



I

WAKE! For the Sun, who scatter'd into
flight
The Stars before him from the Field of
Night,
Drives Night along with them from
Heav'n, and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

II

Before the phantom of False morning
died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern
cried,
"When all the Temple is prepared
within,
"Why nods the drowsy Worshipper out-
side?"

III

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."



RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

IV

Now 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 sus-
pires.

V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd'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.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

VI

And 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' incardine.

VII

Come, 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.



VIII

Whether at Naishápúr 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.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

IX

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you
say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yester-
day?
And this first Summer month that brings
the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád away.

X

Well, let it take them! What have we to
do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?
Let Zál and Rustum bluster as they will,
Or Hátim call to Supper—heed not you.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XI

With me along the strip of Herbage
 strown
That just divides the desert from the
 sown,
 Where name of Slave and Sultán is for-
 got—
And Peace to Mahmúd on his golden
 Throne!

XII

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!

10

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XIII

Some for the Glories of This World; and
 some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
 Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit
 go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

XIV

Look 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."

11

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

xv

And 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.

xvi

The 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.

12

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

xvii

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and
Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his
way.

xviii

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

13

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XIX

I 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.

XX

And this reviving Herb whose tender
Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs un-
seen!

14

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XXI

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.

XXII

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

15

*RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM*

XXIII

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?

XXIV

Ah, 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!

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XXV

Alike for those who for To-day prepare,
And those that after some To-morrow
stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower of Dark-
ness cries,
“Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor
There.”

XXVI

Why, all the Saints and Sages who dis-
cuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so wisely—they are
thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their
Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt
with Dust.



XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argu-
ment
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I
went.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine 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."

XXIX

Into 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.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried
Whence?

And, without asking, *Whither* hurried
hence!

Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Sev-
enth Gate

I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many a Knot unravel'd by the
Road;

But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XXXII

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

XXXIII

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that
mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs
reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and
Morn.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XXXIV

Then of the THEE IN ME who works be-
hind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I
heard,
As from Without—"THE ME WITHIN
THEE BLIND!"

XXXV

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While
you live,
"Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall
return."

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XXXVI

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I
kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

XXXVII

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

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR, KHAYYAM

XXXVIII

And 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?

XXXIX

And not a drop that from our Cups we
throw
For Earth to drink of, but may steal be-
low
To quench the fire of Anguish in some
Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XL

As then the Tulip for her morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks
up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you—like an empty Cup.

XLI

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

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XLII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you
press,
End in what All begins and ends in—
Yes;
Think then you are To-DAY what YES-
TERDAY
You were—To-MORROW you shall not be
less.

XLIII

So when that Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall
not shrink.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XLIV

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Were't not a Shame—were't not a
Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

XLV

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's
rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death address;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XLVI

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like
no more;
The Eternal Sáki from that Bowl has
pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

XLVII

When 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 the Sea's self should heed a pebble-
cast.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XLVIII

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has
reach'd
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make
haste!

XLIX

Would you that spangle of Existence
spend
About THE SECRET—quick about it, Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False and
True—
And upon what, prithee, may life depend?

RUBAIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

L

A Hair perhaps 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;

LI

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's
veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your
pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi;
and
They change and perish all—but He re-
mains;

A moment guess'd—then back behind the
Fold

Immerst of Darkness round the Drama
roll'd

Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Or 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?

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pur-
suit

Of This and That endeavour and dispute;
Better be jocund with the fruitful
Grape

Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

You know, my Friends, with what a brave
Carouse

I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my
Bed,

And took the Daughter of the Vine to
Spouse.



LVI

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.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LVII

Ah, but my Computations, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?—
Nay,
'Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

LVIII

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

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LIX

The 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:

LX

The mighty Mahmúd, 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.

36



LXI

Why, 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?

37



LXII

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,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled into
Dust!

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXIII

O 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 has blown for ever
dies.

LXIV

Strange, 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.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXV

The 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 comrades, and to Sleep
return'd.

LXVI

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul return'd to
me,
And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and
Hell:"

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXVII

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Our-
selves,
So late emerged from, shall so soon ex-
pire.

LXVIII

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and
go
Round with the Sun-illumined Lantern
held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXIX

But helpless 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.

LXX

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and
Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player
goes;
And He that toss'd you down into the
Field,
He knows about it all—*HE* knows—*HE*
knows!

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXXI

The 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.

LXXII

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.



