretius, both as to natural Temper and Genius, and as acted upon by the Circumstances in which he lived. Both indeed, were men of subtle, strong, and cultivated Intellect, fine Imagination, and Hearts passionate for Truth and Justice ; who justly revolted from their Country's false Religion, and false, or foolish, Devotion to it ; but who fell short of replacing what they subverted by such better *Hope* as others, with no better Revelation to guide them, had yet made a Law to themselves. Lucretius, indeed, with such material as Epicurus furnished, satisfied himself with the theory of a vast machine fortuitously constructed, and acting by a Law that implied no Legislator ; and so composing himself into a Stoical rather than Epicurean severity of

\* Professor Cowell.

Attitude, sat down to contemplate the mechanical Drama of the Universe which he was part Actor in ; himself and all about him (as in his own sublime description of the Roman Theatre) discoloured with the lurid reflex of the Curtain suspended between the Spectator and the Sun. Omar, more desperate, or more careless of any so complicated System as resulted in nothing but hopeless Necessity, flung his own Genius and Learning with a bitter or humorous jest into the general Ruin which their insufficient glimpses only served to reveal ; and, pretending sensual pleasure as the serious purpose of Life, only *diverted* himself with speculative problems of Deity, Destiny, Matter and Spirit, Good and Evil, and other such questions, easier to start than to run down, and the pursuit of which becomes a very weary sport at last !

With regard to the present Translation. The original Rubaiyat (as, missing an Arabic Guttural, these *Tetrastichs* are more musically called) are independent Stanzas, consisting each of four Lines of equal, though varied, Prosody ; sometimes *all* rhyming, but oftener (as here imitated) the third line a blank. Somewhat as in the Greek Alcaic, where the penultimate line seems to lift and suspend the Wave that falls over in the last. As usual with such kind of Oriental Verse, the Rubaiyat follow one another according to Alphabetic Rhyme—a strange succession of Grave and Gay. Those here selected are strung into something of an Eclogue, with perhaps a less than equal proportion of the “Drink and make-merry,” which (genuine or not) recurs over-frequently in the Original. Either way, the Result is sad enough : saddest perhaps when most ostentatiously merry : more apt to move Sorrow than Anger toward the old Tentmaker, who, after vainly endeavouring to

unshackle his Steps from Destiny, and to catch some authentic Glimpse of To-MORROW, fell back upon To-DAY (which has outlasted so many To-morrows!) as the only Ground he had got to stand upon, however momentarily slipping from under his Feet.

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While the second Edition of this version of Omar was preparing, Monsieur Nicolas, French Consul at Resht, published a very careful and very good Edition of the Text, from a lithograph copy at Teheran, comprising 464 Rubaiyat, with translation and notes of his own.

Mons. Nicolas, whose Edition has reminded me of several things, and instructed me in others, does not consider Omar to be the material Epicurean that I have literally taken him for, but a Mystic, shadowing the Deity under the figure of Wine, Wine-bearer, etc., as Hafiz is supposed to do; in short, a Sufi Poet like Hafiz and the rest.

I cannot see reason to alter my opinion, formed as it was more than a dozen years ago when Omar was first shown me by one to whom I am indebted for all I know of Oriental, and very much of other, literature. He admired Omar's Genius so much, that he would gladly have adopted any such Interpretation of his meaning as Mons. Nicolas' if he could\*. That he could not, appears by his Paper in the *Calcutta Review* already so largely quoted; in which he argues from the Poems themselves, as well as from what records remain of the Poet's Life.

And if more were needed to disprove Mons. Nicolas' Theory, there is the Biographical Notice which he himself has drawn up in direct contradiction to the Interpretation of the Poems given

\* Perhaps would have edited the Poems himself some years ago. He may now as little approve of my Version on one side, as of Mons. Nicolas' Theory on the other.

in his Notes. (See pp. xiii, xiv of his Preface). Indeed I hardly knew poor Omar was so far gone till his Apologist informed me. For here we see that, whatever were the Wine that Hafiz drank and sang, the veritable Juice of the Grape it was which Omar used, not only when carousing with his friends, but (says Mons. Nicolas) in order to excite himself to that pitch of Devotion which others reached by cries and "hurlemens". And yet, whenever Wine, Wine-bearer, etc., occur in the text—which is often enough—Mons. Nicolas carefully annotates "Dieu", "La Divinité", etc.: so carefully indeed that one is tempted to think that he was indoctrinated by the Sufi with whom he read the Poems. A Persian would naturally wish to vindicate a distinguished Countryman: and a Sufi to enrol him in his own sect, which already comprises all the chief poets in Persia.

What historical authority has Mons. Nicolas to show that Omar gave himself up "avec passion à l'étude de la philosophie des Soufis"? The Doctrines of Pantheism, Materialism, Necessity, etc., were not peculiar to the Sufi; nor to Lucretius before them; nor to Epicurus before him; probably the very original Irreligion of Thinking men from the first; and very likely to be the spontaneous growth of a Philosopher living in an Age of social and political barbarism, under shadow of one of the Two-and-Seventy Religions supposed to divide the world. Von Hammer (according to Sprenger's Oriental Catalogue) speaks of Omar as "a Freethinker, and a great opponent of Sufism"; perhaps because, while holding much of their Doctrine, he would not pretend to any inconsistent severity of morals. Sir W. Ouseley has written a note to something of the same

effect on the fly-leaf of the Bodleian MS. And in two *Rubaiyat* of Mons. Nicolas' own Edition *Suf* and *Sufi* are both disparagingly named.

No doubt many of these Quatrains seem unaccountable unless mystically interpreted; but many more as unaccountable unless literally. Were the Wine spiritual, for instance, how wash the Body with it when dead? Why make cups of the dead clay to be filled with—"La Divinité"—by some succeeding Mystic? Mons. Nicolas himself is puzzled by some "bizarres" and "trop Orientales" allusions and images—"d'une sensualité quelquefois révoltante" indeed—which "les convenances" do not permit him to translate; but still which the reader cannot but refer to "La Divinité."\* No doubt also many of the Quatrains in the Teheran, as in the Calcutta, Copies, are spurious; such *Rubaiyat* being the common form of Epigram in Persia. But this, at best, tells as much one way as another; nay, the Sufi, who may be considered the Scholar and Man of Letters in Persia, would be far more likely than the careless Epicure to interpolate what favours his own view of the Poet. I observe that very few of the more mystical Quatrains are in the Bodleian MS. which must be one of the oldest, as dated at Shiraz, A.H. 865, A.D. 1460. And this, I think, especially distinguishes Omar (I cannot help calling him by his—no, not Christian—

\* A Note to Quatrain 234 admits that, however clear the mystical meaning of such Images must be to Europeans, they are not quoted without "rougissant" even by laymen in Persia—"Quant aux termes de tendresse qui commencent ce quatrain, comme tant d'autres dans ce recueil, nos lecteurs, habitués maintenant à l'étrangeté des expressions si souvent employées par Khéyam pour rendre ses pensées sur l'amour divin, et à la singularité de ses images trop orientales, d'une sensualité quelquefois révoltante, n'auront pas de peine à se persuader qu'il s'agit de la Divinité, bien que cette conviction soit vivement discutée par les moullahs musulmans et même par beaucoup de laïques, qui rougissent véritablement d'une pareille licence de leur compatriote à l'égard des choses spirituelles."

familiar name) from all other Persian Poets; That, whereas with them the Poet is lost in his Song, the Man in Allegory and Abstraction; we seem to have the Man—the *Bonhomme*—Omar himself, with all his Humours and Passions, as frankly before us as if we were really at Table with him, after the Wine had gone round.

