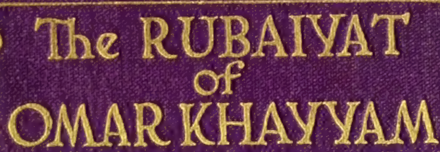

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RUBÁIYÁT OF
OMAR KHAYYÁM

And if there be no meeting after death,
If all be silence, darkness—yet 'tis rest.
  Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep,
  For God's will 'giveth his beloved sleep,'
And if an endless sleep He wills—so best.

HUXLEY.

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1901

RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM

IN ENGLISH VERSE ❧ BY

EDWARD FITZGERALD

LONDON: HOWARD WILFORD BELL
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To the Rose-tree from Omar's Grave,
planted at Fitzgerald's

Alike from alien lips one music flows
To flush the Orient Rose,
Far-sundered spirits finding each in her
His dream's interpreter.

JOHN B. TABB.

THE FIRST VERSION OF THE RUBÁIYÁT

I

AWAKE! 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 Sultán's Turret in a Noose of Light.

II

Dreaming 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

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.'

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 suspires.

V

Irám indeed is gone with all its Rose,
And Jamshýd'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

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

VII

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.

VIII

And 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 Jamshýd and Kaikobád away.

IX

But come with old Khayyám, and leave the
Lot
Of Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú forgot:
Let Rustum lay about him as he will,
Or Hátim Tai cry Supper— heed them not.

X

With me along some Strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán scarce is
known,
And pity Sultán Máhmúd on his Throne.

XI

Here 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.

XII

'How 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

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.'

XIV

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.

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

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

XVII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep;
And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep.

XVIII

I sometimes 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

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!

XX

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.

XXI

Lo! 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

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?

XXIII

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!

XXIV

Alike for those who for TO-DAY prepare,
And those that after a TO-MORROW stare,
A Muezzín from the Tower of Darkness cries
'Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There!'

XXV

Why, 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

Oh, come with old Khayyám, 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

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.

XXVIII

With 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

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

XXX

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

XXXI

Up 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.

XXXII

There 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

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.

XXXIV

Then 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

I 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!

XXXVI

For 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

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

XXXVIII

One 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

How 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.

XL

You 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

For '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

And 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

The 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.

XLIV

The mighty Mahmúd, 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

But 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

For 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

And 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.

XLVIII

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

XLIX

'Tis 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

The 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

The 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.

LII

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

LIII

With 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

I tell Thee this—When, starting from the Goal,
Over the shoulders of the flaming Foal
  Of Heav'n Parwin and Mushtara they flung,
In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul

LV

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

LVI

And 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

Oh 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

Oh, 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!

, , , , , ,

KÚZA-NÁMA

LIX

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

LX

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

LXI

Then 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

Another 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

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?'

LXIV

Said 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

Then 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

So 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

Ah, 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.

LXVIII

That 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

Indeed 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

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.

LXXI

And 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.

LXXII

Alas, 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

Ah 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

Ah, 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

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!

TAMÁM SHUD

The Silence thrills to sound; a mournful strain
Of music throbs across the sea of years,
And bears thy story, Omar, to our ears;
Of prayers the mocking skies hurled back again—
Of hands stretched out to Heaven for help in vain—
Of dull despair which neither hopes nor fears—
Grief that has learned the uselessness of tears—
And bitter calm of weariness and pain.

A human heart speaks to us from the Past,
From the vast Stillness, in whose unknown deep
We too so soon must plunge and seek for rest.
Hath Peace, my Brother, come to thee at last—
The perfect Peace of quiet, dreamless sleep?
Sleep on! for, surely, dreamless sleep is best.

J. WEST ROOSEVELT.

A LIFE OF

OMAR KHAYYÁM

BY

EDWARD FITZGERALD

MAR 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 *Wasíyat*—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 Khorassán was the Imám Mowaffak of Naishápúr, a man highly honoured and reverenced—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 *Ismaílians*,—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 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 have left in the language of modern Europe as their dark memorial, is derived from the *hashísh*, 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 Naishápúr. One of the countless victims of the Assassin's dagger was Nizám ul Mulk himself, the old school-boy friend.[1]

'Omar Khayyám also came to the Vizier to

[1] 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

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, when he found Omar was really sincere in his refusal, he pressed him no further, but granted him a yearly pension of 1200 *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 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 *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

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."'

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 (Khayyám) signifies a Tentmaker, 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 names from their occupations; thus we have Attár, "a druggist," Assár, "an oil presser," etc.[1] 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 poems; it has been printed in the Persian in the Appendix to Hyde's *Veterum Persarum Religio*, p. 499;

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

and D'Herbelot alludes to it in his Bibliothèque, under *Khiam*:[1]

'"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 conversations 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.[2] Years

[1] 'Philosophe Musulman qui a vêcu 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.

[2] 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, I hesitated not a moment to tell him "Stepney";

after, when I chanced to revisit Naishápúr, 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 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

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."'

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 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 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 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 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 the Lucknow MS. at double that number.[1] The Scribes,

[1] '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

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—

'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,[1] 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

438 Tetrastichs, with an Appendix containing 54 others not found in some MSS.'

[1] Professor Cowell.

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*

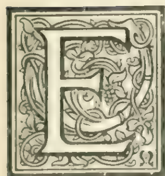
himself with speculative problems of Deity, Destiny, Matter and Spirit, Good and Evil, and other such questions, easier to start than to run down, and the pursuit of which becomes a very weary sport at last!

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 (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.