LXXIII

With 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.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXXIV

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did pre-
pare;

To-MORROW'S Silence, Triumph, or De-
spair:

Drink! for you know not whence you
came, nor why:

Drink! for you know not why you go,
nor where.

LXXV

I tell you this—When, started from the
Goal,

Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwin and Mushtarí they
flung,

In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXXVI

The 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 with-
out.

LXXVII

And 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.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXXVIII

What! out of senseless Nothing to pro-
voke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

LXXIX

What! from his helpless Creature be re-
paid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-al-
lay'd—
Sue for a Debt he never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!



LXXX

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with
gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil
round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!



LXXXI

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst
make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of
Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—
and take!

* * * * *



LXXXII

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

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXXXIII

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and
small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious Vessels were; and
some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

LXXXIV

Said one among them—"Surely not in
vain
"My substance of the common Earth was
ta'en
"And to this Figure moulded, to be
broke,
"Or trampled back to Shapeless Earth
again."

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXXXV

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish
Boy
"Would break the Bowl from which he
drank in joy;
"And He that with his hand the Vessel
made
"Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

LXXXVI

After a momentary 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?"

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXXXVII

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Súfi pipkin—waxing hot—
"All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me
then,
"Who is the Potter, pray, and who the
Pot?"

LXXXVIII

"Why," said another, "Some there are who
tell
"Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
"The luckless Pots he marr'd in mak-
ing—Pish!
"He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be
well."

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LXXXIX

"Well," murmur'd one, "Let whoso make
or buy,
"My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:
"But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
"Methinks I might recover by and by."

XC

So while the Vessels one by one were
speaking,
The little Moon look'd in that all were
seeking:
And then they jogg'd each other,
"Brother! Brother!
"Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-
creaking!"

* * * * *



XCI

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life pro-
vide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has
died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XCII

That 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.

XCIII

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much
wrong:
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow
Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XCIV

Indeed, 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.

XCV

And much as Wine has play'd the In-
fidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—
Well,
I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.



RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

XCVI

Yet 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!

XCVII

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, re-
veal'd,

To which the fainting Traveller might
spring,

As springs the trampled herbage of the
field!

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

xcviii

Would but some wingéd Angel ere too
late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder other-
wise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

xcix

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!

* * * * *

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

c

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

ci

And when like her, oh Sáki, you 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!

OMAR KHAYYAM
THE ASTRONOMER-POET
OF PERSIA

BY EDWARD FITZGERALD



OMAR KHAYYÁM was born at Naishápúr in Khorassán 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 Nizám-ul-Mulk, Vizyr to Alp Arslán the Son, and Malik Shah the Grandson, of Toghrul Beg the Tartar, who had wrested Persia from the feeble successor of Mahmúd the Great, and founded that Seljukian Dynasty which

finally roused Europe into the Crusades. This Nizám-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. 59, from Mirkhond's History of the Assassins.

“One of the greatest of the wise men of Khorassán was the Imám Mowaffak of Naishápúr, 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 Tús to Naishápúr 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 Khayyám and the ill-fated Ben Sabbáh. Both were endowed with sharpness of wit and the highest natural powers; and we three formed a close friendship together. When the Imám 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 Naishápúr, while Hasan Ben Sabbáh'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 Khayyám, "It is a universal belief that the pupils of the Imám 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 Khorassán 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 Arslán.'

"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 school-day vow. 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

OMAR KHAYYAM

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 Alamút, in the province of Rúdbar, 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 left in the language of modern Europe at 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

ASTRONOMER-POET OF PERSIA

the founder of the dynasty, whom we have seen in his quiet collegiate days, at Naishápúr. One of the countless victims of the Assassin's dagger was Nizám-ul-Mulk himself, the old school-boy friend.*

"Omar Khayyám 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

* Some of Omar's Rubáiyát 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. Attár makes Nizám-ul-Mulk use the very words of his friend Omar [Rub. xxviii.], "When Nizám-ul-Mulk was in the Agony (of Death) he said, 'Oh God! I am passing away in the hand of the Wind.'"

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fortune, to spread wide the advantages of Science, and pray for your long life and prosperity.' The Vizier tells us, that, when he found Omar was really sincere in his refusal, he pressed him no further, but granted him a yearly pension of 1,200 *mithkáls* of gold, from the treasury of Naishápúr.

"At Naishápúr thus lived and died Omar Khayyám, '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 Malík Shah, he came to Merv, and attained great praise for his proficiency in science, and the Sultan showered favours upon him.'

