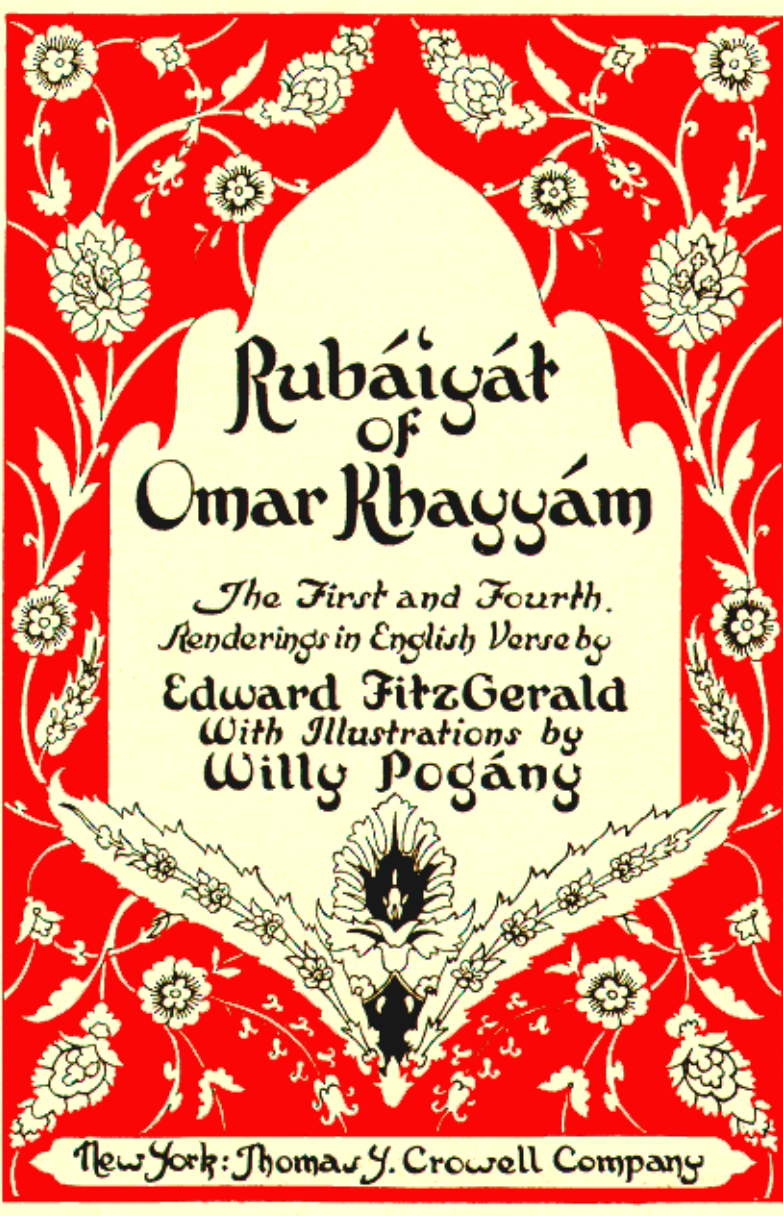


Rubáiyát of
Omar Khayyám

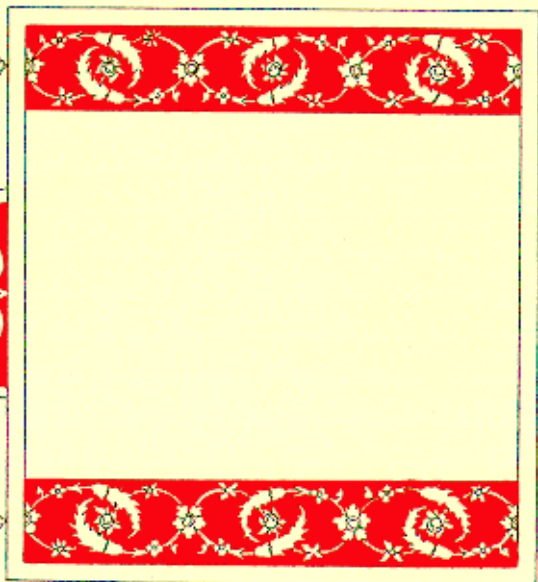




Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

*The First and Fourth.
Renderings in English Verse by*
Edward FitzGerald
With Illustrations by
Willy Pogány

New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company





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INTRODUCTION

IT may possibly seem to some people that no introduction to FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyám* is necessary. It is *chose jugée*; the obscurity of its birth and early experiences has long been lighted up, and while depreciation of it would be idle paradox (nearly the 'vilest' of all things in the double sense of 'cheapest' and 'most disgusting'), praise is superfluous. Perhaps so, but ushership is not, or at least should not be, an ungraceful thing; and while the present writer happens never to have written much originally on the matter, he has the further qualification, not shared by many now, of having seen the whole history of that matter. He had not the luck himself to pick a copy out of that 'penny,' 'twopenny,' or 'fourpenny' box which its cradle is variously said to have been, though he actually saw the box, ignorant of the treasure within. It should not be necessary in the still limited though exclusive space here open to say very much, even in proportion, about the actual history of the book or the biography of the author and the translator. Omar Khayyám was a Persian poet of the eleventh and twelfth centuries who was also an astronomer of great scientific acquisitions and accomplishments. His *Rubáiyát* is or are—for the word is plural—a collection of, in all, genuine and doubtful, some eight hundred and odd quatrains of verse dealing with subjects extremely difficult to label or ticket under one head, though the patient 'philosophy' may perhaps accept them under her wings. These verses met the eye of Edward FitzGerald (1809–83), a man of Irish extraction but English birth and (mainly) residence, who, at Cambridge, fell in with a group

of unusually distinguished comrades, including Thackeray and (later) Tennyson, as well as—later still, and not in connexion with Cambridge—Carlyle. FitzGerald was a man of independent though not large fortune, and in one sense, if not in all, of the most independent character possible. That is to say, he could not do without friends, to whom he was most closely attached. But for miscellaneous society he cared nothing at all; he had no usual amusement except boat-sailing; and having, after her father's death, married on no hurried acquaintance the daughter of Bernard Barton (Quaker poet and best known as friend of Charles Lamb), he separated from her very soon, entirely *à l'amiable*, but mainly, or at least professedly, because he could not stand the rustle of her black silk dresses. His favourite, Omar, had a much more rational appreciation of 'skirts.'