LIFE OF

EDWARD FITZGERALD



EDWARD FITZGERALD, whom the world has already learned, in spite of his own efforts to remain within the shadow of anonymity, to look upon as one of the rarest poets of the century, was born at Bredfield, in Suffolk, on the 31st March 1809. He was the third son of John Purcell, of Kilkenny, in Ireland, who, marrying Miss Mary Frances Fitz-Gerald, daughter of John FitzGerald, of Williamstown, County Waterford, added that distinguished name to his own patronymic; and the future Omar was thus doubly of Irish extraction. (Both the families of Purcell and FitzGerald claim descent from Norman warriors of the eleventh century.) This circumstance is thought to have had some influence in attracting him to the study of Persian poetry, Iran and Erin being almost convertible terms in the early days of modern ethnology. After

some years of primary education at the grammar school of Bury St Edmunds, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1826, and there formed acquaintance with several young men of great abilities, most of whom rose to distinction before him, but never ceased to regard with affectionate remembrance the quiet and amiable associate of their college-days. Amongst them were Alfred Tennyson, James Spedding, William Bodham Donne, John Mitchell Kemble, and William Makepeace Thackeray; and their long friendship has been touchingly referred to by the Laureate in dedicating his last poem to the memory of Edward FitzGerald. 'Euphranor,' our author's earliest printed work, affords a curious picture of his academic life and associations. Its substantial reality is evident beneath the thin disguise of the symbolical or classical names which he gives to the personages of the colloquy; and the speeches which he puts into his own mouth are full of the humorous gravity, the whimsical and kindly philosophy, which remained his distinguishing characteristics till the end. This book was first published in 1851; a second and a third edition were printed some years later; all anonymous, and each of the latter two differing from its pre-

decessor by changes in the text which were not indicated on the title-pages.

'Euphranor' furnishes a good many characterisations which would be useful for any writer treating upon Cambridge society in the third decade of this century. Kenelm Digby, the author of the 'Broadstone of Honour,' had left Cambridge before the time when Euphranor held his 'dialogue,' but he is picturesquely recollected as 'a grand swarthy fellow who might have stepped out of the canvas of some knightly portrait in his father's hall—perhaps the living image of one sleeping under some cross-legged *effigies* in the church.' In 'Euphranor,' it is easy to discover the earliest phase of the unconquerable attachment which FitzGerald entertained for his college and his life-long friends, and which induced him in later days to make frequent visits to Cambridge, renewing and refreshing the old ties of custom and friendship. In fact, his disposition was affectionate to a fault, and he betrayed his consciousness of weakness in that respect by referring playfully at times to 'a certain natural lubricity' which he attributed to the Irish character, and professed to discover especially in himself. This amiability of temper endeared him to many friends of totally dissimilar tastes and qualities; and, by

enlarging his sympathies, enabled him to enjoy the fructifying influence of studies pursued in communion with scholars more profound than himself, but less gifted with the power of expression. One of the younger Cambridge men with whom he became intimate during his periodical pilgrimages to the university, was Edward B. Cowell, a man of the highest attainment in Oriental learning, who resembled FitzGerald himself in the possession of a warm and genial heart, and the most unobtrusive modesty. From Cowell he could easily learn that the hypothetical affinity between the names of Erin and Iran belonged to an obsolete stage of etymology; but the attraction of a far-fetched theory was replaced by the charm of reading Persian poetry in companionship with his young friend, who was equally competent to enjoy and to analyse the beauties of a literature that formed a portion of his regular studies. They read together the poetical remains of Khayyám—a choice of reading which sufficiently indicates the depth and range of Mr Cowell's knowledge. Omar Khayyám, although not quite forgotten, enjoyed in the history of Persian literature a celebrity like that of Occleve and Gower in our own. In the many *Tazkirát* (memoirs

or memorials) of Poets, he was mentioned and quoted with esteem; but his poems, labouring as they did under the original sin of heresy and atheism, were seldom looked at, and from lack of demand on the part of readers, had become rarer than those of most other writers since the days of Firdausi. European scholars knew little of his works beyond his Arabic treatise on Algebra, and Mr Cowell may be said to have disentombed his poems from oblivion. Now, thanks to the fine taste of that scholar, and to the transmuting genius of FitzGerald, no Persian poet is so well known in the western world as Abu-'l-fat'h 'Omar, son of Ibrahim the Tentmaker of Naishápúr, whose manhood synchronises with the Norman conquest of England, and who took for his poetic name (*takhallus*) the designation of his father's trade (*Khayyám*). The *Rubá'iyyát* (Quatrains) do not compose a single poem divided into a certain number of stanzas; there is no continuity of plan in them, and each stanza is a distinct thought expressed in musical verse. There is no other element of unity in them than the general tendency of the Epicurean idea, and the arbitrary divan form by which they are grouped according to the alphabetical arrangement of the final letters; those in

which the rhymes end in *a* constituting the first division, those with *b* the second, and so on. The peculiar attitude towards religion and the old questions of fate, immortality, the origin and the destiny of man, which educated thinkers have assumed in the present age of Christendom, is found admirably foreshadowed in the fantastic verses of Khayyám, who was no more of a Mohammedan than many of our best writers are Christians. His philosophical and Horatian fancies—graced as they are by the charms of a lyrical expression equal to that of Horace, and a vivid brilliance of imagination to which the Roman poet could make no claim—exercised a powerful influence upon FitzGerald's mind, and coloured his thoughts to such a degree that even when he oversteps the largest licence allowed to a translator, his phrases reproduce the spirit and manner of his original with a nearer approach to perfection than would appear possible. It is usually supposed that there is more of FitzGerald than of Khayyám in the English *Rubá'iyyát*, and that the old Persian simply afforded themes for the Anglo-Irishman's display of poetic power; but nothing could be further from the truth. The French translator, J. B. Nicolas, and the English one, Mr Whinfield, supply a closer mechanical

