



• SAPERE AUDE. •



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# THE RUBA'YAT OF

TRANSLATED BY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

RICHARD GARNETT, C.B. LL.D.

LONDON AND NEW YORK  
JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD  
MDCCCXCIX

412438  
25.5.43

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COMPOSITION AND PRESSWORK  
DONE AT THE OFFICE OF C. H.  
HEINTZEMANN, BOSTON, MASS.



*Dedication*

*To Una*

*O spring of work, O source of power to be!  
Each line, each thought I dedicate to Thee.  
Each time I fail the failure is mine own,  
But each success a jewel in thy throne.*

J. E. C.



## INTRODUCTION

JESSIE E. CADELL, remarkable as the only woman whose name has hitherto been connected with that of the astronomer-poet of Persia, was born in London on August 23, 1844. Her maiden name was Nash; her father, a city merchant, left her an orphan at an early age. Her mother's second marriage to General Liptrop took Jessie to India in 1859. In 1860, at the age of sixteen, Jessie Nash became the wife of Henry Mowbray Cadell, third son of John Cadell of Tranent, East Lothian, at the time of his marriage a captain in the Bengal Artillery; who, in 1867, left her a widow with two boys — John, now a captain in the Royal Artillery, and Arthur. The Cadells had returned to England in 1864, and lived principally in the south of France and Algeria until Captain Cadell's death.

Mrs. Cadell then took up her residence in Edinburgh, much influenced, no doubt, by her affection for her mother-in-law, of whom, after her death in

1883, she wrote to the present editor: "The day after I was at the Museum I was summoned away to Edinburgh by my mother-in-law's illness. She died on Sunday. It has been a great loss, for she had been a very great deal to me, and her house a second home."

Few of Mrs. Cadell's letters are without traces of her devotion to her children, but the care of their education could not engross the energies of her active mind. She had studied Persian to a slight extent in India, mainly to relieve the tedium of a military station, and with no view to linguistic research. Fascinated by the gorgeous charm of India, she had conceived the idea of writing its history. She found that a knowledge of Persian would be indispensable, and actively resumed her studies soon after her settlement in Edinburgh. Persian poetry, however, is generally more attractive than Persian prose, and affords an easier introduction to the language. Mrs. Cadell's attention was thus

gradually diverted from the more ambitious undertaking, which would indeed have greatly overtaxed her fragile constitution.

Mrs. Cadell's decision to make Persian poetry her principal study was probably formed about the time of her removal to London in 1873, and would be greatly encouraged by the facility of access to Persian manuscripts. Mutual friends introduced the writer of this memoir to her acquaintance in 1877 or 1878, and he shortly afterwards heard of the version of Omar Khayam which her studies in the interval had enabled her to commence. The essay on *The True Omar Khayam*, if it did not already exist, must have been written soon afterwards. For this, the present writer was so fortunate as to procure admission into *Fraser's Magazine*, where it appeared in May, 1879. This little service doubtless promoted a friendship which would as certainly have existed without it, and the rather as Mrs. Cadell was already endeared

to some of the writer's best friends. It may indeed be said of Jessie Cadell that to know her was to value her. Though her personal as well as her mental graces would have made her an ornament to any society, the qualities which won her favor were far from merely ornamental. It would be difficult to find a more thoroughly sterling character, one whose gifts and accomplishments were more conscientiously and systematically made auxiliary to serious ends. It would also have been difficult to find one whose friends were more unanimous in their judgment respecting her. She seemed to impress every one alike.

This unanimity — though it would have been impossible except in the case of a person of great singleness and straightforwardness of character — was no doubt largely due to the general and inevitable perception of the dominant fact in Mrs. Cadell's life, the struggle against dissolution, which by this time colored her entire exis-

tence, and around which all minor circumstances had come to group themselves. From 1879 onwards, Mrs. Cadell's life was a struggle for existence, pursued at the expense of the two dearest interests which made existence precious to her. She would fain have lived wholly for her children and her work, it was now but by fits and snatches that she could devote herself to either. She moved from place to place seeking and occasionally finding alleviation and hope, then thrown back, then again rallying, gradually parting with her strength, but with spirit unconquerable to the end. Her correspondence contains much that is melancholy as a bare statement of fact, never a word of regret or repining. The struggle with pain and debility seemed to brace her energies, and to become in some measure a substitute for the work to which, so long as health allowed, she had dedicated her life:

“ So have I, not unmoved in mind,  
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind,  
Thus beating up against the wind.”