FitzGerald, however, was nothing if not literary, though he would not have been true to his general character if he had not extended his literary interests outside, while by no means neglecting, the more usual curricula. Yet his unconquerable individuality was to show itself here also. Chaucer was called, by not the least of his French contemporaries and to some extent masters, *grant translateur* (peace to possible quibbles about this!), and we have had other great ones since—Chapman, Dryden, Pope, and others yet—in different ways. But whether we have ever had a *greater* 'translator' than FitzGerald—whether we have ever had one nearly so great—remains a question. What is quite certain is that we have never had anyone who, in verse, confining himself almost if not quite wholly to translation, did it so interestingly in all cases, in one—a critic of some experience and not given to reckless superlative ventures to say—so magnificently. It is to this last point that we shall here mainly confine ourselves, after a very few sentences on the author and on his work as a whole.

Over translation as a thing 'in the abstract' there have been many fights—the main 'difference' or subject of quarrel being the question, "Should the translator stick as closely as possible

not merely to the subject, but to the words and even the form of his original, or should he endeavour to produce what he thinks is the general drift of that original in the form most likely to produce a similar or at least a corresponding effect on his probable readers ? ” FitzGerald’s greatest predecessor, in translation, at Trinity, Cambridge, had avowedly answered this question in the latter sense : but “ Fitz ” carried the liberty which this answer postulates far further than “ Glorious John.” In all his translated work—the bulk of it from Greek and Spanish, *Æschylus* and *Calderon*—he has given himself the widest licence of paraphrase, omission, and addition. Whether he has gone wider still in part of his Persian borrowings—that rather inferior *Salámán and Absál*, which talks scandal not about Queen Elizabeth, but about the other Queen of Sheba—I am not in a position to say ; for I do not know Persian, and I have never come across any professedly exact translation of this piece. But the piece itself, though amusing in a way, is not of much importance. I wish the Shah and the Sage had left *Salámán* alone with *Absál* where and when they were both perfectly happy : or else had finished them both off together. For completeness’ sake I may perhaps be allowed to say that, while FitzGerald’s letters are quite first-rate, his original dialogue *Euphranor* and his collected or ‘commonplace’ *Polonius*, though very interesting, perhaps hardly deserve, on general and public grounds, that numerical classification.

On the other hand, for us legitimately—and even for all but special students of one kind or another not too illegitimately—FitzGerald is Omar Khayyám, and one may almost dare to say Omar Khayyám is FitzGerald. The late Mr John Payne’s translation of the fullest possible bulk of these *Rubáiyát* or quatrains appears not merely to contain the most scrupulously exact reproduction of the originals in English, but an extensive amount of editorial matter, which it is not unfair to characterize as authoritative from a merely scholastic point of view, but which is certainly

not too favourable to FitzGerald himself. Mr Payne even went to the length—in a spirit which may be called rash, which may be called innocent, but which cannot be denied the epithets of fair and frank—of printing two pages, double-columned, of FitzGerald's rendering of what may be supposed to be stanzas of the original and his own of the same. That the two results are remarkably different cannot be denied : but the conclusions which Mr Payne seems to have drawn, and those likely to be drawn by most critics who, though they may be ignorant of Persian, possess knowledge enough of other languages ancient and modern to give them something of comparative faculty, are perhaps more different still. Such critics will be able to allow for—though they may feel little pleasure in—the retention of such characteristics of the original as rhymes identical as far as possible (we hate identical rhymes in English so strongly that I have known an excellent censor disallow 'cruise' and 'screws,' though I should not do that myself), and whenever possible making them triple, though triple rhymes (again in English) are things almost impossible to keep from burlesque effect. The combination of these supplies something as different as possible from the stately melody of FitzGerald's stanza, but critical practice can allow for that.

There are other points on which, for all one's gratitude in respect of the clearer light in which they put "old Fitz's" achievement, there is hardly anything to be set on the good side of the account but one, and a very great one, in the higher range of things, and one in the lower. The first everyone should see at once—that, of course, what we may call the 'inspiration' is Omar's. The combination of scepticism in things of the spirit and hedonism in things of the flesh is, of course, universal enough—the hedonist who is not sceptical-mystic is no man, but a pig—worse than a pig as being not himself eatable—while the sceptic who has no flashes of hedonism is a dreary creature. But in this almost universality there are *genera* and species and individuals, and as the number diminishes the interest increases. In this sort of

topsy-turvy hierarchy it seems probable that the Astronomer of Nishapur, at his best, might rank not so very far below the Preacher himself.

At his best—but if anyone thinks that best is best revealed in the text of the more than eight hundred quatrains (which seems to be our largest allowance) he must have curious tastes. It is, I believe, admitted even by those who set least store by our version that the larger sources are, to a great extent, adulterated. The very great enlargement of the later copies over the earlier is more than suspicious: and it would seem that the oldest and smallest—that in the Bodleian at Oxford—is some four centuries younger than the author's days. I have sometimes, prompted by a fellow-feeling for wine, as well as by other aptnesses of the comparison, imagined the *Rubáiyát* as a cask in which some noble growth of Bordeaux or of Burgundy has been drowned in gallons of *ordinaire*, some 'stunned' liquor, and not a little water, some of it decidedly dirty. Problem: What to do with it?

What FitzGerald did with it was not far short of a miracle. He gave back about a pint for a gallon—his enemies say not above half a pint—but what he gave has the purity of brandy, the strength of port, and the flavour and bouquet of a champion vintage of Haut-Brion or Romanée-Conti.