reflection of the sense in each separate stanza; but Mr FitzGerald has, in some instances, given a version equally close and exact; in others, rejointed scattered phrases from more than one stanza of his original, and thus accomplished a feat of marvellous poetical transfusion. He frequently turns literally into English the strange outlandish imagery which Mr Whinfield thought necessary to replace by more intelligible banalities, and in this way the magic of his genius has successfully transplanted into the garden of English poesy exotics that bloom like native flowers.

One of Mr FitzGerald's Woodbridge friends was Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, with whom he maintained for many years the most intimate and cordial intercourse, and whose daughter Lucy he married. He wrote the memoir of his friend's life which appeared in the posthumous volume of Barton's poems. The story of his married life was a short one. With all the overflowing amiability of his nature, there were mingled certain peculiarities or waywardnesses which were more suitable to the freedom of celibacy than to the staidness of matrimonial life. A separation took place by mutual agreement, and FitzGerald behaved in this circumstance with the generosity and unselfishness which were apparent in all his

whims no less than in his more deliberate actions. Indeed, his entire career was marked by an unchanging goodness of heart and a genial kindliness; and no one could complain of having ever endured hurt or ill-treatment at his hands. His pleasures were innocent and simple. Amongst the more delightful, he counted the short coasting trips, occupying no more than a day or two at a time, which he used to make in his own yacht from Lowestoft, accompanied only by a crew of two men, and such a friend as Cowell, with a large pasty and a few bottles of wine to supply their material wants. It is needless to say that books were also put into the cabin, and that the symposia of the friends were thus brightened by communion with the minds of the great departed. FitzGerald's enjoyment of gnomic wisdom enshrined in words of exquisite propriety was evinced by the frequency with which he used to read Montaigne's essays and Madame de Sévigné's letters, and the various works from which he extracted and published his collection of wise saws entitled 'Polonius.' This taste was allied to a love for what was classical and correct in literature, by which he was also enabled to appreciate the prim and formal muse of Crabbe, in whose grandson's house he died.

His second printed work was the 'Polonius,'

already referred to, which appeared in 1852. It exemplifies his favourite reading, being a collection of extracts, sometimes short proverbial phrases, sometimes longer pieces of characterisation or reflection, arranged under abstract headings. He occasionally quotes Dr Johnson, for whom he entertained sincere admiration; but the ponderous and artificial fabric of Johnsonese did not please him like the language of Bacon, Fuller, Sir Thomas Browne, Coleridge, whom he cites frequently. A disproportionate abundance of wise words was drawn from Carlyle; his original views, his forcible sense, and the friendship with which FitzGerald regarded him, having apparently blinded the latter to the ungainly style and ungraceful mannerisms of the Chelsea sage. (It was Thackeray who first made them personally acquainted forty years ago; and FitzGerald remained always loyal to his first instincts of affection and admiration.[1]) 'Polonius'

[1] The close relation that subsisted between FitzGerald and Carlyle has lately been made patent by an article in the *Historical Review* upon the Squire papers,—those celebrated documents purporting to be contemporary records of Cromwell's time,—which were accepted by Carlyle as genuine, but which other scholars have asserted from internal evidence to be modern forgeries. However the question may be decided, the fact which concerns us here is that our poet was the

also marks the period of his earliest attention to Persian studies, as he quotes in it the great Sufi poet Jalál-ud-din-Rúmi, whose *masnaví* has lately been translated into English by Mr Redhouse, but whom FitzGerald can only have seen in the original. He, however, spells the name *Jallaladín*, an incorrect form of which he could not have been guilty at the time when he produced Omar Khayyám, and which thus betrays that he had not long been engaged with Irani literature. He was very fond of Montaigne's essays, and of Pascal's Pensées; but his 'Polonius' reveals a sort of dislike and contempt for Voltaire. Amongst the Germans, Jean Paul, Goethe, Alexander von Humboldt, and August Wilhelm von Schlegel attracted him greatly, but he seems to have read little German, and probably only quoted translations. His favourite motto was 'Plain Living and High Thinking,' and he expresses great reverence for all things manly, simple, and true. The laws and institutions of England were, in his eyes, of the highest value and sacredness; and whatever Irish sympathies he had would never have diverted his affections from the Union to Home Rule. This is strongly illus-

negotiator between Mr Squire and Carlyle, and that his correspondence with the latter upon the subject reveals the intimate nature of their acquaintance.

trated by some original lines of blank verse at the end of 'Polonius,' annexed to his quotation, under 'Æsthetics,' of the words in which Lord Palmerston eulogised Mr Gladstone for having devoted his Neapolitan tour to an inspection of the prisons.

FitzGerald's next printed work was a translation of Six Dramas of Calderon, published in 1853, which was unfavourably received at the time, and consequently withdrawn by him from circulation. His name appeared on the title-page—a concession to publicity which was so unusual with him that it must have been made under strong pressure from his friends. The book is in nervous blank verse, a mode of composition which he handled with great ease and skill. There is no waste of power in diffuseness and no employment of unnecessary epithets. It gives the impression of a work of the Shakespearean age, and reveals a kindred felicity, strength, and directness of language. It deserves to rank with his best efforts in poetry, but its ill-success made him feel that the publication of his name was an unfavourable experiment, and he never again repeated it. His great modesty, however, would sufficiently account for this shyness. Of 'Omar Khayyám,' even after the little book had won its way to general esteem, he used to

say that the suggested addition of his name on the title would imply an assumption of importance which he considered that his 'transmogrification' of the Persian poet did not possess.