I must say that I, for one, never wholly believed in the Mysticism of Hafiz. It does not appear there was any danger in holding and singing Sufi Pantheism, so long as the Poet made his Salaam to Mohammed at the beginning and end of his Song. Under such conditions Jelaluddin, Jami, Attar, and others sang; using Wine and Beauty indeed as Images to illustrate, not as a Mask to hide, the Divinity they were celebrating. Perhaps some Allegory less liable to mistake or abuse had been better among so inflammable a People: much more so when, as some think with Hafiz and Omar, the abstract is not only likened to, but identified with, the sensual Image; hazardous, if not to the Devotee himself, yet to his weaker Brethren; and worse for the Profane in proportion as the Devotion of the Initiated grew warmer. And all for what? To be tantalized with Images of sensual enjoyment which must be renounced if one would approximate a God, who according to the Doctrine, *is* Sensual Matter as well as Spirit, and into whose Universe one expects unconsciously to merge after Death, without hope of any posthumous Beatitude in another world to compensate for all one's self-denial in this. Lucretius' blind Divinity certainly merited, and probably got as much self-sacrifice as this of the Sufi; and the burden of Omar's Song—if not "Let us eat"—is assuredly—"Let us drink, for To-morrow we die!" And if Hafiz meant quite otherwise by a similar

*Edward Fitzgerald*

language, he surely miscalculated when he devoted his Life and Genius to so equivocal a Psalmody as, from his Day to this, has been said and sung by any rather than Spiritual Worshippers.

However, as there is some traditional presumption, and certainly the opinion of some learned men, in favour of Omar's being a Sufi—and even something of a Saint—those who please may so interpret his Wine and Cup-bearer. On the other hand, as there is far more historical certainty of his being a Philosopher, of scientific Insight and Ability far beyond that of the Age and Country he lived in; of such moderate worldly Ambition as becomes a Philosopher, and such moderate wants as rarely satisfy a Debauchee; other readers may be content to believe with me that, while the Wine Omar celebrates is simply the Juice of the Grape, he bragged more than he drank of it, in very defiance perhaps of that Spiritual Wine which left its Votaries sunk in Hypocrisy or Disgust.

EDWARD FITZGERALD.

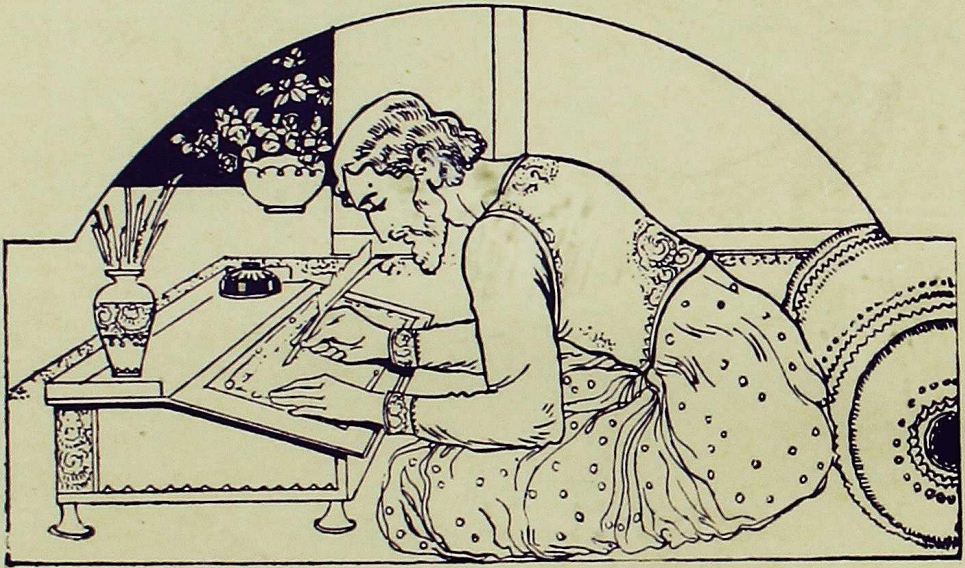


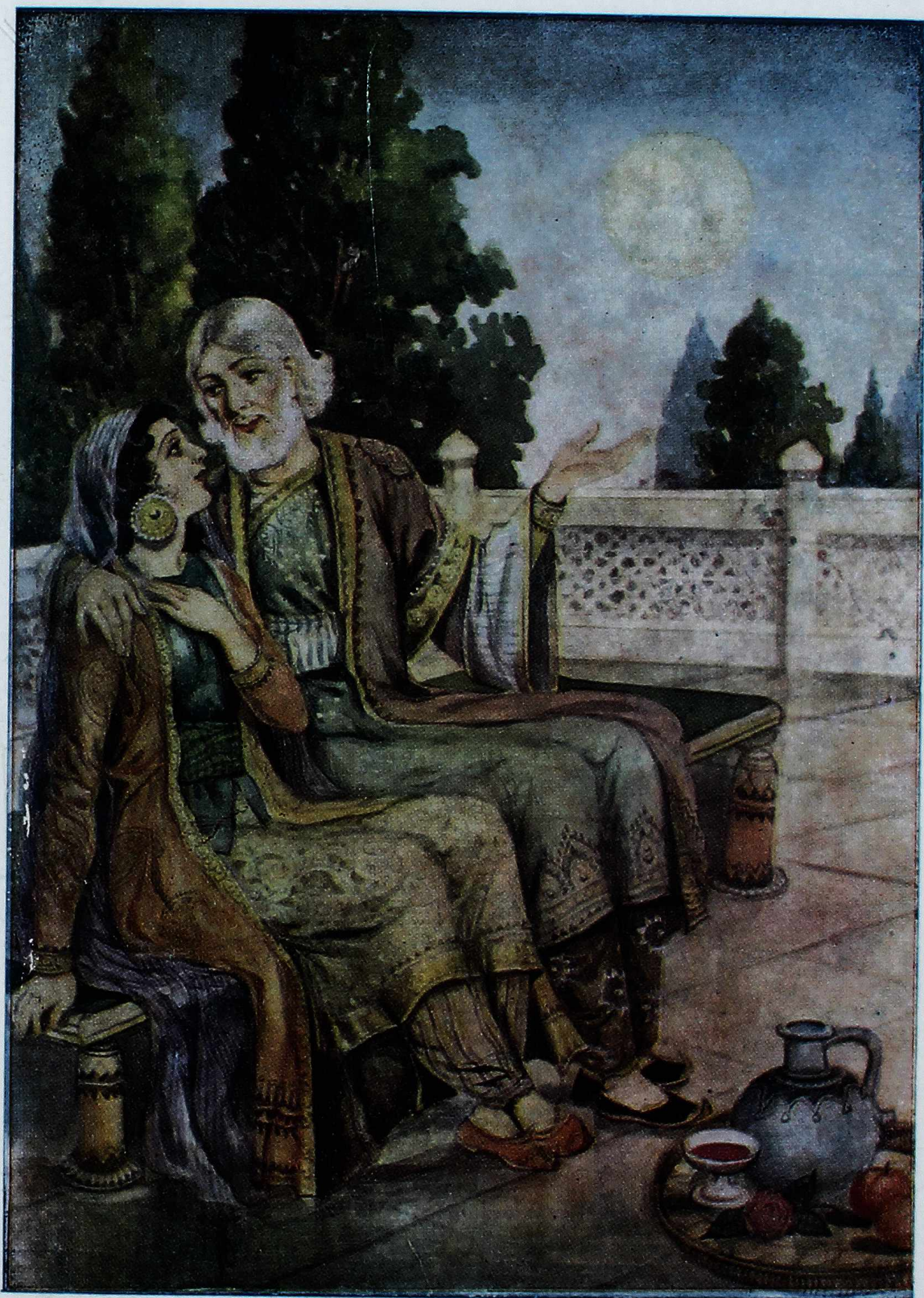


1944  
Rubaiyat  
OF  
Omar Khayyam

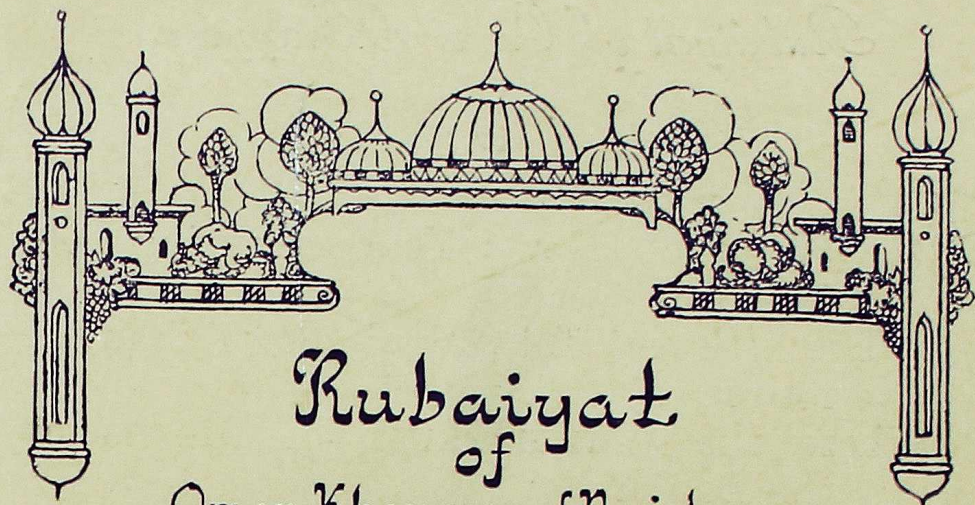
EDWARD FITZGERALD

THE FIRST EDITION  
1859





Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—  
How oft herefter will she wax and wane;  
How oft hereafter rising look for us  
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!