She found from time to time refuge at Florence, where she enjoyed the friendship of Miss Violet Paget; and at Siena, where she fell in a measure under the spell of the *genius loci*, St. Catherine, in whom she recognized a kindred spirit to her Persians. “No enthusiast in our time,” she wrote, “could have been so sensible.” She meditated a translation of St. Catherine’s most remarkable utterances, but broken health forbade. Nor did she forget Omar, and always looked forward to the production of the standard edition in which the genuine quatrains were to be sifted from the spurious, and the true Omar discriminated from Fitzgerald’s brilliant but misleading paraphrase. She writes from Cadenabbia, May 27, 1881:—

So far I have not been able to do any steady work, but I have looked into the libraries of the



towns I have passed to ask for Khayam. I only found trace of him in one place, Venice, where there looked me in the face (from a glass case) two well-known quatrains of Omar. The librarian was out. I found out when he was to be back, and walked about Venice in a considerable state of excitement for a couple of hours. I had forgotten that I cared so much about it all, until there seemed a chance of a new manuscript. The librarian was very kind and I got it out at last, but it proved to be a disappointment—it was only a fragment, two dozen quatrains instead of two or three hundred. It was carefully catalogued as the *Yusuf and Zuleika of Nizami!* Altogether Italy seems poor in Persian, but it is rich in so much else that one has no right to grumble.

Up to the beginning of 1884 Mrs. Cadell's spirit had remained unabated, and there is no indication of her admitting the hopelessness of her recovery even to herself. Nor, indeed, is any symptom of despondency to be found in her communications with the present writer, but there are

tokens that she was beginning to find the struggle too severe. This does not appear to have been occasioned by aggravation of suffering so much as by increasing weakness. The contest with sickness had kept her in a kind of artificial health; her sword had been her staff, and she drooped when it was withdrawn. In the last letter which the writer received from her, dated Florence, April 26, 1884, she says, after speaking of a slight degree of improvement which she had experienced after reaching that city, "Still, it is a very scanty measure of health, and I am so wretchedly weak as to find that positive suffering." She adds, "I shall stay here, I suppose, until I am well enough to move myself." That until never became a now. She died at Florence on June 17, 1884, and was interred in the cemetery which holds the remains of Mrs. Browning and Landor and Theodore Parker and so many other gifted men and women of English race.

*The True Omar Khayam*, published in Fraser in May, 1879, is the sole contribution towards her chosen task which Mrs. Cadell was enabled to get in print during her lifetime. It falls mainly into two sections, criticism of FitzGerald as a translator, and of Omar as a thinker. Both points of which are combined in the following passage: —

As very beautiful English verse, no one can doubt that Mr. FitzGerald's *Khayam* fully deserves its fame. As a translation we are less satisfied with it. While acknowledging that the translator has been, on the whole, successful in catching the sound of the Persian lines, wonderfully so in setting thoughts and phrases from the Persian in his English verses, we contend that this is hardly enough to satisfy us in the translation of a set of epigrams. It is a poem on Omar, rather than a translation of his work, and its very faults have, to English readers, taken nothing from its charm and added much to its popularity. Its inexactness has allowed the infusion of a modern element, which

we believe to exist in the Persian only in the sense in which the deepest questions of modern life are of all time. Its occasional obscurity, too, has rather helped than hindered the impression of the whole. People expect obscurity in a Persian writer of the twelfth century—even like it—as it leaves dark corners which the mind can light up any way it pleases, and regard what it finds there as one of the peculiar beauties of Eastern thought. These parts have less attraction for those who, knowing Khayam in the original, have learned to value him for himself.