FitzGerald's conception of a translator's privilege is well set forth in the prefaces of his versions from Calderon, and the Agamemnon of Æschylus. He maintained that, in the absence of the perfect poet, who shall re-create in his own language the body and soul of his original, the best system is that of a paraphrase conserving the spirit of the author,—a sort of literary metempsychosis. Calderon, Æschylus, and Omar Khayyám were all treated with equal licence, so far as form is concerned,—the last, perhaps, the most arbitrarily; but the result is not unsatisfactory as having given us perfect English poems instinct with the true flavour of their prototypes. The Persian was probably somewhat more Horatian and less melancholy, the Greek a little less florid and mystic, the Spaniard more lyrical and fluent, than their metaphrast has made them; but the essential spirit has not escaped in transfusion. Only a man of singular gifts could have performed the achievement, and these works attest Mr FitzGerald's right to rank amongst the finest poets of the century. About the same time

as he printed his Calderon, another set of translations from the same dramatist was published by the late D. F. MacCarthy, a scholar whose acquaintance with Castilian literature was much deeper than Mr Fitz-Gerald's, and who also possessed poetical abilities of no mean order, with a totally different sense of the translator's duty. The popularity of MacCarthy's versions has been considerable, and as an equivalent rendering of the original in sense and form his work is valuable. Spaniards familiar with the English language rate its merits highly; but there can be little question of the very great superiority of Mr FitzGerald's work as a contribution to English literature. It is indeed only from this point of view that we should regard all the literary labours of our author. They are English poetical work of fine quality, dashed with a pleasant outlandish flavour which heightens their charm; and it is as English poems, not as translations, that they have endeared themselves even more to the American English than to the mixed Britons of England.

It was an occasion of no small moment to Mr FitzGerald's fame, and to the intellectual gratification of many thousands of readers, when he took his little packet of *Rubá'iyyát*

to Mr Quaritch in the latter part of the year 1858. It was printed as a small quarto pamphlet, bearing the publisher's name but not the author's; and although apparently a complete failure at first—a failure which Mr FitzGerald regretted less on his own account than on that of his publisher, to whom he had generously made a present of the book—received, nevertheless, a sufficient distribution by being quickly reduced from the price of five shillings and placed in the box of cheap books marked a penny each. Thus forced into circulation, the two hundred copies which had been printed were soon exhausted. Among the buyers were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Mr Swinburne, Captain (now Sir Richard) Burton, and Mr William Simpson, the accomplished artist of *The Illustrated London News.* The influence exercised by the first three, especially by Rossetti, upon a clique of young men who have since grown to distinction, was sufficient to attract observation to the singular beauties of the poem anonymously translated from the Persian. Most readers had no possible opportunity of discovering whether it was a disguised original or an actual translation; even Captain Burton enjoyed probably but little chance of seeing a manuscript of the Persian Rubá'iyyát. The Oriental imagery and allusions were too

thickly scattered throughout the verses to favour the notion that they could be the original work of an Englishman; yet it was shrewdly suspected by most of the appreciative readers that the 'translator' was substantially the author and creator of the poem. In the refuge of his anonymity, FitzGerald derived an innocent gratification from the curiosity that was aroused on all sides. After the first edition had disappeared, inquiries for the little book became frequent, and in the year 1868 he gave the MS. of his second edition to Mr Quaritch, and the Rubá'iyyát came into circulation once more, but with several alterations and additions by which the number of stanzas was somewhat increased beyond the original seventy-five. Most of the changes were, as might have been expected, improvements; but in some instances the author's taste or caprice was at fault,—notably in the first *Rubá'iy.* His fastidious desire to avoid anything that seemed *baroque* or unnatural, or appeared like plagiarism, may have influenced him; but it was probably because he had already used the idea in his rendering of Jámí's Salámán, that he sacrificed a fine and novel piece of imagery in his first stanza and replaced it by one of much more ordinary character. If it were from a dislike to pervert

his original too largely, he had no need to be so scrupulous, since he dealt on the whole with the Rubá'iyyát as though he had the licence of absolute authorship, changing, transposing, and manipulating the substance of the Persian quatrains with singular freedom. The vogue of 'old Omar' (as he would affectionately call his work) went on increasing, and American readers took it up with eagerness. In those days, the mere mention of Omar Khayyám between two strangers meeting fortuitously acted like a sign of freemasonry, and established frequently a bond of friendship. Some curious instances of this have been related. A remarkable feature of the Omar-cult in the United States was the circumstance that single individuals bought numbers of copies for gratuitous distribution before the book was reprinted in America. Its editions have been relatively numerous, when we consider how restricted was the circle of readers who could understand the peculiar beauties of the work. A third edition appeared in 1872, with some further alterations, and may be regarded as virtually the author's final revision, for it hardly differs at all from the text of the fourth edition, which appeared in 1879. This last formed the first portion of a volume entitled 'Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám; and

the Salámán and Absál of Jámí; rendered into English verse.' The Salámán (which had already been printed in separate form in 1856) is a poem chiefly in blank verse, interspersed with various metres (although it is all in one measure in the original) embodying a love-story of mystic significance; for Jámí was, unlike Omar Khayyám, a true Súfi, and indeed differed in other respects, his celebrity as a pious Mussulman doctor being equal to his fame as a poet. He lived in the fifteenth century, in a period of literary brilliance and decay; and the rich exuberance of his poetry, full of far-fetched conceits, involved expressions, overstrained imagery, and false taste, offers a strong contrast to the simpler and more forcible language of Khayyám. There is little use of Arabic in the earlier poet; he preferred the vernacular speech to the mongrel language which was fashionable among the heirs of the Saracen conquerors; but Jámí's composition is largely embroidered with Arabic.