Rubaiyat  
of  
Omar Khayyam of Naiskapur

i

**W**AKE! for Morning in the Bowl  
of Night  
Has flung the Stone that puts the  
Stars to Flight:  
And Lo! the Hunter of the East has  
caught  
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

ii

**D**REAMING when Dawn's Left Hand  
was in the Sky  
I heard a Voice within the Tavern  
cry,  
"Awake, my Little ones, and fill  
the Cup  
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."

iii

**A**ND, as the Cock crew, those who stood  
before  
The Tavern shouted—"Open then  
the Door!  
You know how little while we have to  
stay,  
And, once departed, may return no more."

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

iv

**N**OW the New Year reviving old  
Desires,  
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude  
retires,  
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on  
the Bough  
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground  
suspIRES.

v

**I**RAM indeed is gone with all its Rose  
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where  
no one knows ;  
But still the Vine her ancient Ruby  
yields,  
And still a Garden by the Water blows.

vi

**A**ND David's Lips are lock't ; but in  
divine  
High piping Pehlevi, with "Wine !  
Wine ! Wine !  
*Red Wine !*"—the Nightingale cries to  
the Rose  
That yellow Cheek of hers to incarnadine.

vii

**C**OME, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of  
Spring  
The Winter Garment of Repentance  
fling :  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To fly—and Lo ! the Bird is on the Wing.



None answer'd this ; but after Silence spake  
A vessel of a more ungainly Make :  
    " They sneer at me for leaning all awry ;  
What ! did the Hand then of the Potter shake ? "

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

viii

**A**ND look—a thousand Blossoms with  
the Day  
Woke—and a thousand scatter'd into  
Clay :  
And this first Summer Month that brings  
the Rose  
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobad away.

ix

**B**UT come with old Khayyam, and  
leave the Lot  
Of Kaikobad and Kaikhosru forgot :  
Let Rustum lay about him as he will,  
Or Hatim Tai cry Supper—heed them  
not.

x

**W**ITH me along some Strip of Herbage  
strown  
That just divides the desert from  
the sown,  
Where name of Slave and Sultan scarce  
is known,  
And pity Sultan Mahmud on his Throne.

xi

**H**ERE with a Loaf of Bread beneath  
the Bough,  
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—  
and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—  
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xii

**H**OW sweet is mortal Sovranty !”—  
think some :  
Others— “ How blest the Paradise  
to come ! ”  
Ah, take the Cash in hand and waive the  
Rest ;  
Oh, the brave Music of a *distant* Drum !

xiii

**L**OOK to the Rose that blows about us  
—“ Lo,  
Laughing,” she says, “ into the World  
I blow :  
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse  
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw.”

xiv

**T**HE Worldly Hope men set their Hearts  
upon  
Turns Ashes—or it prospers ; and  
anon,  
Like Snow upon the Desert’s dusty Face  
Lighting a little Hour or two—is gone.

xv

**A**ND those who husbanded the Golden  
Grain,  
And those who flung it to the Winds  
like Rain,  
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn’d  
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.





And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass  
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,  
And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot  
Where I made one—turn down an empty Glass.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xvi

**T**HINK, in this batter'd Caravanserai  
Whose Doorways are alternate Night  
and Day,  
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp  
Abode his Hour or two, and went his  
way.

xvii

**T**HEY say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and  
drank deep ;  
And Bahram, that great Hunter—the  
Wild Ass  
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep.

xviii

**S**OMETIMES think that never blows  
so red  
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar  
bled ;  
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears  
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely  
Head.

xix

**A**ND this delightful Herb whose tender  
Green  
Fledges the River's Lip on which we  
lean—  
Ah, lean upon it lightly ! for who knows  
From what once lovely Lip it springs  
unseen !

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xx

**O**H, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears  
TO-DAY of past Regrets and future  
Fears—  
*To-morrow?*—Why, To-morrow I may be  
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand  
Years.

xxi

**L**O! some we loved, the loveliest and best  
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage  
prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two  
before,  
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

xxii

**A**ND we, that now make merry in the  
Room  
They left, and Summer dresses in new  
Bloom.  
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of  
Earth  
Descend, ourselves to make a Couch—for  
whom?

xxiii

**A**H, make the most of what we yet may  
spend,  
Before we too into the Dust descend;  
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,  
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—  
sans End!



Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say ;  
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday ?  
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose  
Shall take Jamshy'd and Kaikobád away.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xxiv

**A**LIKE for those who for TO-DAY  
prepare,  
And those that after a TO-MORROW stare,  
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness  
cries  
“Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor  
There!”

xxv

**W**HY, all the Saints and Sages who  
discuss'd  
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are  
thrust  
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words  
to Scorn  
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt  
with Dust.

xxvi

**O**H, come with old Khayyam, and leave  
the Wise  
To talk; one thing is certain, that Life  
flies;  
One thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies;  
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

xxvii

**M**YSELF when young did eagerly  
frequent  
Doctor and Saint, and heard great  
Argument  
About it and about: but evermore  
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xxviii

**W**ITH them the Seed of Wisdom did  
I sow,  
And with my own hand labour'd it to  
grow :  
And this was all the Harvest that I  
reap'd—  
“ I came like Water, and like Wind I go.”

xxix

**I**NTO this Universe, and *why* not know-  
ing,  
Nor *whence*, like Water willy-nilly flow-  
ing :  
And out of it, as Wind along the  
Waste,  
I know not *whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

xxx

**W**HAT, without asking, hither hurried  
*whence* ?  
And, without asking, *whither* hurried  
hence !  
Another and another Cup to drown  
The Memory of this Impertinence !

xxxi

**U**P from Earth's Centre through the  
Seventh Gate  
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn  
sate,  
And many Knots unravel'd by the Road ;  
But not the Knot of Human Death and  
Fate.



Listen again. One evening at the Close  
Of Ramzán, ere the better Moon arose,  
In that old Potter's Shop I stood alone  
With the clay Population round in Rows.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xxxii



HERE was a Door to which I found no  
Key :  
There was a Veil past which I could not  
see :  
Some little Talk awhile of ME and THEE  
There seem'd—and then no more of THEE  
and ME.

xxxiii



HEN to the rolling Heav'n itself I  
cried,  
Asking, "What Lamp had Destiny to  
guide  
Her little Children stumbling in the  
Dark?"  
And—"A blind Understanding!" Heav'n  
replied.

xxxiv



HEN to this earthen Bowl did I adjourn  
My Lip the secret well of Life to learn :  
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you  
live  
Drink!—for once dead you never shall  
return."

xxxv



THINK the Vessel, that with fugitive  
Articulation answer'd, once did live,  
And merry-make ; and the cold Lip I  
kiss'd  
How many Kisses might it take—and give !



*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xxxvi

**F**OR in the Market-place, one Dusk of  
Day,  
I watch'd the Potter thumping his wet  
Clay ;  
And with its all obliterated Tongue  
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently,  
pray !"

xxxvii

**A**H, fill the Cup :—what boots it to  
repeat  
How Time is slipping underneath our  
Feet :  
Unborn TO-MORROW, and dead YESTER-  
DAY,  
Why fret about them if TO-DAY be  
sweet !

xxxviii

**O**NE Moment in Annihilation's Waste,  
One Moment, of the Well of Life to  
taste—  
The Stars are setting and the Caravan  
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing—Oh, make  
haste !

xxxix

**H**OW long, how long, in infinite Pursuit  
Of This and That endeavour and  
dispute ?  
Better be merry with the fruitful Grape  
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.



Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument  
About it and about; but evermore  
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xl

**Y**OU know, my Friends, how long since  
in my House  
For a new Marriage I did make  
Carouse :  
Divorced old barren Reason from my  
Bed,  
And took the Daughter of the Vine to  
Spouse.

xli

**F**OR " IS " and " IS-NOT " though *with*  
Rule and Line,  
And " UP-AND-DOWN " *without*, I could  
define,  
I yet in all I only cared to know,  
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

xlii

**A**ND lately, by the Tavern Door agape,  
Came stealing through the Dusk an  
Angel Shape  
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder ; and  
He bid me taste of it ; and 'twas—the  
Grape !

xliii

**T**HE Grape that can with Logic absolute  
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects  
confute :  
The subtle Alchemist that in a Trice  
Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xliv

**T**HE mighty Mahmud, the victorious  
Lord,  
That all the misbelieving and black  
Horde  
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul  
Scatters and slays with his enchanted Sword.

xlv

**B**UT leave the Wise to wrangle, and  
with me  
The Quarrel of the Universe let be :  
And, in some corner of the Hubbub  
coucht,  
Make Game of that which makes as much  
of Thee.

xlvi

**F**OR in and out, above, about, below,  
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-  
show,  
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,  
Round which we Phantom Figures come  
and go.

xlvii

**A**ND if the Wine you drink, the Lip you  
press,  
End in the Nothing all Things end in  
—Yes—  
Then fancy while Thou art, Thou art but  
what  
Thou shalt be—Nothing—Thou shalt not be  
less.



Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,  
Asking, "What Lamp had Destiny to guide  
Her little Children stumbling in the Dark?"  
And—"A blind Understanding!" Heav'n replied.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xlvi

**W**HILE the Rose blows along the River  
Brink,  
With old Khayyam the Ruby Vintage  
drink :  
And when the Angel with his darker  
Draught  
Draws up to Thee—take that, and do not  
shrink.

xlix

**I**S all a Chequer-board of Nights and  
Days  
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces  
plays :  
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and  
slays.  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

l

**T**HE Ball no Question makes of Ayes  
and Noes,  
But Right or Left as strikes the Player  
goes ;  
And He that toss'd Thee down into the  
Field,  
*He* knows about it all—**HE** knows—**HE**  
knows !

li

**T**HE Moving Finger writes ; and, having  
writ,  
Moves on ; nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lii

**A**ND that inverted Bowl we call The  
Sky,  
Whereunder crawling coopt we live and  
die,  
Lift not thy hands to *It* for help—for *It*  
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.

liii

**W**ITH Earth's first Clay They did the  
Last Man's knead,  
And then of the Last Harvest sow'd the  
Seed :  
Yea, the first Morning of Creation wrote  
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall  
read.

liv

**T**ELL Thee this—When, starting from  
the Goal,  
Over the shoulders of the flaming Foal  
Of Heav'n Parwin and Mushtara they  
flung,  
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul.

lv

**T**HE Vine had struck a Fibre ; which  
about  
If clings my Being—let the Sufi flout ;  
Of my Base Metal may be filed a Key,  
That shall unlock the Door he howls  
without.

# *Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām*

lvi

**A**ND this I know ; whether the one  
True Light,  
Kindle to Love, or Wrath—consume  
me quite,  
One glimpse of It within the Tavern  
caught  
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

lvii

**O**H Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with  
Gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with Predestination round  
Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin ?

lviii

**O**H, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst  
make,  
And who with Eden didst devise the  
Snake ;  
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of  
Man  
Is blacken'd, Man's Forgiveness give—and  
take !

## KUZA-NAMA

lix

**L**ISTEN again. One evening at the close  
Of Ramazan, ere the better Moon  
arose,  
In that old Potter's Shop I stood alone  
With the clay Population round in Rows.



*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

ix

**A**ND, strange to tell, among the Earthen  
Lot  
Some could articulate, while others  
not :  
And suddenly one more impatient cried—  
“ Who *is* the Potter, pray, and who the  
Pot ? ”

lxi

**T**HEN said another—“ Surely not in vain  
My Substance from the common Earth  
was ta'en,  
That He who subtly wrought me into  
Shape  
Should stamp me back to common Earth  
again.”

lxii

**A**NOTHER said—“ Why, ne'er a peevish  
Boy  
Would break the Bowl from which he  
drank in Joy ;  
Shall He that *made* the Vessel in pure  
Love  
And Fancy, in an after Rage destroy ! ”

lxiii

**N**ONE answer'd this ; but after Silence  
spake  
A Vessel of a more ungainly Make :  
“ They sneer at me for leaning all awry ;  
What ! did the Hand then of the Potter  
shake ? ”



Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,  
And Jamsly'd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows ;  
    But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,  
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxiv

**S**AID one—"Folks of a surly Tapster  
tell,  
And daub his Visage with the Smoke of  
Hell;  
They talk of some strict Testing of us—  
Pish!  
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

lxv

**T**HEN said another with a long-drawn  
Sigh,  
"My Clay with long oblivion is gone  
dry:  
But, fill me with the old familiar Juice,  
Methinks I might recover by-and-bye!"

lxvi

**S**O while the Vessels one by one were  
speaking,  
One spied the little Crescent all were  
seeking:  
And then they jogg'd each other,  
"Brother! Brother!  
Hark to the Porter's Shoulder-knot a-  
creaking!"

lxvii

**A**H, with the Grape my fading Life  
provide,  
And wash my Body whence the Life  
has died,  
And in a Windingsheet of Vine-leaf wrapt,  
So bury me by some sweet Garden-side.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxviii

**T**HAT ev'n my buried Ashes such a  
Snare  
Of Perfume shall fling up into the  
Air,  
As not a True Believer passing by  
But shall be overtaken unaware.

lxix

**I**NDEED the Idols I have loved so  
long  
Have done my Credit in Men's Eye much  
wrong :  
Have drown'd my Honour in a shallow  
Cup,  
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

lxx

**I**NDEED, Indeed, Repentance oft  
before  
I swore—but was I sober when I swore ?  
And then and then came Spring, and  
Rose-in-hand  
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

lxxi

**A**ND much as Wine has play'd the  
Infidel,  
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour  
—well,  
I often wonder what the Vintners buy  
One half so precious as the Goods they sell.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxxii

**A**LAS, that Spring should vanish with the  
Rose !

That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript  
should close !

The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,  
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who  
knows !

lxxiii

**A**H Love ! could thou and I with Fate  
conspire

To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things  
entire,

Would not we shatter it to bits—and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire !

lxxiv

**A**H, Moon of my Delight who know'st  
no wane,

The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again :  
How oft hereafter rising shall she look  
Through this same Garden after me—in vain !

lxxv

**A**ND when Thyself with shining Foot  
shall pass

Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the  
Grass,

And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot  
Where I made one—turn down an empty  
Glass !

TAMAM SHUD



Look to the Rose that blows about us—"Lo,  
Laughing," she says, "into the World I blow :  
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse  
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

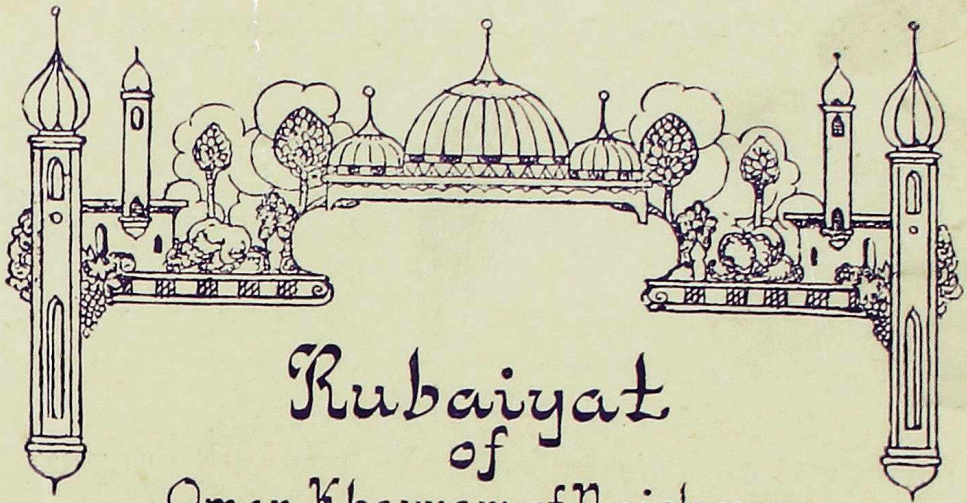
Rubaiyat  
OF  
Omar Khayyam

EDWARD FITZGERALD

THE FOURTH EDITION  
1879







Rubaiyat  
of  
Omar Khayyam of Naishapur

i

**W**AKE! For the Sun behind yon  
Eastern height  
Has chased the Session of the Stars from  
Night ;  
And, to the field of Heav'n ascending,  
strikes  
The Sultan's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

ii

**B**EFORE the phantom of False morning  
died,  
Methought a Voice within the Tavern  
cried,  
“ When all the Temple is prepared within,  
Why lags the drowsy Worshipper outside ? ”

iii

**A**ND, as the Cock crew, those who stood  
before  
The Tavern shouted—“ Open then the  
door !  
You know how little while we have to stay,  
And, once departed, may return no more.”