I never read his *Rubáiyát* without finding it more wonderful: but I think the greatest push to my wonder took place when I first read the fuller and more faithful, as they say, version of the original. Of course FitzGerald had, as another stale saying goes, "great advantages." He wrote in the very centre of one of the greatest periods of our literature. He was, as seen above, the intimate friend of perhaps the three greatest writers of that period—Tennyson, Thackeray, and Carlyle. He had that entire leisure which, sneer or be shocked as anyone may or may not be at the saying, has been, if not the indispensable condition, the almost constant accompaniment of the writing of great poetry. He was intensely literary without being merely bookish; and in a queer

sort of way all his other work was a kind of rehearsal *in alia materia*—not a ‘foul copy,’ but a ‘first draught’ of this. It was by no means mere sudden inspiration or dream, like *Kubla Khan*, to which it has some resemblance. In the Second Edition especially there are quatrains which are not merely not as good as usual, but are out of pattern, qualityless, *wrong*! But on the whole he had got his Omar, the Omar as he (with some slight exceptions in divinity and morality) ought to have been, must have been, and, perhaps, to some extent, was. It is a positive advantage that he has left us considerable variations, for most of them are good in themselves, and all of them throw light on the singular process of suggestion, manipulation, and completion which all have more or less gone through. We compassionate, if we do not exactly sympathize with, the type of scholar who looks for a verbal rendering and cannot find it, but for ourselves we thank the god of poetry whose mercy gave us the author of the fault—and the masterpiece.

Let us take some views of that masterpiece as it presents itself, not so much for analysis as for æsthesis, though the sometimes supposed opposition of the two is rather a blunder.

Although FitzGerald has given us a certain amount of prefatory, commentatorial, annotative, or what not, work, he gives us no more explicit intelligence than Dickens’s celebrated “I thought of Mr Pickwick” supplies about the real design which turned thousands of almost ragbag fragments into an almost seamless garment of scarcely five hundred. No further reference need be made to Payne’s objections, which are those not merely of a rival, but (if one may say so without failing in gratitude to a most useful assistant) a rival who does not quite understand the relative positions of himself and the other. Yet it is impossible not to smile, and difficult not to laugh, when one finds a faithful and admiring friend like Professor Cowell, who himself was in a way one of the begetters of the masterpiece, looking in vain for the original of one of “Fitz’s” lines; “writing to him about it from

Calcutta," but finding, as he says with a sort of resignation which is attractive but amusing, that the author "never cared to alter it." Of course he didn't: *his* (so different!) Mr Pickwick had been "thought of," was there, and had to stay there

Pour le bonheur du genre humain.

It is, however, wonderful enough—this "transmogrification," as the transmogrifier himself called it, the completeness of it, the absence of loose threads, missed stitches, or anything of the kind. In FitzGerald's version there is, indeed, something like a middle point marking some revolution of attitude if not thought, the second half being that containing the lighter parts of the whole, though by no means consisting wholly of them. But the entire book is pervaded by the same drift—not simple, not merely what has been called "sceptical-hedonist," but mainly so; with a background of a third kind which supplies more than a background—a sort of backbone of stately melancholy to the whole "Eclogue," as the writer not unhappily labels it. Of course you can be content without this if, like its far from Voltairian French translator or editor, you sink the scepticism altogether, gloss 'wine' wherever it occurs with 'God,' and (one supposes) change the cupbearers whom Mr Payne impolitely Elizabethanizes "skinkers" into angels, or holy and happy thoughts, or something—a mutation which it would seem they can, in some parts of the original, bear with considerable difficulty. But our "Fitz" has no need of this amiable hanky-panky.

I do not remember that anyone before myself has made very much of that reference to Lucretius which Cowell and FitzGerald seem to have indulged in when talking of this matter. But there is no author known to me who, different as his standpoint may be in some respects, seems in others to have been so comparable to Khayyám; and none at all whose manner even approaches that of FitzGerald's Omar so closely. In the *Rubáiyát* you may, of course, find repeated and almost violent invocation of the sensual palliatives which Lucretius treats with only one or two

escapes of confession as to how they appeal to him, but always with his terrible *nequidquam* acknowledgment of their vanity and insufficiency. Yet if the affirmative finds most expression in Omar the negative is not in the least disguised or blinked. And, what is more important still, the peculiar magnificence of the great Roman's style, tone, music, seems to me to have been, if not wholly, to a great extent imported here by FitzGerald. One cannot, of course, allow too much or too often for inability to read the original : yet once more also it may be permissible to hope that a certain experience of more than one or two, more than three or four, different tongues and their literatures may confer some power of discrimination in such a case as this. At any rate, I take it that FitzGerald, having perceived or felt Omar's general drift of combined melancholy and sensuality, scepticism and hedonism, with a touch of the mystical, having, also, partly received from heaven and partly derived from study, especially of Lucretius, a style fitting to express this in English, set to work and gave us what we have. Among the rather bewilderingly numerous results of his gift is that one hardly ever says—at least, I never say—"More." People are welcome to say—I always do—"Again." One might write something of a morality on that difference : but I spare my readers. It certainly applies in more instances than the present.

Of the stanza which FitzGerald substituted for the curiously artificial, but certainly not, in English, engaging, form of the original something should be said ; but I will endeavour to give as little as possible of the loathed jargon of technical prosody. Most people, I suppose, who take any interest in such matters know the pleasant story (I tell it from memory) of Mr Swinburne running downstairs to tell a small but goodly company at breakfast of his discovery of FitzGerald—a discovery which bore the again goodly fruit, slightly altered, of *Laus Veneris*. But this, of course, had no influence on FitzGerald himself. There were already great examples—the greatest being due to Dryden and Gray—of the four-lined heroic stanza rhymed alternately in

English; but this transmutation of rhyme order and number gives a singularly new effect which is not perceptible even in the partially similar subject of the *Elegy*. Whether FitzGerald ever considered the further change (which Mr Swinburne carried out) of linking the odd lines in pairs of stanzas by rhyme after the fashion of *terza rima* I do not know or have forgotten. It would have been somewhat against the avowed and intentional disconnectedness of the Persian stanza. But he has achieved a nobler effect with it as it is, and has managed, as already contended, to connect the whole in a fashion, by maintained sweep of tone and temper, into an "Eclogue." It is certainly one of the most effective for its special purpose of all verse-forms, though for narrative the more linked one may be preferable. And the diction suits the form. What would seem to be the extreme familiarity of the Persian appears sometimes, but not often; the vulgarity which that familiarity may seem to invite, never. But on the other hand FitzGerald almost avoids, certainly does not employ, excessive poetic diction. As we may see in a moment, his very great passages are often quite plain—a point in which he again resembles Lucretius. In fact, verse and phrase alike suit the subject, the attitude, the poetry, as perfectly as possible. One cannot refrain from dwelling a little on some of the most remarkable instances of this most remarkable achievement.