Mr FitzGerald had from his early days been thrown into contact with the Crabbe family; the Reverend George Crabbe (the poet's grandson) was an intimate friend of his, and it was on a visit to Morton Rectory that FitzGerald died. As we know that friendship has power

to warp the judgment, we shall not probably be wrong in supposing that his enthusiastic admiration for Crabbe's poems was not the product of sound impartial criticism. He attempted to reintroduce them to the world by publishing a little volume of 'Readings from Crabbe,' produced in the last year of his life, but without success. A different fate awaited his 'Agamemnon: a tragedy taken from Æschylus,' which was first printed privately by him, and afterwards published with alterations in 1876. It is a very free rendering from the Greek, and full of a poetical beauty which is but partly assignable to Æschylus. Without attaining to anything like the celebrity and admiration which have followed Omar Khayyám, the Agamemnon has achieved much more than a *succès d'estime.* Mr FitzGerald's renderings from the Greek were not confined to this one essay; he also translated the two Œdipus dramas of Sophocles, but left them unfinished in manuscript till Prof. Eliot Norton had a sight of them about seven or eight years ago and urged him to complete his work. When this was done, he had them set in type, but only a very few proofs can have been struck off, as it seems that, at least in England, no more than one or two copies were sent out

by the author. In a similar way he printed translations of two of Calderon's plays not included in the published 'Six Dramas'—namely, *La Vida es Sueño,* and *El Magico Prodigioso* (both ranking among the Spaniard's finest work); but they also were withheld from the public and all but half-a-dozen friends.

When his old boatman died, about ten years ago, he abandoned his nautical exercises and gave up his yacht for ever. During the last few years of his life, he divided his time between Cambridge, Crabbe's house, and his own home at Little Grange, near Woodbridge, where he received occasional visits from friends and relatives.

This edition of the 'Omar Khayyám' is a modest memorial of one of the most modest men who have enriched English literature with poetry of distinct and permanent value. His best epitaph is found in Tennyson's 'Tiresias and other poems,' published immediately after our author's quiet exit from life in 1883, in the seventy-fifth year of his age.

M. K.

Inscription

That border land 'twixt Day and Night be mine,
And choice companions gathered there to dine,
With talk, song, mirth, soup, salad, bread and
wine.

E. C. STEDMAN.

A NOTE

HE poetry of the learned astronomer and mathematician Ghias uddin Abul Fath 'Umar bin Ibrahim, known to posterity as Omar Khayyám, is so real, so human, that the old Persian seems to his admirers more real and more human than any other writer of the Middle Ages. He was an Oriental, and yet his mode of thought is direct and simple, and in spite of the attempts of Súfis to make him out a mystic, and to read esoteric meanings into his references to wine, woman, and song, he is universal: he belongs to the world, and not to a province.

Of trustworthy information regarding his actual life, there is almost none. The famous story of his compact with his two schoolmates and its subsequent fulfilment, when the Nizám ul Mulk, Wazir to the Sultan Malikshah, gave Omar a pension and appointed the dastardly Hasan ben Sabah - known to history as the

'Chief of the Assassins'—to a position of trust which he abused and repaid with the basest ingratitude, furnishes a dramatic background for his life, but unfortunately there is no proof that it is not a legend. It is dangerous to read fact into poetry, and one can hardly follow the German encyclopaedist and state categorically that Omar Khayyám was born about 1018 and died in 1123, at the age of 105. For some reason most of Omar's biographers set his birth somewhere in the last half of the eleventh century. If Abulfida's 'annals' are correct the reform of the calendar effected in the reign of Malik-shah by Omar and seven other astronomers was dated 1079. It seems hopeless to reconcile the contradictions, and one must echo the words of Professor Zhukovsky, who calls the narrative of the three schoolmates 'a fable known to be full of anachronisms and drawn from an apochryphal memorial.'[1]

Aside from the legend of his asking to be buried where the roses might drop their petals

[1] The story of his apparition to his mother must also be given up if the earlier date of his birth be accepted. Professor Zhukovsky, in his article on the 'Wandering Quatrains ɔ 1Omar Khayyám' published in St Petersburg in ó97, has enriched his biography with a few additional statements concerning him.

over his grave—a request which time has religiously fulfilled—there is one last glimpse of Omar: 'They say that Omar was picking his teeth with a golden toothpick and attentively reading about "The divine nature" in Avicenna's "Healing," and coming to the passage about "the one and the many," he placed the golden toothpick between two leaves, got up, said his prayer, made his will, and thereafter neither ate nor drank. Having finished his prayer for his coming sleep he bowed to the ground, and while still bowing down he exclaimed: "O God! Verily I have known thee according to the measure of my capabilities; pardon me because of my knowledge and my service before thee." . . . and thus he died—may God's mercy be upon him.'