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

iv

**N**OW the New Year reviving old  
Desires,  
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,  
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the  
Bough  
Puts out, and Jesus from the ground suspires.

v

**I**RAM indeed is gone with all his  
Rose,  
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where  
no one knows ;  
But still a Ruby gushes from the Vine,  
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

vi

**A**ND David's lips are lockt ; but in  
divine  
High-piping Pehlevi, with " Wine !  
Wine ! Wine !  
Red Wine ! "—the Nightingale cries to the  
Rose  
That sallow cheek of hers to incarnadine.

vii

**C**OME, fill the Cup, and in the fire of  
Spring  
Your Winter-garment of Repentance  
fling :  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.



Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring  
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling :  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To fly—and Lo ! the Bird is on the Wing.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

viii

**W**HETHER at Naishapur or Babylon,  
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter  
run,  
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,  
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

ix

**M**ORNING, a thousand Roses brings,  
you say ;  
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of  
yesterday ?  
And this first Summer month that brings  
the Rose  
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobad away.

x

**W**ELL, let it take them ! What have  
we to do  
With Kaikobad the Great, or Kai-  
khosru ?  
Let Rustum cry "To Battle !" as he  
likes,  
Or Hatim Tai "To Supper !" —heed not  
you.

xi

**W**ITH me along the strip of Herbage  
strown  
That just divides the desert from the  
sown,  
Where name of Slave and Sultan is forgot—  
And Peace to Mahmud on his golden  
Throne !

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xii

**H** E R E with a little Bread beneath the  
Bough,  
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—  
and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—  
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

xiii

**S** O M E for the Glories of This World;  
and some  
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to  
come;  
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Promise go  
Nor heed the music of a distant Drum!

xiv

**W** E R E it not Folly, Spider-like to spin  
The Thread of present Life away to  
win—  
What? for ourselves, who know not if  
we shall  
Breathe out the very Breath we now breathe  
in!

xv

**L** O O K to the blowing Rose about us—  
“Lo,  
Laughing,” she says, “into the world  
I blow:  
—At once the silken tassel of my Purse  
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden  
throw.”

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xvi

**F**OR those who husbanded the Golden  
grain,  
And those who flung it to the winds  
like Rain,  
Alike to no such aureate Earth are  
turn'd  
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

xvii

**T**HE Worldly Hope men set their Hearts  
upon  
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,  
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,  
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

xviii

**T**HINK, in this batter'd Caravanserai  
Whose Portals are alternate Night and  
Day,  
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp  
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

xix

**T**HEY say the Lion and the Lizard  
keep  
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and  
drank deep:  
And Bahram, that great Hunter—the Wild  
Ass  
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his  
Sleep.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xx

**T**HE Palace that to Heav'n his pillars  
threw,  
And Kings the forehead on his threshold  
drew—  
I saw the solitary Ringdove there,  
And “Coo, coo, coo,” she cried; and “Coo,  
coo, coo.”

xxi

**A**H, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears  
TO-DAY of past Regret and future Fears;  
*To-morrow!*—Why, To-morrow I may be  
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand  
Years.

xxii

**F**OR some we loved, the loveliest and  
the best  
That from his Vintage rolling Time has  
prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two  
before,  
And one by one crept silently to rest.

xxiii

**A**ND we, that now make merry in the  
Room  
They left, and Summer dresses in new  
bloom,  
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of  
Earth  
Descend, ourselves to make a Couch—for  
whom?



And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,  
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,  
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for *It*  
As impotently moves as you or I.



*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xxiv

**S**SOMETIMES think that never blows  
so red  
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar  
bled ;  
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears  
Dropt in her lap from some once lovely  
Head.

xxv

**A**ND this delightful Herb whose living  
Green  
Fledges the River's Lip on which we  
lean—  
Ah, lean upon it lightly ! for who knows  
From what once lovely Lip it springs  
unseen !

xxvi

**A**H, make the most of what we yet may  
spend,  
Before we too into the Dust descend ;  
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,  
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—  
sans End !

xxvii

**A**LIKE for those who for To-DAY prepare,  
And those that after some To-MORROW  
stare,  
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness  
cries,  
“ Fools ! your Reward is neither Here nor  
There ! ”

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xxviii

**A**NOTHER Voice, when I am sleeping  
cries,  
“The Flower should open with the  
Morning skies.”  
And a retreating Whisper, as I wake—  
“The Flower that once has blown for ever  
dies.”

xxix

**W**HY, all the Saints and Sages who  
discuss'd  
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are  
thrust  
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words  
to Scorn  
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt  
with Dust.

xxx

**M**YSELF when young did eagerly fre-  
quent  
Doctor and Saint, and heard great  
argument  
About it and about: but evermore  
Came out by the same door as in I went.

xxxi

**W**ITH them the seed of Wisdom did I  
sow,  
And with my own hand wrought to  
make it grow:  
And this was all the Harvest that I  
reap'd—  
“I came like Water, and like Wind I go.”

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xxxii

**I**NTO this Universe, and *Why* not knowing,  
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flow-  
ing :  
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,  
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

xxxiii

**W**HAT, without asking, hither hurried  
*Whence* ?  
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried  
hence !  
Ah, contrite Heav'n endowed us with the  
Vine  
To drug the memory of that insolence !

xxxiv

**U**P from Earth's Centre through the  
Seventh Gate  
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,  
And many Knots unravel'd by the Road ;  
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

xxxv

**T**HERE was the Door to which I found  
no Key :  
There was the Veil through which I  
could not see :  
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE  
There was—and then no more of THEE and  
ME.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xxxvi

**E**ARTH could not answer: nor the Seas  
that mourn  
In flowing Purple, of their Lord for-  
lorn;  
Nor Heaven, with those eternal Signs  
reveal'd  
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

xxxvii

**T**HEN of the THEE IN ME who works  
behind  
The Veil of Universe I cried to find  
A Lamp to guide me through the dark-  
ness; and  
Something then said—"an Understanding  
blind."

xxxviii

**T**HEN to the Lip of this poor earthen  
Urn  
I lean'd, the secret Well of Life to  
learn:  
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While  
you live,  
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall  
return."

xxxix

**T**HINK the Vessel, that with fugitive  
Articulation answer'd, once did live,  
And drink; and that impassive Lip I  
kiss'd,  
How many Kisses might it take—and give!



And we, that now make merry in the Room  
They left, and Summer dresses in new Bloom,  
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth  
Descend, ourselves to make a Couch—for whom ?

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xl

**F**OR I remember stopping by the way  
To watch a Potter thumping his wet  
Clay :  
And with its all-obliterated Tongue  
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently,  
pray !"

xli

**F**OR has not such a Story from of Old  
Down Man's successive generations  
roll'd  
Of such a clod of saturated Earth  
Cast by the Maker into Human mould ?

xlii

**A**ND not a drop that from our Cups we  
throw  
On the parcht herbage but may steal  
below  
To quench the fire of Anguish in some  
Eye  
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

xliii

**A**S then the Tulip for her wonted sup  
Of Heavenly Vintage lifts her chalice  
up,  
Do you, twin offspring of the soil, till  
Heav'n  
To Earth invert you like an empty Cup.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xliv

**D**O you, within your little hour of Grace,  
The waving Cypress in your Arms  
enlace,  
Before the Mother back into her arms  
Fold, and dissolve you in a last embrace.

xlv

**A**ND if the Cup you drink, the Lip you  
press,  
End in what All begins and ends in  
—Yes ;  
Imagine then you *are* what heretofore  
You *were*—hereafter you shall not be less.

xlvi

**S**O when at last the Angel of the drink  
Of Darkness finds you by the river-brink,  
And, proffering his Cup, invites your  
Soul  
Forth to your Lips to quaff it—do not shrink.

xlvii

**A**ND fear not lest Existence closing  
*your*  
Account, should lose, or know the type  
no more ;  
The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has  
pour'd  
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xlvi

**W**HEN You and I behind the Veil are  
past,  
Oh but the long long while the World  
shall last,  
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds  
As much as Ocean of a pebble-cast.

xlix

**O**NE Moment in Annihilation's Waste,  
One Moment, of the Well of Life to  
taste—  
The Stars are setting, and the Caravan  
Draws to the Dawn of Nothing—Oh make  
haste!