This is the natural point of view of the Persian scholar versus the amateur. It is, nevertheless, somewhat unjust to FitzGerald, who never placed himself in the Persian scholar's position. He never professed to translate Omar, only to paraphrase him, and his version must be regarded as a variation upon a given theme, not a transcript of it. "Many quatrains," he says himself, "are mashed together." Nevertheless, while indulging

in liberty, he kept on the right side of license. "He altered and added," says Professor Cowell, "but never invented an entire tetrastich of his own." And Mr. Heron-Allen finds that many of his most daring interpolations are but transplantations from the *Martih ut tari* of another Persian poet — Ferid ud din Attar.

While, nevertheless, we are far from condemning FitzGerald, it is a matter of much interest to rightly appreciate the Persian semblance of the figure which his genius has brought, in half European costume, upon the theatre of modern literature. Few, probably, have been so well qualified as Mrs. Cadell for this work of restoration. Deeply sympathetic with independent thought in every form, she possessed a clear logical understanding, and her first inquiry under all circumstances was, *What is true?* Her verdict upon Khayam as a thinker is as follows:—

He mocks, questions, laments, enjoys; is a person of varying moods, strong feelings and remarkable boldness; but he has some sort of belief at the bottom of it all. He has no doubt about his enjoyment of the pleasant things round him while they last. He can chafe against the sorrows of life and its inevitable end, the folly of the hypocrites and the cruelty of fate, but he never doubts the existence of an oppressor, or questions the reality of sorrow any more than that of death. It would seem that with all his boldness he never succeeded in convincing himself that he was in the right; and that his attitude of mind towards God, the law, and moral obligation was that of rebellion, not negation.

In many respects Khayam contradicts preconceived notions of Oriental character. Though fond of pleasure, he was not attracted by a sensual Paradise. He was not indifferent to death, he was not passive under the hand of Fate, or at all remarkable for resignation. He is a discovery, a light on the old Eastern world in its reality, which proves, as do most realities, different from what suppositions and theories would make them.

On the question how far the constant praises of wine and incitement to conviviality in Omar's verse is to be understood literally, Mrs. Cadell is very illuminating:—

Without agreeing with those who look on it all as simply a figure for Divine love, "the wine of the love of God," we come to regard it as representing more than mere sensual pleasure. We must remember that drinking had in the East at that time no vulgar associations. Wine parties were common in the houses of the great men, and in the courts of the princes. These wine parties were in fact the nurseries of all the intellectual life of the time which was unconnected with religion, and did much to counteract the dullness of orthodox Mohammedan life. So little growth to be got in what was lawful, it was small wonder that stirring minds turned from it; and, as including so much else that they valued, we find them idolising the pleasure which seemed so fertile as a metaphor for the rest.

This, we are much inclined to believe, is the real explanation of Omar's apparent attitude towards the wine-cup. A man of his intellectual superiority — an astronomer too, whose pursuits especially required sobriety and method — cannot have been the mere Epicurean — not in the sense of Epicurus — for which he might be taken. "I swear I drink not my poor thirst to slake," he says in one place. Wine stands to him as, in Mrs. Cadell's words, "a metaphor for the rest" — an abbreviated symbol for all the excellent things from which Mohammedan bigotry debarred the free and genial soul. "He occupies himself," says Mrs. Cadell, "with the problems which, dealt with unsatisfactorily to Persian minds by Mohammedan theology, gave rise to the mysticism of Attar, Jelal-ud-din-Rumi, and Saadi." This remark on the unsuitableness of Mohammedan theology to the Persian mind opens up a deep question. How far has Persia assimilated Islam? Accustomed to comprehend Arabs, Turks