He lived and wrote, when in Spain, Ruy Diaz—known as 'The Cid'—was performing his wonderful exploits: the first crusade and the capture of Jerusalem, with the great events that ended the twelfth century, must have come to him with a thrill of excitement; his life covered the conquest of England by William the Conqueror. But over Europe at that day hung intellectual darkness like a cloud; in contrast the Arabic and Persian literatures shine with dazzling brilliancy. Amazing is the list of poets among whom Omar seemed

to his contemporaries to shine as a star of the second magnitude. But Omar was too much of a scoffer and sceptic to be popular in his own land. His simplicity was western; he had little of the Oriental filigree work of Hafiz and the most of his successors. Consequently not until recent times, having been discovered by a kindred spirit, was he recognised as one of the chief in the galaxy of Persian poets. And the paucity of actually known facts in regard to his life finds its concomitant in the inchoate state of his works. There is no received text; almost every quatrain has a variety of readings, as if they had been preserved in the memory of his friends and afterwards jotted down at haphazard, and there is no Persian scholar who would dare from internal evidence to decide which of the twelve hundred or more Rubaiyat were really composed by Omar Khayyám. The dozens having similar thought and varying form would seem to indicate that the trick was easily caught.

In 1841, the same *Fraser's Magazine* that seventeen years afterwards refused FitzGerald's immortal translation, published, in a series of articles on Persian poetry, a number of translations of the quatrains of Omar Khayyám. They are almost verbally the same as afterwards came out under the title 'The Rose

Garden of Persia,' with the name of Louisa S. Costello on the title-page. There was nothing to indicate that these banal verses were translated from the Persian; the German versions of Von Hammer-Purgstall were scarcely more touched by the divine hue of Poesy. And Emerson, who was Oriental in his whole system of Poetry, found only two stanzas of Omar, thus represented, to tempt him into an English rendering of them.

These simple facts bring into greater relief the genius of Edward FitzGerald, who was able, with his comparatively slight and not very accurate knowledge of Persian, to create or re-create a work which has been recognised by so many competent critics as a masterpiece. He himself neither expected nor seemed to care for fame; he died before the unexampled popularity of his work had even begun to catch among the select few. It was first published in a small edition in paper in 1859; its market value sank to a penny or two, and even then went begging; nor, when one regards its outlandish name, its publication without guarantee of authorship, its cheapness of form, was this strange. Nine years passed and a second edition in the same paper form, but with the seventy-five stanzas increased to one hundred and ten, came out. Four years more went by

and the third edition appeared, still without the translator's name, still in quarto, but bound in half Roxburghe, and with the number of quatrains reduced to one hundred and one; and just twenty years after its first appearance came the fourth edition, the last in the lifetime of Edward FitzGerald, who died in 1883.

From that time forth the names of Omar Khayyám and of FitzGerald have become inseparably associated. Through the researches of Mr Edward Heron-Allen we know exactly the source of each one of the quatrains, even those that contain ideas or figures alien to Omar himself. Others have made translations and paraphrases, but while we would not detract from the value or interest or scholarliness of these attempts, each one seems the more definitely to set FitzGerald on a pinnacle peculiar to itself and unapproachable.

It may be asked what is the cause of this extraordinary vogue of a poem which, in its baldest aspect, teaches a hopeless pessimism, an Epicurean philosophy of seizing present pleasures because to-morrow we die, a Pagan poem, if one will.

It corresponds with a certain strenuous demand of our day, a dissatisfaction with an unjustified optimism; it voices for us the courage of human philosophy facing the un-

known and daring the possibilities of a god's injustice; it pictures a popular form of fatalism which appeals to the philosophic mind; it has a wholesome taste, though bitter; it represents good fellowship of men banding together not to resist, but to meet the inevitable; more rarely it speaks of love not in the forms of Oriental sensuousness, but with an almost modern sentiment; the poet reclines underneath the bough, not with bread and wine alone, but with 'a book of verses.' And lastly it is all couched, in sonorous ringing lines, many of them memorable and of haunting melody and beauty.

Such was the service that Edward FitzGerald performed. He stands as one more example of men who have done good work and have died unrewarded, leaving behind them an ever-widening circle of fame.

N. H. DOLE.

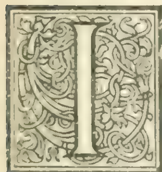
On the Fly-leaf of a Copy of Omar

Deem not this book a creed; 'tis but the cry
Of one who fears not death, yet would not die;
Who at the table feigns with sorry jest
To love the wine the Master's hand has pressed,
The while he loves the absent Master best—
The bitter cry of love for love's reply!

A. S. HARDY.

IN PRAISE OF OMAR

Being an Address by the Hon. John Hay before the Omar Khayyám Club in London on 8th December 1897



CANNOT sufficiently thank you for the high and unmerited honour you have done me to-night. I feel keenly that on such an occasion, with such company, my place is below the salt; but as you kindly invited me, it was not in human nature for me to refuse.

Although in knowledge and comprehension of the two great poets whom you are met to commemorate I am the least among you, there is no one who regards them with greater admiration, or reads them with more enjoyment, than myself. I can never forget my emotions when I first saw FitzGerald's translations of the Quatrains. Keats, in his sublime ode on Chapman's Homer, has described the sensation once for all:

'Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.'