1

**W**OULD you that spangle of Existence  
spend  
About THE SECRET—quick about it,  
Friend!  
A Hair, they say, divides the False and  
True—  
And upon what, prithee, does Life depend?

li

**A** HAIR, they say, divides the False and  
True;  
Yes; and a single Alif were the clue,  
Could you but find it, to the Treasure-  
house,  
And peradventure to THE MASTER too;



*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lii

**W**HOSE secret Presence, through  
Creation's veins  
Running, Quicksilver-like eludes your  
pains :  
Taking all shapes from Mah to Mahi ;  
and  
They change and perish all—but He remains ;

liii

**A**MOMENT guess'd—then back behind  
the Fold  
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama  
roll'd  
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,  
He does Himself contrive, enact, behold.

liv

**B**UT if in vain, down on the stubborn  
floor  
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening  
Door,  
You gaze To-day, while You are You—  
how then  
To-morrow, You when shall be You no  
more ?

lv

**O**H, plagued no more with Human or  
Divine,  
To-morrow's tangle to itself resign,  
And lose your fingers in the tresses of  
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.



And this delightful Herb whose tender Green  
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean—

Ah, lean upon it lightly ! for who knows  
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen !

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lvi



WASTE not your Hour, not in the vain  
pursuit  
Of This and That endeavour and dis-  
pute ;  
Better be merry with the fruitful Grape  
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

lvii



YOU know, my Friends, how bravely in  
my House  
For a new Marriage I did make Carouse :  
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,  
And took the Daughter of the Vine to  
Spouse.

lviii



FOR " Is " and " IS-NOT " though with  
Rule and Line  
And " UP-AND-DOWN " by Logic I  
define,  
Of all that one should care to fathom I,  
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

lix



AH, but my Computations, People say,  
Have squared the Year to human  
compass, eh ?  
If so, by striking from the Calendar  
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lx

**A**ND lately, by the Tavern Door agape,  
Came shining through the Dusk an  
Angel Shape  
Bearing a Vessel on her Shoulder ; and  
He bid me taste of it ; and 'twas—the Grape !

lxi

**T**HE Grape that can with Logic absolute  
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects  
confute :

The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice  
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute :

lxii

**T**HE mighty Mahmud, Allah-breathing  
Lord,  
That all the misbelieving and black  
Horde

Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul  
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

lxiii

**W**HY, be this Juice the growth of God,  
who dare  
BlaspHEME the twisted tendril as a  
Snare ?

A Blessing, we should use it, should we  
not ?

And if a Curse—why, then, Who set it there ?

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxiv

**I** MUST abjure the Balm of Life, I must,  
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on  
trust,  
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,  
When the frail Cup in crumbled into Dust!

lxv

**I**F but the Vine and Love-abjuring Band  
Are in the Prophet's Paradise to stand,  
Alack, I doubt the Prophet's Paradise  
Were empty as the hollow of one's Hand.

lxvi

**O**H threats of Hell and Hopes of Para-  
dise!  
One thing at least is certain—*This* Life  
flies:  
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;  
The Flower that once is blown for ever dies.

lxvii

**S**TRANGE, is it not? that of the myriads  
who  
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness  
through  
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,  
Which to discover we must travel too.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxviii

**T**HE Revelations of Devout and Learn'd  
Who rose before us, and as Prophets  
burn'd,  
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from  
Sleep  
They told their fellows, and to Sleep return'd.

lxix

**W**HY, if the Soul can fling the Dust  
aside,  
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,  
Is't not a shame—is't not a shame for him  
So long in this Clay suburb to abide !

lxx

**B**UT that is but a Tent wherein may rest  
A Sultan to the realm of Death address ;  
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash  
Strikes, and prepares it for another guest.

lxxi

**I**SENT my Soul through the Invisible,  
Some letter of that After-life to spell :  
And after many days my Soul return'd  
And said, " Behold, Myself am Heav'n and  
Hell : "



And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,  
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape  
    Bearing a Vessel on her Shoulder; and  
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas—the Grape!

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxxii

**H**EAV'N but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,  
And Hell the Shadow of a Soul on fire,  
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,  
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

lxxiii

**W**E are no other than a moving row  
Of visionary Shapes that come and go  
Round with this Sun-illumin'd Lantern  
held  
In Midnight by the Master of the Show ;

lxxiv

**I**MPOW'RD Pieces of the Game he plays  
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and  
Days ;  
Hither and thither moves, and checks and  
slays ;  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

lxxv

**T**HE Ball no question makes of Ayes and  
Noes,  
But Right or Left as strikes the Player  
goes ;  
And He that toss'd you down into the  
Field,  
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE  
Knows !



*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxxvi

**T**HE Moving Finger writes : and, having writ,  
Moves on : nor all your Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

lxxvii

**F**OR let Philosopher and Doctor preach  
Of what they will, and what they will  
not—each  
Is but one Link in an eternal Chain  
That none can slip, nor break, nor over-reach.

lxxviii

**A**ND that inverted Bowl we call The  
Sky,  
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and  
die,  
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for *It*  
As impotently rolls as you or I.

lxxix

**W**ITH Earth's first Clay They did the  
Last Man knead,  
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd  
the Seed :  
And the first Morning of Creation wrote  
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall  
read.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxxx

**Y**ESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did  
prepare :  
To-morrow's Silence, Triumph, or  
Despair :  
Drink ! for you know not whence you  
came, nor why ;  
Drink ! for you know not why you go, nor  
where.

lxxxi

**T**ELL you this—When, started from the  
Goal,  
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal  
Of Heav'n Parwin and Mushtari they flung  
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul.

lxxxii

**T**HE Vine had struck a fibre : which  
about  
If clings my Being—let the Dervish  
flout ;  
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,  
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

lxxxiii

**A**ND this I know : whether the one True  
Light,  
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me  
quite,  
One Flash of It within the Tavern caught  
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxxxiv



W HAT! out of senseless Nothing to  
provoke  
A conscious Something to resent the  
yoke  
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain  
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

lxxxv



W HAT! from his helpless Creature be  
repaid  
Pure Gold for what he lent us dross-  
allay'd—  
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,  
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

lxxxvi



N AY, but, for terror of his wrathful Face,  
I swear I will not call Injustice Grace;  
Not one Good Fellow of the Tavern but  
Would kick so poor a Coward from the place.

lxxxvii



O H Thou, who didst with pitfall and with  
gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil round  
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin?



A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,  
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—  
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow !

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

lxxxviii

**O**H thou, who Man of baser Earth didst  
make,  
And ev'n with Paradise devise the  
Snake :  
For all the Sin the Face of wretched Man  
Is black with—Man's Forgiveness give—and  
take !

