

PERSIAN POEMS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF VERSE TRANSLATIONS



EDITED BY

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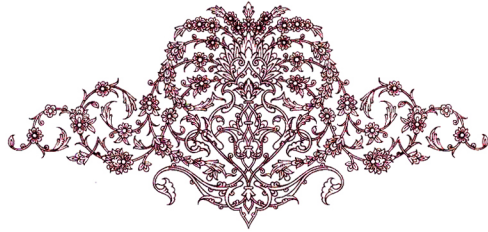
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OMAR KHAYYÁM

Omar Khayyám, Arabic in full Ghiyath-od Din Abul-Fath Umar ibn Ibrahim al-Neishabouri al-Khayyámi (1048-1131, Neishabour, Iran), Iranian mathematician, astronomer, and poet, renowned in his own country and time for his scientific achievements but chiefly known to English-speaking readers through the translation of a collection of his rubáiyát ("quatrains") in *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859), by the English writer Edward FitzGerald. Omar's poems had attracted comparatively little attention in the West until they inspired FitzGerald to write his celebrated *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, containing such now-famous phrases as "A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou," "Take the Cash, and let the Credit go," and "The Flower that once has blown forever dies." These quatrains have been translated into almost every major language and are largely responsible for coloring European ideas about Persian poetry.

Each of Omar's quatrains forms a complete poem in itself. It was FitzGerald who conceived the idea of combining a series of these rubáiyát into a continuous elegy that had an intellectual unity and consistency.

OMAR KHAYYÁM

Edward FitzGerald
First Edition, 1859

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

ÍráM 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 Péhlevi, with 'Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!' – the Nightingale cries to the Rose,
That yellow Cheek of her's 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.



Mas'oud Honarkar, Safavid school, 21×14 cm., 2001