The exquisite beauty, the faultless form, the singular grace of those amazing stanzas, were not more wonderful than the depth and breadth of their profound philosophy, their knowledge of life, their dauntless courage, their serene facing of the ultimate problems of life and of death. Of course the doubt did not spare me, which has assailed many as ignorant as I was of the literature of the East, whether it was the poet or his translator to whom was due this splendid result. Was it, in fact, a reproduction of an antique song, or a mystification of a great modern, careless of fame, and scornful of his time? Could it be possible that in the eleventh century, so far away as Khorassan, so accomplished a man of letters lived, with such distinction, such breadth, such insight, such calm disillusion, such cheerful and jocund despair? Was this Weltschmerz, which we thought a malady of our day, endemic in Persia in 1100. My doubt only lasted till I came upon a literal translation of the Rubáiyát, and I saw that not the least remarkable quality of FitzGerald's poem was its fidelity to the original.

In short, Omar was a FitzGerald before the latter, or FitzGerald was a reincarnation of

Omar. It is not to the disadvantage of the later poet that he followed so closely in the footsteps of the earlier. A man of extraordinary genius had appeared in the world; had sung a song of incomparable beauty and power in an environment no longer worthy of him, in a language of narrow range; for many generations the song was virtually lost; then by a miracle of creation, a poet, a twin-brother in the spirit to the first, was born, who took up the forgotten poem and sung it anew with all its original melody and force, and all the accumulated refinement of ages of art. It seems to me idle to ask which was the greater master; each seems greater than his work. The song is like an instrument of precious workmanship and marvellous tone, which is worthless in common hands, but when it falls, at long intervals, into the hands of the supreme master, it yields a melody of transcendent enchantment to all that have ears to hear. If we look at the sphere of influence of the two poets, there is no longer any comparison. Omar sang to a half-barbarous province; FitzGerald to the world. Wherever the English speech is spoken or read, the Rubáiyát have taken their place as a classic. There is not a hill-post in India, nor a village in England, where there is not

a coterie to whom Omar Khayyám is a familiar friend and a bond of union. In America he has an equal following, in many regions and conditions. In the Eastern States his adepts form an esoteric sect; the beautiful volume of drawings by Mr Vedder is a centre of delight and suggestion wherever it exists. In the cities of the West you will find the Quatrains one of the most thoroughly read books in every club library. I heard them quoted once in one of the most lonely and desolate spots of the high Rockies. We had been camping on the Great Divide, our 'roof of the world,' where in the space of a few feet you may see two springs, one sending its waters to the Polar solitudes, the other to the eternal Carib summer. One morning at sunrise, as we were breaking camp, I was startled to hear one of our party, a frontiersman born, intoning these words of sombre majesty:

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

I thought that sublime setting of primeval forest and pouring cañon was worthy of the lines; I am sure the dewless, crystalline air never vibrated to strains of more solemn

music. Certainly, our poet can never be numbered among the great popular writers of all time. He has told no story; he has never unpacked his heart in public; he has never thrown the reins on the neck of the winged horse, and let his imagination carry him where it listed. 'Ah! the crowd must have emphatic warrant,' as Browning sang. Its suffrages are not for the cool, collected observer, whose eye no glitter can dazzle, no mist suffuse. The many cannot but resent that air of lofty intelligence, that pale and subtle smile. But he will hold a place forever among that limited number who, like Lucretius and Epicurus — without rage or defiance, even without unbecoming mirth,— look deep into the tangled mysteries of things; refuse credence to the absurd, and allegiance to arrogant authority; sufficiently conscious of fallibility to be tolerant of all opinions; with a faith too wide for doctrine and a benevolence untrammelled by creed; too wise to be wholly poets, and yet too surely poets to be implacably wise.

Sultan and slave alike have gone their way
With Bahrám Gúr, but whither none may say.
Yet he who charmed the wise at Naishápúr
Seven centuries since, still charms the wise to-day.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

VOCABULARY

Alif, *Ah-lif.* Name of the first letter in the Persian alphabet; the only vowel written.

Allah, *Al-lâh.* Arabic name for the Lord God.

Amír, *A-meér.* Arabic for Prince; in composition, as amiru'ddeula, grand vizir (wazir).

Attár, *Attawr.* A famous Persian Poet, Farrîd-uddîn Attâr, author of the Bird Parliament, partly paraphrased by Edward FitzGerald.

Bahrám Gúr (xvii), *Bah-rawm Goor.* Ancient Persian king and hunter.

Caravanserai (xvi), *Karwawn-sar-ah-ee.* Hotel of the Caravan.

Dánad, *Daw-nad.* Third person singular of dân to know.

Fánús: Khiyál, *Faw-noo-see-Khe-yawl.* Magic lantern.

Ferrásh, *Far-rawsh.* A servant, tent-pitcher.

Hátim Tai (ix), *Haw-tim Ty.* A mythical king, type of generosity.

Hijra, Arabic *Hedjra,* flight. The flight of Mahomet from which Mussulmans date, June 16, 622.

Iram (v), *Ee-ram.* The Arabian garden fabled to have been planted by Shaddâd bin 'Ad. See Sale's Koran, chapter lxxxix: note.

Jamshyd (v), *Jam-sheed.* A mythical king of the Peshdadian dynasty. The ruins of his palace at Persepolis are still shown.

Kaikhosrú (ix), *Ky-kooz-row.* Persian for King Cyrus.

Kaikobád (ix), *Ky-ko-bawd.* A mythical king.

Khusraw, *Kooz-row.* Persian for Chosroes, a common Royal name. Sanskrit *Susravas*, famous.

Kuza-Náma (in ed. 1, a title prefixed to quatrains lix-lxvi), *Kooza-nawma.* Book of Pots, or Pot-book.