Many years ago there used to be a cheerful and hospitable society called the Omar Khayyám Club, which once invited me to an excellent dinner plentifully furnished with Omar's beloved liquor, though there was a sad neglect to provide a tulip-cheeked creature to sit beside one according to the original specification. Whether this club, as the virtuous Browning Societies of the same time did, indulged in discussions of a serious kind about its hero or subject I do not know. Nor did I myself come across the *Rubáiyát* much before the time when one had other things to do besides *talking* about literature. But the Everest of FitzGerald's range has always seemed to me, as I dare say to others,

to be the quatrain of the Moving Finger (LI in the First Edition, LXXI in the Fourth). Contrary to his habit, he altered nothing here in the two, except the unimportant substitution of "your" for "thy," and he was wise, for the thing is as nearly perfect as anything can be. The thought is great; the diction is simple, but amply adequate; and the rhythm and metre do in exquisite fashion their great and mysterious part of establishing as poetry what would otherwise be grand prose, but only prose. Having taken some trouble to trace possible correspondence with the, in a way, 'certified' original by Payne, I can find nothing fuller or closer than

Whatever betides on the Tablet of destiny writ is,
Of good and of evil the Pen Divine thenceforward quit is,
In Fate fore-ordained whatever behoved it 'stablished
Our stress and our strife and our thought-taking—vain every whit is.

Not much comment, I suppose, is needed for that. The bare gist of the thought is of course the same; the word 'writ' is the same; the 'Pen' no doubt suggested the Finger that guides it; and no doubt you must have a 'Tablet' of some sort—papyrus, marble, Infinity—to write upon. But here Omar—not at all merely because he is put into doggerel—is prose and FitzGerald is poetry—poetry, too, of a kind which, for all its unpretentiousness, you must go to Job or to Isaiah, to Æschylus or to Lucretius, to Dante or to Shakespeare, to beat, if not even to match.

It is beautiful; but it is of course severe: and one with a certain not altogether shamefaced pleasure remembers the tulip cheeks and the wine-pots. They are commemorated of course almost everywhere in Omar, and quite liberally in FitzGerald. But is there anything in the former, literally and faithfully interpreted, quite so delightful as the again famous and really exquisite

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!¹

¹ Fourth Edition, Stanza xii.

especially if the book of verses were like this; the wine were one's favourite *cru* or *cuvée*; the bread were *not* tin-bread, and the Thou—well, *the* Thou? These two stanzas are perhaps the extremes of magnificence and of grace, but after the Second Edition there is hardly one which does not come up to or overpass any reasonable standard. Perhaps, as that Edition is not given here, one example which, in the opinion of the present critic at least, does not so come up should be given. Here it is :

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

The sentiment is Omarian enough, and the style is not unlike some parts of the original. But the phrasing is awkward; the two "buts" and the "so poor a coward" won't do; and, though the second line would not be bad in a Popian satire, the rhythm of the whole has neither grace nor dignity, nor even jocular burlesque enough to carry it off. It was a false shot: and he recognized that it should be thrown away.

One is sometimes uncertain whether one likes the First or the Fourth Edition best, and, the piece being so short, it is therefore excellent practice to give both. About the splendid opening, which is confessedly almost or quite pure "Fitz," there have been little quarrels—*amantium iræ* with a slight difference, for these are quarrels of the rivals with each other as well as with the object of their affection. One certainly grudges the loss of

Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to flight.

But fortunately one can now follow the admirable example of the lady who, being taken to a jeweller's shop to choose between two rings, said, "Please, dear, I'll have both"—a true story which would certainly have delighted "old Khayyám" himself. For myself I have always delighted specially in one of the quatrains which shocked Payne so much that he pillories it alongside of his own blameless, but, alas! how far inferior and how complexly (in

the legitimate and not the jargonish sense of 'complex') different, rendering! The two may perhaps be given.

Fitz (*poet.*):

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.

Payne (*lit.*):

That palace wherein Behram took the cup. The deer fawneth and the lion taketh rest. Behram, who still used to take the wild ass with the lasso, thou seest on what wise it hath taken Behram.

There being in the Persian tongue for 'wild ass'—*gour*—a play of double sense, and the second being 'tomb.'

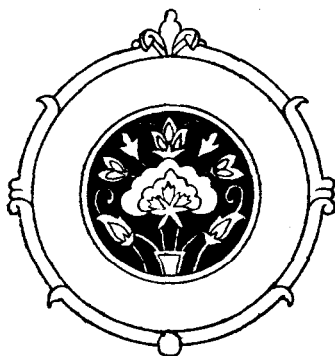
The way in which FitzGerald has availed himself of this rather childish pun to make really poetical meaning has a great deal of instruction as well as pleasure in it. I have no space to comment on Payne's formal translation of this as opposed to his avowed 'construe,' but there is certainly nothing in it which would weaken our general contention here. Only let it be repeated that Payne himself is mentioned "for the sake of honour" and with due gratitude, though one may differ with him critically.

Certain words just used may start the conclusion of this brief but, for the purpose, 'whole' matter. It may be necessary for persons who are set upon 'instruction' to inform themselves as fully as possible about FitzGerald's original and its author, though as far as the latter is concerned they will not, to the best of my knowledge and belief, find much. People seem to know, or at least to communicate knowledge, much more about Omar's friends—on the one hand, a worthy Persian Minister, who seems to have had some of the ill as well as much of the good luck of the vizier class, and, on the other, one of the greatest scoundrels in history, the original "Assassin" or "Old Man of the Mountain"—than about Omar himself.

But for *pleasure*—for pleasure of the best kind, which deserves,

as all pleasure hardly does, the name of delight—they need not go beyond the pages of FitzGerald himself. His personality will certainly bear and repay exploration, and his Letters at least will give pleasure of a slightly more commonplace, but also of a more varied and, so to speak, bulkier kind, than this curious excursion into perfectly real and yet more than half-mystical regions of human thought and passion or passions—passion of helplessness ; passion of doubt ; passion of the palliatives of sense ; passion of delight in the music of word and word-suggestion. It has left behind, or below, whatever of foulness and whatever of mere frivolity there was in its original, and has soared above them on the wings of pure poetry. It has avoided mere ‘goodness’ and mere sentimentality. It is, perhaps, hardly cheerful ; but it is at the worst not gloomy or whining or simply fractious, and if there is suffering in it there is enjoyment. Like its great Latin counterpart, it suggests that, though you may refuse to be *conviva satur*, there are, at least in some cases, grounds for contending that you should be a guest contented for the time ; and, whether or no, it *sings*. Not many have bettered that singing in its own tone and key.