"When Malik Shah determined to re-

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form the calendar, Omar was one of the eight learned men employed to do it; the result was the *Jaláli* era (so called from *Jalál-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 'Zíji-Maliksháhi,' and the French have lately republished and translated an Arabic Treatise of his on Algebra.

"His Takhallus or poetical name (Khayyám) signifies a Tent-maker, and he is said to have at one time exercised that trade, perhaps before Nizám-ul-Mulk's generosity raised him to independence. Many Persian poets similarly derive their

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names from their occupations; thus we have Attár,' 'a druggist,' Assár, 'an oil presser,' etc.* Omar himself alludes to his name in the following whimsical lines:—

'Khayyám, 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,
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

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

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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 Khayyám, died at Naishápúr in the year of the Hegira, 517 (A.D. 1123); in science he was unrivalled—the very paragon of his age. Khwájah Nizámi of Samarcand, who was one of his pupils, relates the following story: "I often used to hold con-

* "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 Khayyám.

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versations with my teacher, Omar Khayyám, 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 visit Naishápúr,

*The Rashness of the Words, according to D'Herbelot, consisted in being so opposed to those in the Korán: "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,

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I went to his final resting-place, and lo! it was just outside a garden, 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

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.'"

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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 Súfis, 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

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Omar would not hide. Their poets, including Háfiz, 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

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World but This, he set about making the most of it; preferring rather 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 this 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

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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 reacht Westward at all, in spite of all the acquisitions of Arms and Science. There is no copy at the India House, none at the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. We know of but one in England: No. 140 of the Ouseley MSS. at the Bodleian, written at Shiráz, A.D. 1460. This contains but 158 Rubáiyát. 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

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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 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:—

* "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."

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"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

* Professor Cowell.

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 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!

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With regard to the present Translation. The original Rubáiyát (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 Rubáiyát 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 (gen-

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uine 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 Tent-maker, 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.

[From the Third Edition]

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,

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from a lithograph copy at Teheran, comprising 464 Rubáiyát, 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, &c., as Háfiz is supposed to do; in short, a Súfí Poet like Háfiz 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 other, litera-

* [This was written in 1868.]

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ture. 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 in his

* 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.

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 Háfiz 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, &c., occur in the text—which is often enough—Mons. Nicolas carefully annotates "Dieu," "La Divinité," &c.: so carefully indeed that one is tempted to think that he was indoctrinated by the Súfi with whom he read the Poems. (Note to Rub. ii. p. 8.) A Per-

sian would naturally wish to vindicate a distinguished Countryman; and a Súfi to enrol him in his own sect, which already comprises all the chief Poets of Persia.

What historical Authority has Mons. Nicolas to show that Omar gave himself up "avec passion à l'étude de la philosophie des Soufis"? (Preface, p. xiii.) The Doctrines of Pantheism, Materialism, Necessity, &c., were not peculiar to the Súfi; 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

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world. Von Hammer (according to Sprenger's Oriental Catalogue) speaks of Omar as "a Free-thinker, 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 Rubáiyát of Mons. Nicolas' own Edition Súf and Súfi 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

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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 Quat-

* 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 employés par Khéyam pour rendre ses pensées sur l'amour divin, et à la singularité de ses images

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rains in the Teheran, as in the Calcutta, Copies are spurious; such *Rubáiyát* being the common form of Epigram in Persia. But this, at best, tells as much one way as another; nay, the Súfi, 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

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 moulahs musulmans et même par beaucoup de laïques, qui rougissent véritablement d'une pareille licence le leur compatriote à l'égard des choses spirituelles."

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must be one of the oldest, as dated at Shiráz, A.H. 865, A.D. 1460. And this, I think, especially distinguishes Omar (I cannot help calling him by his—no, not Christian—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 Háfiz. It does not appear there was any danger in holding and singing Súfi Pantheism, so long as the Poet made his Salaam to Mo-

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hammed at the beginning and end of his Song. Under such conditions Jeláluddín, Jámí, Attár, 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 Háfiz 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

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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 Súfi; and the burden of Omar's Song—if not "Let us eat"—is assuredly—"Let us drink, for To-morrow we die!" And if Háfiz meant quite otherwise by a similar 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

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presumption, and certainly the opinion of some learned men, in favour of Omar's being a Súfi—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 bragg'd more than he drank of it, in very defiance perhaps of that Spiritual Wine which left its Votaries sunk in Hypocrisy or Disgust.