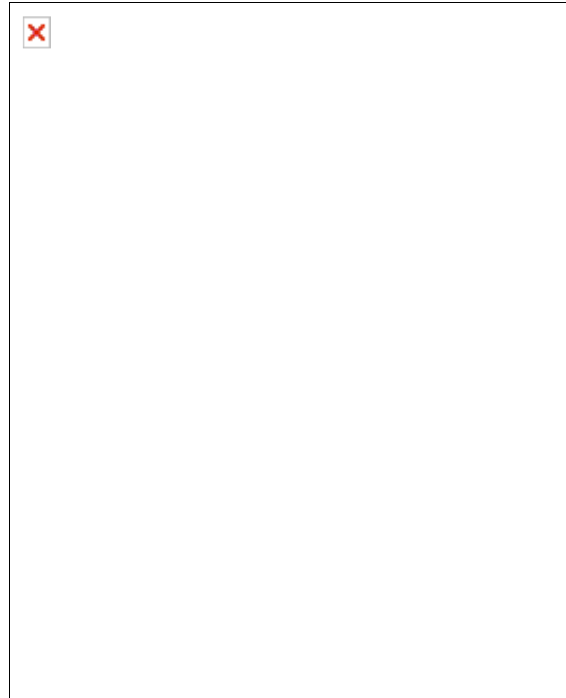


The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyamn



1 Wake! 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.

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 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.

6 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 her's to 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 Roses with the Day Woke--and a thousand scatter'd into Clay: And this first Summer month that brings the Rose Shall take Jamshyd 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.

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

11 Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough, A Flask of Wine, a Loaf of Bread,--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 wave 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."

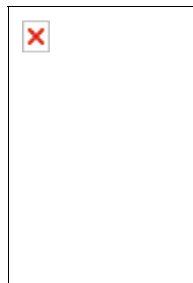
14 The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon Turns Ashes--or it prospers; and anon, Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face Lighting a little Hour or two--is gone.

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 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.

17 They say the Lion and the Lizard keep The Courts where Jamshýd gloried* and drank deep: And Bahrá, 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 Fear-- 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 some 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 Works 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 forever 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 the Door to which I found no Key: There was the Veil through which I could not see: Some little Talk awhile of Me and Thee There 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 endeavor 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 Alchemest 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 and 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 Mushtarí they flung, In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul.

55 The Vine has 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 will 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!

~Translated by Edward FitzGerald

[HOME](#)