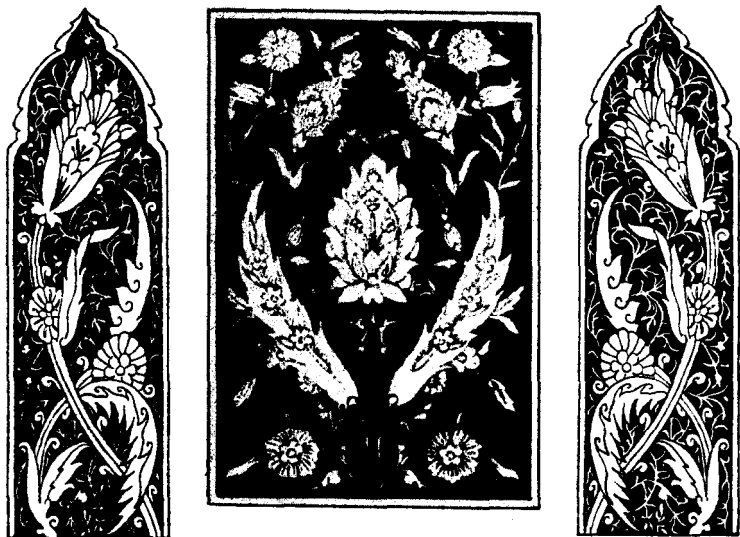
GEORGE SAINTSBURY



The First Edition







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 Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

2

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.”

3

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."

4

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.

5

Íráin 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.





6

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

7

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.

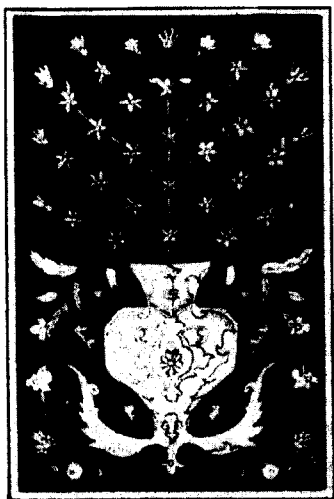


8

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.

9

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.



IO

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.

II

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.



12

“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 !

13

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.”

14

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.





15

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.

16

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

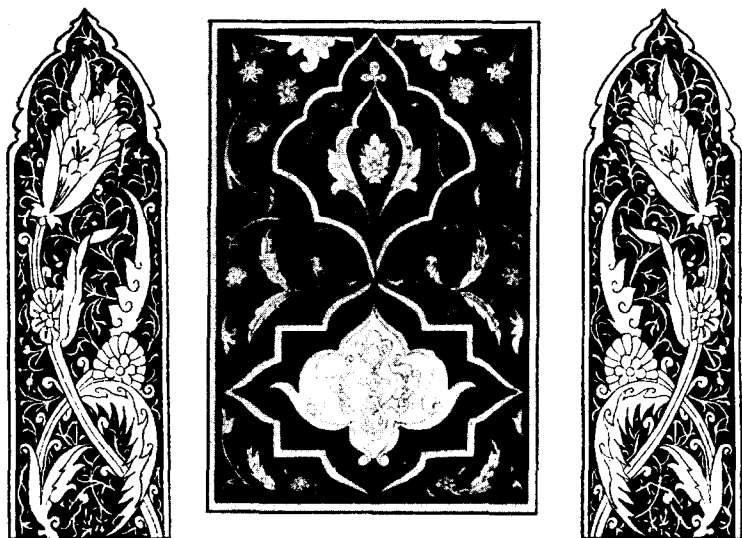


17

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

18

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.



19

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!

20

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.



21

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.

22

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 ?

23

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 !

24

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 !”

25

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.





26

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.

27

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.

28

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.”

29

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.

30

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





31

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.

32

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 seemed—and then no more of THEE and ME.



33

'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.

34

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."

35

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 !

36

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 ! ”

37

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 !





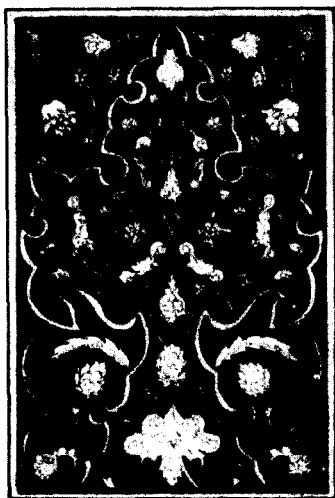


38

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 !

39

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.



40

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.

41

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.

42

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!

43

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.

44

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.





45

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.

46

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.

47

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.



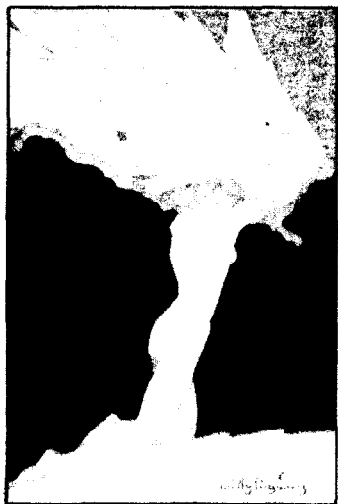


48

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.

49

'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.



50

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 !

51

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.

52

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.

53

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.

54

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





55

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.

56

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.



57

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?

58

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!

جمال الحبيب



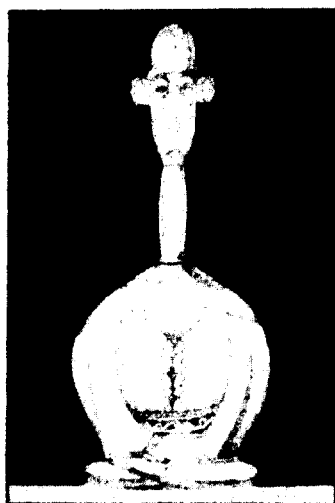


59

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.

60

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 ?”



61

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."

62

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 !"