\* \* \* \*

lxxxix

**A**S under cover of departing Day  
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazan away,  
Once more within the Potter's house  
alone  
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

xc

**A**ND once again there gather'd a scarce  
heard  
Whisper among them ; as it were, the  
stirr'd  
Ashes of some all but extinguisht Tongue,  
Which mine ear kindled into living Word.

xcı

**S**AID one among them—" Surely not in  
vain,  
My substance from the common Earth  
was ta'en.  
That He who subtly wrought me into  
Shape  
Should stamp me back to shapeless Earth  
again ? "

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xcii

**A**NOTHER said—" Why, ne'er a peevish  
Boy  
Would break the Cup from which he  
drank in Joy ;  
Shall He that of his own free Fancy made  
The Vessel, in an after-rage destroy ! "

xciii

**N**ONE answer'd this ; but after silence  
spake  
Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make ;  
" They sneer at me for leaning all awry :  
What ! did the Hand then of the Potter  
shake ? "

xciv

**T**HUS with the Dead as with the Living,  
*What ?*  
And *Why ?* so ready, but the *Wherefor*  
not,  
One on a sudden peevishly exclaim'd,  
" Which is the Potter, pray, and which the  
Pot ? "

xcv

**S**AID one—" Folks of a surly Master tell,  
And daub his Visage with the Smoke of  
Hell :  
They talk of some sharp Trial of us —  
Pish !  
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

xcvi

“**W**ELL” said another, “Whoso will,  
let try,  
My Clay with long oblivion is gone  
dry :  
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,  
Methinks I might recover by-and-bye !”

xcvii

**S**O while the Vessels one by one were  
speaking,  
One spied the little Crescent all were  
seeking :  
And then they jogged each other,  
“ Brother ! Brother !  
Now for the Porter’s shoulder-knot a-creak-  
ing ! ”

\* \* \* \*

xcviii

**A**H, with the Grape my fading Life  
provide,  
And wash my Body whence the Life  
has died,  
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,  
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

xcix

**W**HITHER resorting from the vernal  
Heat  
Shall Old Acquaintance Old Acquaint-  
ance greet,  
Under the Branch that leans above the  
Wall  
To shed his Blossom over head and feet.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

c

**T**HEN ev'n my buried Ashes such a  
snare  
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air.  
As not a true-believer passing by  
But shall be overtaken unaware.

ci

**I**NDEED the Idols I have loved so long  
Have done my credit in Men's eye much  
wrong :  
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,  
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

cii

**I**NDEED, indeed, Repentance oft before  
I swore—but was I sober when I swore ?  
And then and then came Spring, and  
Rose-in-hand  
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

ciii

**A**ND much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,  
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour  
—Well,  
I often wonder what the Vintners buy  
One half so precious as the ware they sell.





Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire  
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,  
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

civ

**Y**ET Ah, that Spring should vanish with  
the Rose !  
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript  
should close !  
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,  
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who  
knows !

cv

**W**OULD but the Desert of the Fountain  
yield  
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed  
reveal'd,  
Toward which the fainting Traveller might  
spring,  
As springs the trampled herbage of the field !

cvi

**O**H if the World were but to re-create,  
That we might catch ere closed the  
Book of Fate,  
And make The Writer on a fairer leaf,  
Inscribe our names, or quite obliterate !

cvii

**B**BETTER, oh better, cancel from the Scroll  
Of Universe one luckless Human Soul,  
Than drop by drop enlarge the Flood that  
rolls  
Hoarser with Anguish as the Ages roll.

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

cviii

**A**H Love! could you and I with Fate  
conspire  
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things  
entire,  
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

cix

**B**UT see! The rising Moon of Heav'n  
again  
Looks for us, Sweet-heart, through the  
quivering Plane:  
How oft hereafter rising will she look  
Among those leaves—for one of us in vain!

cx

**A**ND when Yourself with silver Foot  
shall pass  
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the  
Grass,  
And in your joyous errand reach the spot  
Where I made One—turn down an empty  
Glass!

TAMAM



And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before  
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!  
You know how little while we have to stay,  
And, once departed, may return no more."

## NOTES

### TO THE FOURTH EDITION

(Stanza II.) The "*False Dawn*"; *Subhi Kazib*, a Transient Light on the Horizon about an hour before the *Subhi Sadik*, or True Dawn; a well-known Phenomenon in the East.

(IV). New Year. Beginning with the Vernal Equinox, it must be remembered; and (howsoever the old Solar Year is practically superseded by the clumsy *Lunar* Year that dates from the Mohammedan Hijra) still commemorated by a Festival that is said to have been appointed by the very Jamshyd whom Omar so often talks of, and whose yearly Calendar he helped to rectify.

"The sudden approach and rapid advance of the Spring," says Mr. Binning,\* "are very striking. Before the Snow is well off the Ground, the Trees burst into Blossom, and the Flowers start forth from the Soil. At *Now Rooz* (*their* New Year's Day) the Snow was lying in patches on the Hills and in the shaded Vallies, while the Fruit-trees in the Gardens were budding beautifully, and green Plants and Flowers springing up on the Plains on every side—

'And on old Hyems' Chin and icy Crown  
An odorous Chaplet of sweet Summer buds  
Is, as in mockery, set.'—

Among the plants newly appeared I recognized some old Acquaintances I had not seen for many a Year: among these, two varieties of the Thistle—a coarse species of Daisy like the 'Horse-gowan'—red and white Clover—the Dock—the blue Corn-flower—and that vulgar Herb the Dandelion rearing its yellow crest on the Banks of the Water-courses." The Nightingale was not yet heard, for the Rose was not yet blown; but an almost identical Blackbird and Wood-pecker helped to make up something of a North-country Spring.

\**Two Years' Travel in Persia, etc.*, i. 165.

## Notes

“The White Hand of Moses,” Exodus iv. 6, where Moses draws forth his Hand—not, according to the Persians, “*leprous as Snow*,”—but *white*, as our May-blossom in Spring perhaps. According to them also the Healing Power of Jesus resided in His Breath.

(v.) Iram, planted by King Shaddad, and now sunk somewhere in the Sands of Arabia. Jamshyd’s Seven-ring’d Cup was typical of the 7 Heavens, 7 Planets, 7 Seas, etc., and was a *Divining Cup*.

(VI.) *Pehlevi*, the old Heroic Sanskrit of Persia. Hafiz also speaks of the Nightingale’s *Pehlevi*, which did not change with the People’s.

I am not sure if the fourth line refers to the Red Rose looking sickly, or to the Yellow Rose that ought to be Red ; Red, White, and Yellow Roses all common in Persia. I think that Southey, in his Common-Place Book, quotes from some Spanish author about the Rose being White till 10 o’clock ; “*Rosa Perfecta*” at 2 ; and “*Perfecta Incarnada*” at 5.

(X.) Rustum, the “Hercules” of Persia, and Zal his Father, whose exploits are among the most celebrated in the Shahnama. Hatim Tai, a well-known type of Oriental Generosity.

(XIII.) A Drum—beaten outside a Palace.

(XIV.) That is, the Rose’s Golden Centre.

(XVIII.) Persepolis : call’d also *Takht-i-Jamshyd*—THE THRONE OF JAMSHYD, “*King Splendid*,” of the mythical *Peshdadian* Dynasty, and supposed (according to the Shahnama) to have been founded and built by him. Others refer it to the Work of the Genie King, Jan Ibn Jan—who also built the Pyramids—before the time of Adam.

BAHRAM GUR—*Bahram of the Wild Ass*—a Sassanian Sovereign—had also his Seven Castles (like the King of Bohemia !) each of a different Colour : each with a Royal Mistress within ; each of whom tells him a Story, as told in one of the most famous Poems of Persia, written by Amir Khusraw : all these Seven also figuring (according to

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Eastern Mysticism) the Seven Heavens ; and perhaps the Book itself that Eighth, into which the mystical Seven transcend, and within which they revolve. The Ruins of Three of those Towers are yet shown by the Peasantry ; as also the swamp in which Bahram sunk, like the Master of Ravenswood, while pursuing his *Gur*.

The Palace that to Heav'n his pillars threw,  
And Kings the forehead on his threshold drew—  
I saw the solitary Ringdove there,  
And "Coo, coo, coo," she cried ; and "Coo, coo, coo."

This Quatrain Mr. Binning found, among several of Hafiz and others, inscribed by some stray hand among the ruins of Persepolis. The Ringdove's ancient *Pehlevi* *Coo, Coo, Coo*, signifies also in Persian "*Where? Where? Where?*" In Attar's "Bird-parliament" she is reproved by the Leader of the Birds for sitting still, and for ever harping on that one note of lamentation for her lost Yusuf.

A propos of Omar's Red Roses in Stanza xix., I am reminded of an old English superstition, that our Anemone Pulsatilla, or purple "Pasque Flower" (which grows plentifully about the Fleam Dyke, near Cambridge), grows only where Danish blood has been spilt.

(XXI.) A thousand years to each Planet.

(XXXI.) Saturn, Lord of the Seventh Heaven.

(XXXII.) ME-AND-THEE : some dividual Existence or Personality distinct from the Whole.