and Persians under the general denomination of Orientals, we are liable to forget that there is no community of race among them. The Moham-  
medan religion was imposed by a Semitic people upon an Aryan one, without condescension to the subtleties of controversy, but by dint of apostolic blows and knocks. An authentic history of the conversion of Persia to Islam would be a very curious chapter in human history. The process was far from instantaneous, for two centuries after the overthrow of the Sassanian monarchy we find the followers of the two religions holding public disputations, and about the same time was compiled the *Dinkard*, an extensive digest of Zoroastrian theology and law. The reader of the *Fisberman and the Genie* will remember that a fourth of the metamorphosed inhabitants of the enchanted lake-city are fire-worshippers; and the story of Amgiad and Assad shows the strength of the old religion and the embittered feeling between its votaries and the fol-

lowers of Islam. We do not suggest that Omar was secretly a Zoroastrian, but the doctrine of heredity teaches that repugnance to Mohammedanism was not likely to be extinct in him, and that in this respect he probably shared the Sufi frame of mind, little of a Sufi as he may have been himself. Now, one of the points upon which the two religions came most markedly into collision was the lawfulness of wine, proscribed by one, and lauded by the other as one of the Deity's chief gifts to man. The anonymous author of the *Dina i Mainog Kbirad* (Opinions of the Spirit), a Persian book probably written shortly before the downfall of the empire, says of the moderate use of wine: "It causes recollection of things forgotten, and goodness takes place in the mind. It likewise increases the sight of the eye, the hearing of the ear and the speaking of the tongue; and work which it is necessary to do and to expedite becomes more progressive. He also sleeps pleasantly

in the sleeping-place, and rises light. And, on account of these contingencies, good repute for the body, righteousness for the soul, and also the approbation of the good come upon him." The writer, it is true, proceeds to enumerate the ill effects of the misuse of wine, but it never occurs to him that its use should be forbidden on that account. Without, therefore, at all disputing Omar's partiality for the juice of the grape in its most material sense, we think it may also have stood to him as an emblem of religious and philosophical freedom, much as Shelley makes it an emblem of love.

One of the most important inquiries that can be instituted respecting Omar relates to the genuineness of his text. The essence and quintessence of his poetry are doubtless to be found in the hundred and ten quatrains translated by FitzGerald, but FitzGerald has so frequently fused several stanzas into one that it is difficult to determine precisely how many he admitted into his canon. The manuscripts

vary greatly in the number of quatrains recognised as Omar's. Of the two used by FitzGerald the Oxford manuscript contains only 158; the Calcutta ("swelled," he says, "by all kinds of repetition and corruption") has 516. A Cambridge manuscript has no fewer than 801, but is very modern. The Calcutta printed edition of 1836 has 492, M. Nicolas' translation 464, Bodenstedt's 467, Schack's 336, Whinfield's 500. Mrs. Cadell found no less than 1040 quatrains attributed to Omar, of which not more than from 250 to 300 were accepted by her as authentic. Her own version includes 150, the genuineness of a few of which may appear questionable. Mr. Garner deemed the spirit of Omar sufficiently represented by the 152 which he selected from the mass, and most readers will probably agree with him. From a critical point of view, nevertheless, it is important to obtain as authentic a text of Omar as possible, and if his diction differs so greatly as has been represented, from the poets who succeeded him,

this ought not to be a matter of very great difficulty as regards the question of genuineness. The frequent variations of text would be less easy to adjust, unless some manuscript should be found considerably nearer to Omar's time than any at present known.

Mrs. Cadell was not long in obtaining recognition for her work in the highest quarter. It came under the notice of Bodenstedt, then engaged in the preparation of his translation of the *Rubáiyat*, published in 1881. Totally unacquainted with the identity, and entirely unsuspecting of the sex of the translator, he wrote in his introduction: —

An Orientalist whose name is unknown to me, but who, in a very searching review of Fitzgerald's version, signed J. E. C., reveals himself as one thoroughly acquainted with Omar, hits the mark in rejecting all one-sided interpretations of the poet, and proving that a deeply religious spirit breathes from his finest strophes,

which may be recognised even when he is attacking Islam, a creed repugnant to his nature, with the sharpest weapons of reason.