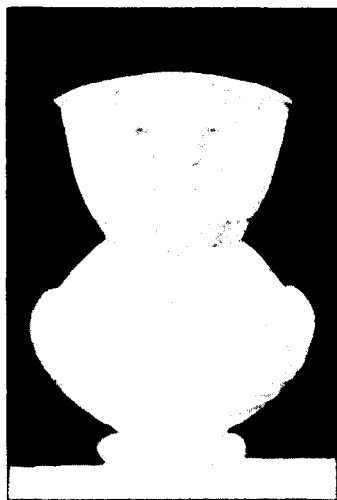
63

None answered 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 ? ”

64

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.”



65

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 !”

66

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
One spied the little Crescent all were seeking :
And then they jogged each other, “Brother !
Brother !
Hark to the Porter’s Shoulder-knot a-creaking !”



67

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

68

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.

69

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





70

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.

71

And much as Wine has played 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.



72

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 ?

73

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 !

74

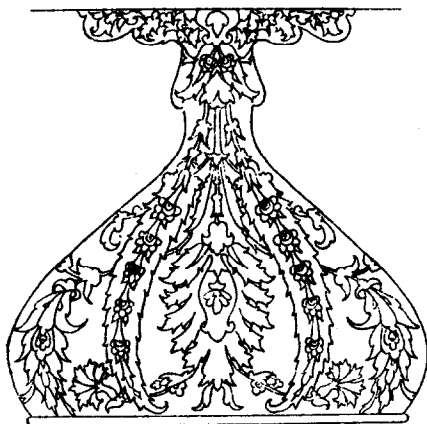
Ah, Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane,
The Moon of Heaven is rising once again :

How oft hereafter rising shall she look
Through this same Garden after me—in vain !

75

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

TAMAM SHUD



The Fourth
Edition



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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.

2

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 outside?”



3

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."

4

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.



5

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

6

And David's lips are lockt ; but in divine
 High-piping Péhlevi, with " Wine ! Wine ! Wine !
 Red Wine ! "—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
 That sallow cheek of hers t' incarnadine.

7

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.





8

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.

9

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



10

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.

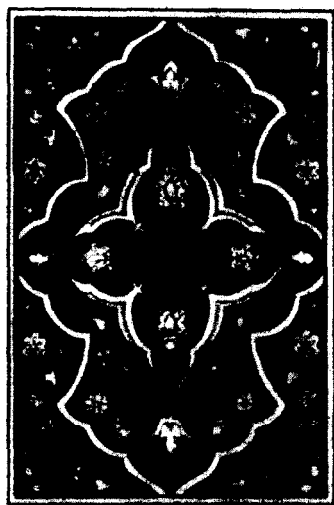
11

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

12

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!





13

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 !

14

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."

15

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.

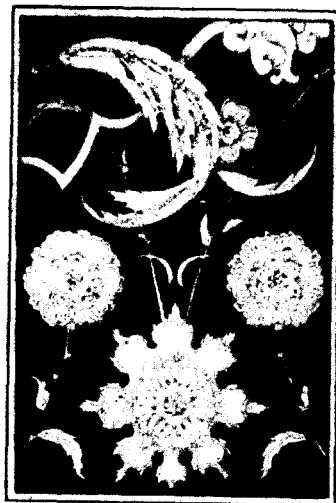
16

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.

17

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.





18

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

19

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.

20

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 unseen!

21

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
TO-DAY of past Regrets and future Fears:

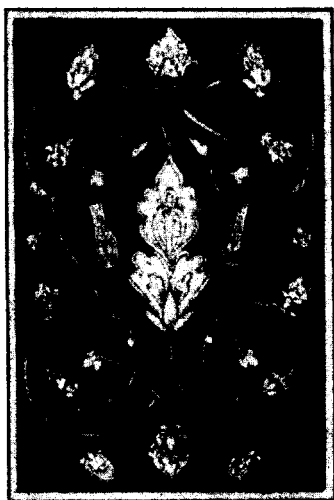
To-morrow!—Why, *To-morrow* I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

22

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.





23

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?

24

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!

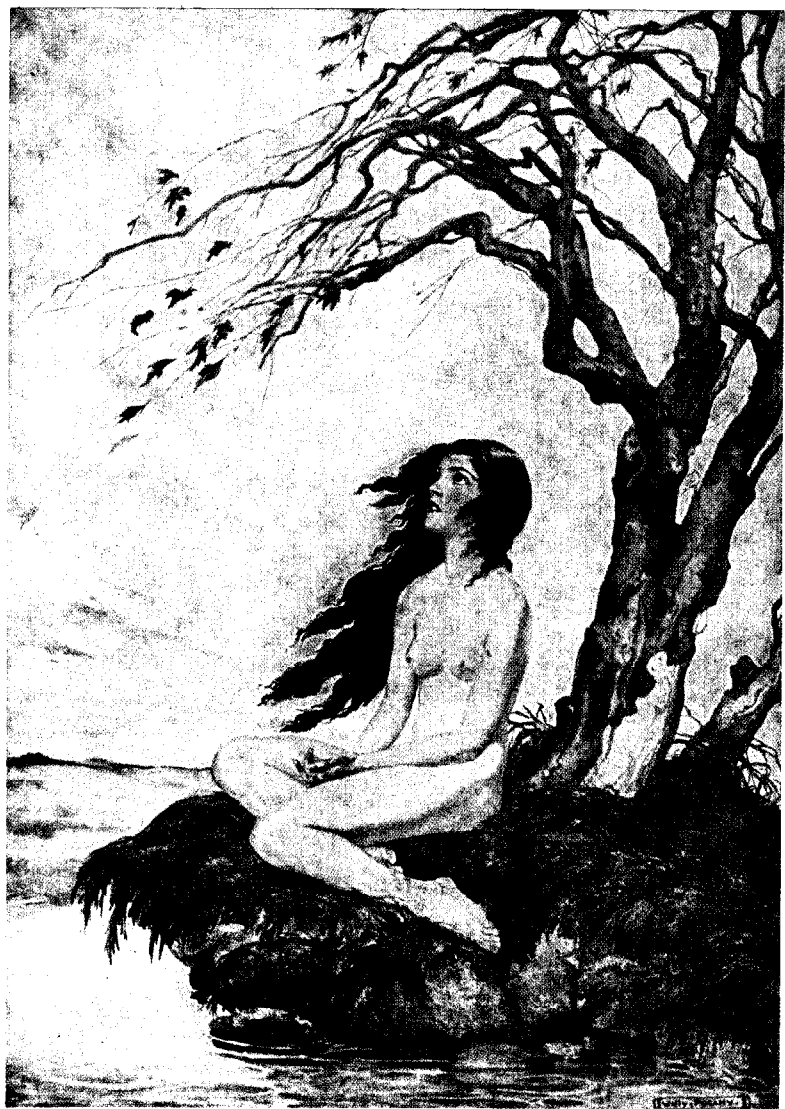


25

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

26

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'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.