(XXXVII.) One of the Persian Poets—Attar, I think—has a pretty story about this. A thirsty Traveller dips his hand into a Spring of Water to drink from. By and by comes another who draws up and drinks from an earthen Bowl; and then departs, leaving his Bowl behind him. The first Traveller takes it up for another draught ; but is surprised to find that the same Water which had tasted sweet from his own hand tastes bitter from the earthen Bowl. But a Voice—from Heaven, I think—tells him the clay from which the Bowl is made was once *Man* ; and,

## Notes

into whatever shape renewed, can never lose the bitter flavour of Mortality.

(XXXIX.) The custom of throwing a little Wine on the ground before drinking still continues in Persia, and perhaps generally in the East. Mons. Nicolas considers it "un signe de libéralité, et en même temps un avertissement que le buveur doit vider sa coupe jusqu'à la dernière goutte." Is it not more likely an ancient Superstition; a Libation to propitiate Earth, or make her an Accomplice in the illicit Revel? Or, perhaps, to divert the Jealous Eye by some sacrifice of superfluity, as with the Ancients of the West? With Omar we see something more is signified; the precious Liquor is not lost, but sinks into the ground to refresh the dust of some poor Wine-worshipper foregone.

Thus Hafiz, copying Omar in so many ways: "When thou drinkest Wine pour a draught on the ground. Wherefore fear the Sin which brings to another Gain?"

(XLIII.) According to one beautiful Oriental Legend, Azrael accomplishes his mission by holding to the nostril an Apple from the Tree of Life.

This and the two following Stanzas would have been withdrawn, as somewhat *de trop*, from the Text, but for advice which I least like to disregard.

(LI.) From Mah to Mahi; from Fish to Moon.

(LVI.) A Jest, of course, as his Studies. A curious mathematical Quatrain of Omar's has been pointed out to me; the more curious because almost exactly parallel'd by some Verses of Doctor Donne's, that are quoted in Izaak Walton's Lives! Here is Omar: "You and I are the image of a pair of compasses; though we have two heads (sc. our feet) we have one body: when we have fixed the centre for our circle, we bring our heads (sc. feet) together at the end." Dr. Donne:

If we be two, we two are so  
As stiff twin-compasses are two;  
Thy Soul, the fixt foot, makes no show  
To move, but does if the other do.



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And though thine in the centre sit,  
Yet when my other far does roam,  
Thine leans and hearkens after it,  
And grows erect as mine comes home.

Such thou must be to me, who must  
Like the other foot obliquely run ;  
Thy firmness makes my circle just,  
And me to end where I begun.

(LIX.) The Seventy-two Religions supposed to divide the World, *including* Islamism, as some think : but others not.

(LX.) Alluding to Sultan Mahmud's Conquest of India and its dark people.

(LXVIII.) *Fanusi khiyal*, a Magic-lantern still used in India ; the cylindrical Interior being painted with various Figures, and so lightly poised and ventilated as to revolve round the lighted Candle within.

(LXX.) A very mysterious Line in the Original :

O danad O danad O danad O———

breaking off something like our Wood-pigeon's Note, which she is said to take up just where she left off.

(LXXV.) Parwin and Mushtari—The Pleiads and Jupiter.

(LXXXVII.) This Relation of Pot and Potter to Man and his Maker figures far and wide in the Literature of the World, from the time of the Hebrew Prophets to the present ; when it may finally take the name of "Pot theism," by which Mr. Carlyle ridiculed Sterling's "Pantheism." My Sheikh, whose knowledge flows in from all quarters, writes to me—

"A propos of old Omar's Pots, did I ever tell you the sentence I found in Bishop Pearson on the Creed ? 'Thus are we wholly at the disposal of His will, and our present and future condition framed and ordered by His free, but

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wise and just decrees. *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?* (Rom. ix. 21). And can that earth artificer have a freer power over his *brother potsherd* (both being made of the same metal), than God hath over him, who, by the strange fecundity of His omnipotent power, first made the clay out of nothing, and then him out of that? ”

And again—from a very different quarter—“I had to refer the other day to Aristophanes, and came by chance on a curious Speaking-pot story in the *Vespæ*, which I had quite forgotten.

“The Pot calls a bystander to be a witness to his bad treatment. The woman says, ‘If, by Proserpine, instead of all this “testifying” you would buy yourself a rivet, it would show more sense in you!’

One illustration for the oddity’s sake from the *Autobiography of a Cornish Rector*, by the late James Hamley Tregenna. 1871.

“There was one old Fellow in our Company—he was so like a Figure in the *Pilgrim’s Progress* that Richard always called him the ‘ALLEGORY,’ with a long white beard—a rare Appendage in those days—and a Face the colour of which seemed to have been baked in, like the Faces one used to see on Earthenware Jugs. In our Country-dialect Earthenware is called ‘*Clome*’; so the Boys of the Village used to shout out after him—‘Go back to the Potter, old Clome-face, and get baked over again.’ For the ‘Allegory,’ though shrewd enough in most things, had the reputation of being *saift-baked*, i.e., of weak intellect.”

(XC.) At the Close of the Fasting Month, Ramazan (which makes the Mussulman unhealthy and unamiable), the first Glimpse of the New Moon (who rules their division of the year) is looked for with the utmost Anxiety, and hailed with Acclamation. Then it is that the Porter’s

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Knot may be heard—toward the *Cellar*. Omar has elsewhere a pretty Quatrain about the same Moon—

“Be of Good Cheer—the sullen Month will die,  
And a young Moon requite us by and by :

Look how the Old one, meagre, bent, and wan  
With Age and Fast, is fainting from the Sky !”



## EDWARD FITZGERALD

The "Gray of the 19th Century," writer of one immortal poem, Edward Fitzgerald was born of Irish parentage at Bredfield House, Suffolk, on March 31, 1809. Educated at King Edward VI's School, he joined Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1826 and on leaving the University with his degree in 1830, he lived at near Woodbridge almost continuously till death.

A lover of books and flowers, Fitzgerald led a quiet and uninterrupted country-life, save for occasional visits to London. Yachting and gardening were his favourite amusements, and the delightful friendship with some of the choicest spirits of the age—Tennyson, Thackeray, Cowell, Groome, Spedding, and Barton, whose daughter, Lucy, he married,—remained the object dearest to the heart of this warm and wistful scholarly recluse, till his death on 14th June, 1883.

Fitzgerald's first work, *Euphranor*, a dialogue on youth, was published anonymously in 1851, and this was followed a year later by *Polonius*. A translation from Spanish of Calderon's dramas (1853) was soon withdrawn from circulation. Fitzgerald turned his attention from Spanish to Persian and, in 1856, published anonymously a version of Jami's *Salamon and Absal*. About this time, while visiting the Bodleian Library, he felt attracted by the works of Omar Khayyam, the Persian astronomer-poet of the 11th century, who was then little known save through a French translation issued at Paris by M. Nicolas in 1857. Fitzgerald at

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once recognized the beauty of Omar's *Rubaiyat* (Quatrains), which held for him a subtly spiritual appeal, and his rendering of the *Rubaiyat* with all the variations of their moving melody indissolubly linked the names of Omar and Fitzgerald for all times. The *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, published anonymously in 1859, flamed into prominence after a brief initial period of obscurity. Fitzgerald is, in spite of all the bold liberties that he takes with the original, in perfect accord with the Persian poet, whose moods he rightly interprets and melodies he sweetly echoes. Though Omar's ideas are often amended, compressed and shifted, Fitzgerald's version never misses the spirit of the "high-piping Pehlevi" of Persia.

## OMAR KHAYYAM

Omar Khayyam or Umar Khayyam (c. 1050-c. 1123) the astronomer-poet of Persia was born at Naishapur in Khorassan. He was known to have reformed the Muslim Calendar, and one of his Arabic mathematical treatises was edited and translated by Woepke (1851). It was as a mathematician that Omar was known to the western world until in 1859 Edward Fitzgerald introduced Omar as the agnostic poet of pessimism by his "Translation" of seventy-five of Omar's Rubaiyat or Quatrains.

The original Rubaiyat of Omar must have passed through a process of transformation after Omar's death and the Rubaiyat can now be regarded as nothing but an anthology of many hands with little or nothing of the original of Omar in it. Omar's verse therefore now appears to be a strange mixture of bold philosophic speculations and convivial musing on roses and wine. It is a curious medley striking on various notes, sweet and strong, sad and wistful with a dash of bold protest against the narrowness and bigotry against the theology of the period.