Máh, *Maw.* The moon. The Arabs pronounce it *Mah.*

Máhi, *Maw-hi.* Fish.

Mahmúd (x), *Mah-mood.* A common name among Orientals corresponding to Muhammad or Mahomet.

Muezzín (xxiv), *Moo-ez-zeen.* Anglicized from Arabic word meaning 'he who calls to prayer.'

Mushtarí, *Moosh-tah-ree.* The planet Jupiter.

Naishápúr, *Ny-* (or *Nee*) *shawpoor.* In modern Persian, Nishābûr. The famous city of Khorasân, home of Omar.

Naw Rooz, *Naw Rooz.* The Persian New Year's day.

Omar Khayyám (by purists spelt 'Umar: the apostrophe indicating the breathing *'ain* which might be represented by *gh*, as in high) *Ghoomár Ky-yawm.* Khayyám signifies Tent-maker. This may or may not have been a family trade.

Parwin (liv), *Par-ween.* The Pleiades.

Pehleví (vi), *Pah-hla-vee.* The official language of the Sassanian dynasty, with a special script. Later middle Persian still free from Semitic influence is called Parsî; modern Persian is called Farsî.

Ramazán, *Ram-a-dawn* or *Ram-a-thawn.* The ninth Muslim month, devoted to fasting.

Rubáiyát *Roo-baw-(gh)-ee-yawt.* Plural of Arabic Rubâ'i a quatrain, four lines.

Rustum (ix), *Roos-tam.* Rustam, a mythical Persian hero, son of Zál.

VOCABULARY

Sákí, *Saw-kee*. A cup-bearer.

Sháh-náma, *Shawh-nawma*. 'Book of Kings,' by Abul-qasím Hasan Ahmad, known as Firdausi.

Sheikh Arabic Sheekh. An old man, hence a title of respect; Sheikh-u'l-islam, chief of religion.

Subhi Kázib, *Soo-bhee Kawzib*. The false dawn.

Subhi Sádik, *Soo-bhi Saw-dik*. The true dawn.

Súfi, *Soo-fee*. A sect which read esoteric meanings into all poetry.

Sultán (1), *Sool-tawn*. Arabic Sultân, a king. The King of Persia is Shâh (*Shawh*), Padeshâh or Shâh-inshâh.

Tamán (1st ed. Tamám Shud), *Tah-mawm Shood*. The end. The very end.

Zál, *Zawl*. Father of Rustam.

The accent in Persian words is regularly on the last syllable. These are approximately the pronunciation in *modern* Persian, but as Omar's own pronunciation is utterly unknown and was undoubtedly very different, the ordinary Anglicized use of the words is to be recommended.

N. H. D.

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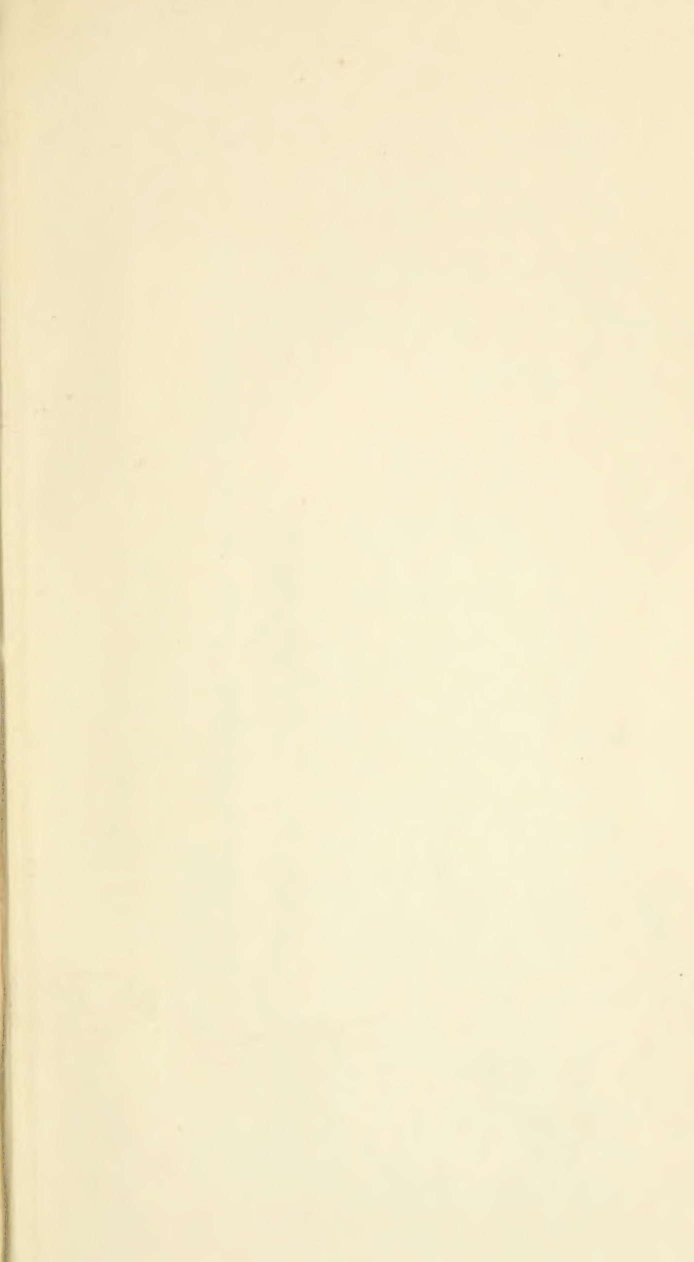

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