27

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 where in I went.

28

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.”

29

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.





30

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!

31

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh 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.

32

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.

33

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.

34

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind
 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 ! "





35

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."

36

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 !

37

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 ! "

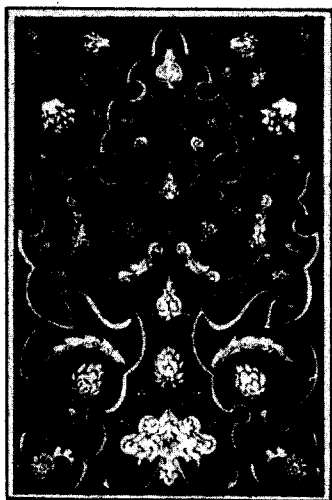
38

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 ?

39

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





40

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.

41

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.

42

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 YESTERDAY
You were—TO-MORROW you shall not be less.

43

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,

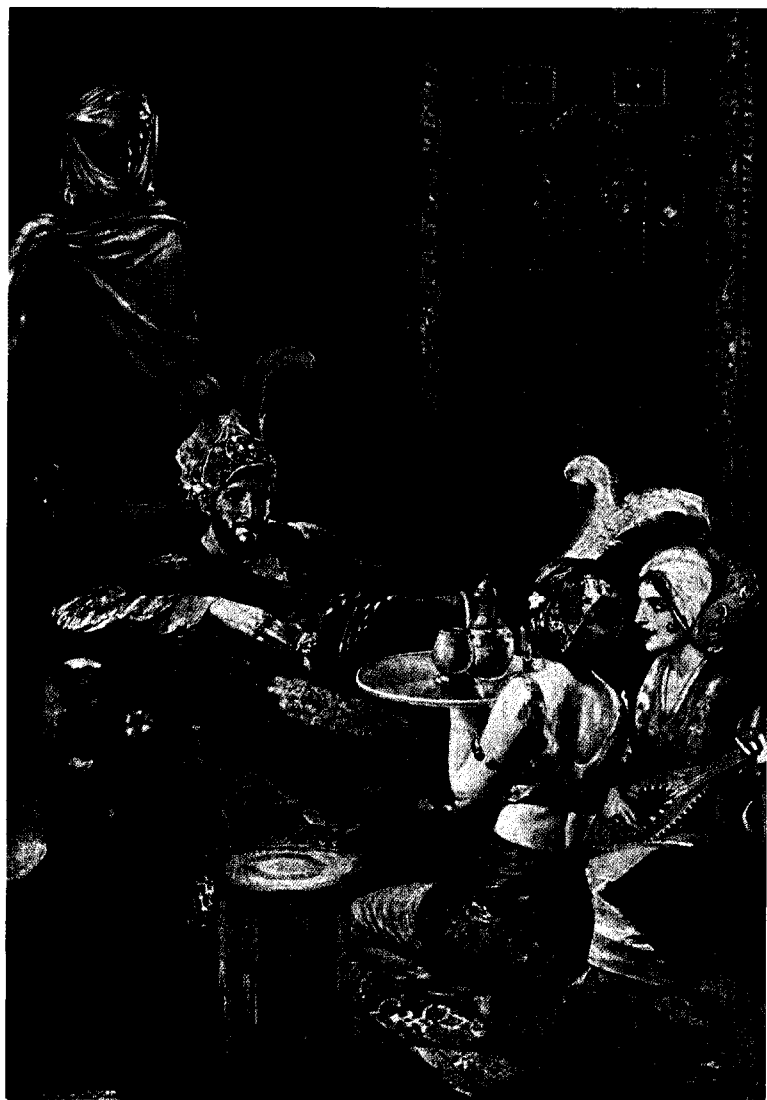
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

44

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 ?







45

'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.

46

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.

47

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.

48

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!

49

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?





50

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 ;

51

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 remains ;

52

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.

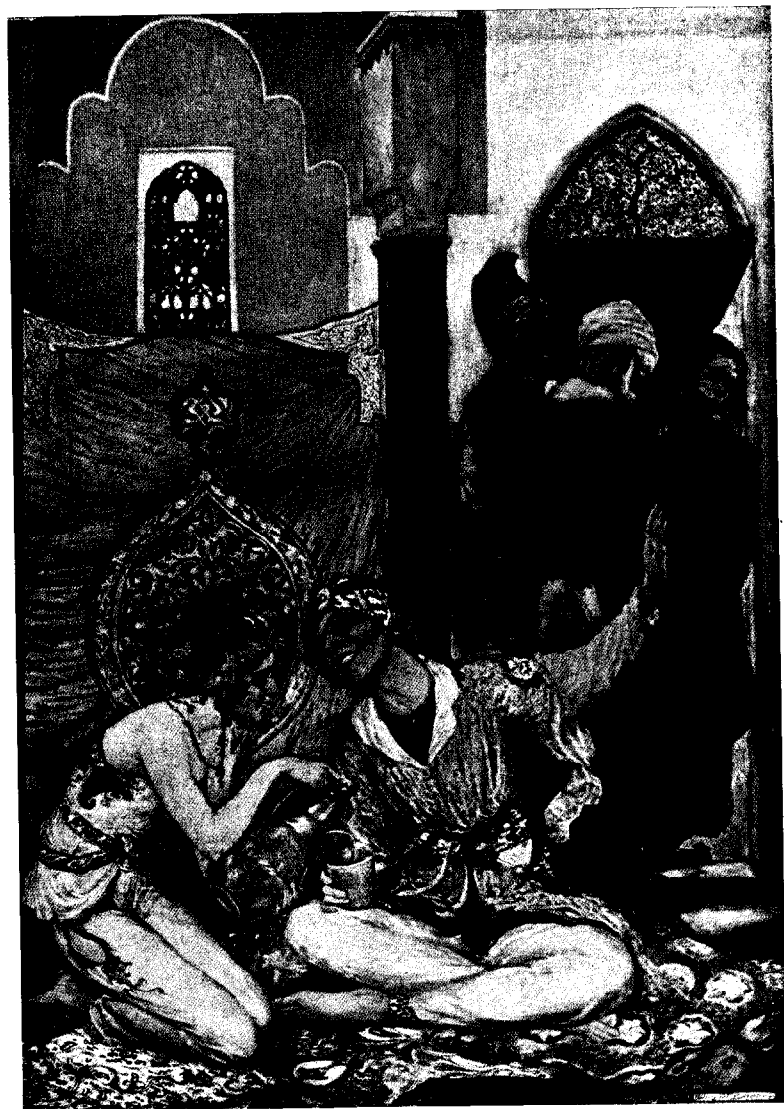
53

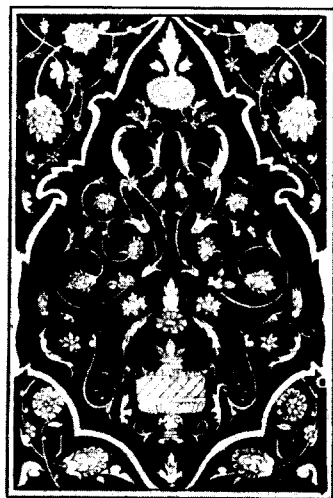
But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
You gaze TO-DAY, while You are You—how then
TO-MORROW, when You shall be You no more?

54

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute ;
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.







55

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.

56

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.

57

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.

58

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!

59

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:



60

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.

61

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?

62

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!



63

Oh, threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise !
 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.

64

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.

65

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.



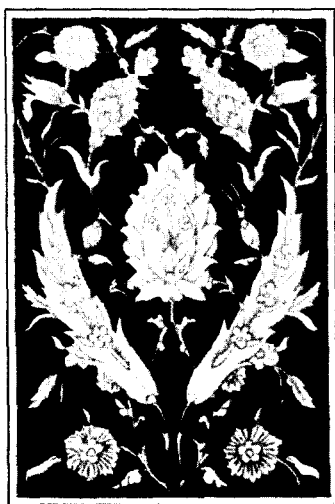


66

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" :

67

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

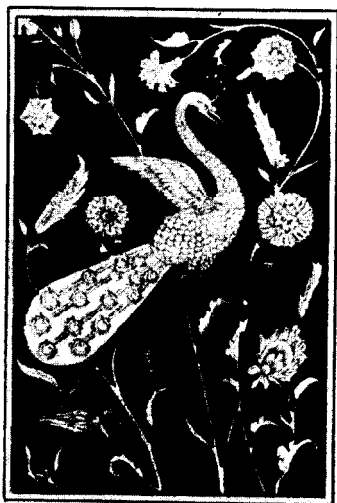


68

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

69

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.



70

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 !

71

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.



72

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.

73

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.

74

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare ;
 TO-MORROW'S Silence, Triumph, or Despair :

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

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

75

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 predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul

76

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 without.



77

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.

78

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

79

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



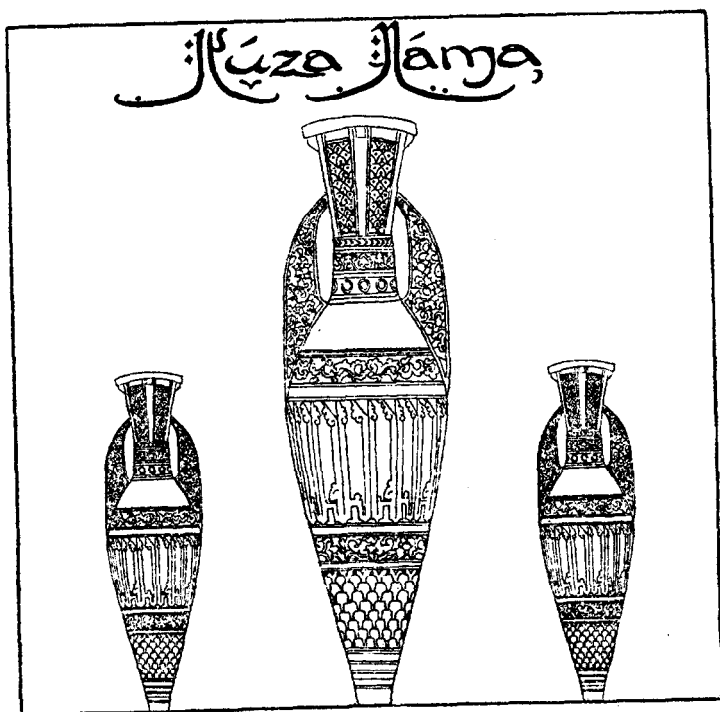


80

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 !

81

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 !



82

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.



83

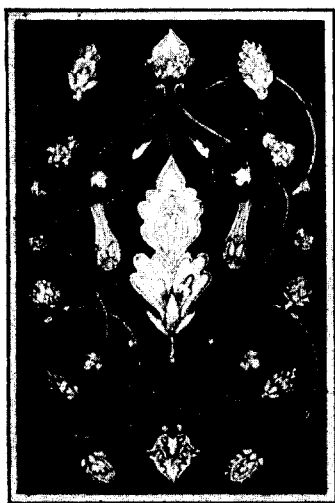
Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall ;

And some loquacious Vessels were ; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

84

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."



85

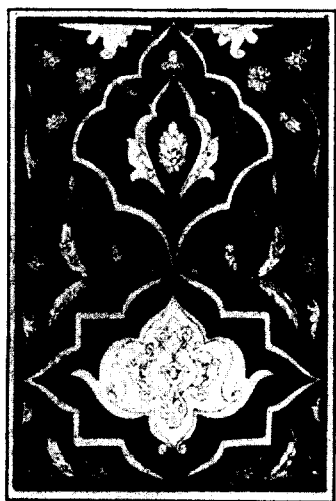
Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in
joy;

And He that with His hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

86

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?"



87

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?”

88

“Why,” said another, “Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell

The luckless Pots he marr’d in making—Pish!
He’s a Good Fellow, and ’twill all be well.”

89

“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.”

90

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!”



91

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,

And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.



92

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.

93

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.



94

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.

95

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
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.

96

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!



97

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

98

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

99

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!

* * * *





100

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 !

101

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 !

TAMÁM