This is not exactly the view of Mrs. Cadell, who, while vindicating Omar from the charge of sheer agnosticism, represents him as a rebel against precepts in whose supernatural sanction he, nevertheless, does not wholly disbelieve. Both this view, and Bodenstedt's, however, occupy a middle position between the two "one-sided interpretations" of which Bodenstedt complains, the Epicureanism of FitzGerald and the Sufism of M. Nicolas. They admit of reconciliation if we place ourselves at the point of view which both Bodenstedt and Mrs. Cadell all but assume, and regard Omar as an example of an Aryan intellect in revolt against an uncongenial Semitic theology, which nevertheless the power of tradition and early association disables him from discarding as decidedly as he would wish.

The sanity of both critics has effected much for the vindication of their author. Bodenstedt justly points out the impossibility of finding any record of coherent mental development in a series of quatrains arranged by the scribes according to the alphabetical order of the first lines. Mrs. Cadell shows what slight warrant some of FitzGerald's audacities derive from the original Persian. Had she known FitzGerald more intimately she might also have pointed out how Omar's verse had come as a torch, to enkindle thoughts long latent in his own mind :

“What marvel if, where strewed the fuel lay,  
Around the heart the sudden flame upwent?”

Mrs. Cadell left not only a metrical but also a prose version of her hundred and fifty quatrains, which evidently preceded the poetical rendering. Indeed, as the few translations of her own given in *The True Omar* are invariably in prose, and

agree exactly with the prose manuscript, it may be conjectured that the metrical translation was not then in existence. The prose, at all events, is the basis of the verse, and the comparison of the two is interesting as showing what labor the latter cost her. In a few instances, where the exigencies of metre have been too hard for her, and she has evidently failed to satisfy herself, recourse has been had to the prose for an amended version. Substantially, however, the work is given to the world as she left it. She also left behind her a transcript of the Persian text of the hundred and fifty quatrains, with marginal notes, indicating in which of fourteen manuscripts which she consulted, indicated by letters of the alphabet, any particular one is found. This is frequently interesting and suggestive. There appears, for example, but one instance of a quatrain occurring in one manuscript only, but many of its being confined to two or three. When this is the case, A, B,



and D are almost certain to be among the manuscripts containing it. A quatrain contained in A is almost certain to be included in B also, but B has many not found in A. The quatrains cited from M and N are so few that Mrs. Cadell probably had not herself collated those manuscripts. It is not certain whether she intended to have published the Persian text; but it is most probable that she did, and that she would have added particulars respecting the manuscripts, and an endeavor to determine their various degrees of authority. She would also, no doubt, have appended explanatory notes, which have been deemed superfluous at the present advanced period of Khayamite study.

As a translator, Mrs. Cadell's work is entitled to the indulgence that may be justly claimed by a labor of love. Deciding that her author could not be effectively rendered in prose, she courageously essayed a verse translation, although her

experience of the poetic art must have been of the slenderest. So far, indeed, as known to the present writer, the noble quatrain of her own, prefixed to her rendering, is her sole original essay in metrical composition. Under the circumstances, her success must be considered remarkable. She wants neither dignity, tenderness, nor epigrammatic brevity. Her defects are mainly technical, and some, such as the frequent imperfect rhymes, would have disappeared under the stricter revision which her broken health never allowed her to carry through. In one respect she is manifestly at a disadvantage not only in comparison with FitzGerald, but with Mr. Whinfield, Mr. Garner, and Mr. Heron-Allen, her failure to reproduce the precise form of the original, a form particularly adapted for sententious poetry. She was nevertheless well advised in declining to undertake what at this early stage of her poetical discipline would have been entirely beyond her power; but

it may be regretted that she did not discard rhyme altogether in favor of an easy metrical prose. The necessity for finding rhymes evidently cramped her terribly. Her strong point is the sympathy with Omar which renders her more of a Persian than any of her competitors. We seem nearer to Omar in her verse than elsewhere. FitzGerald, as she herself remarks, has rather written a poem upon Omar than translated him; and the other translators, though faithful to the mere wording of their original, behold this through a medium of nineteenth century thought. Jessie Cadell alone expresses herself as Omar might have done had he returned to earth to give his poem to England. As FitzGerald's translation will survive to the latest age of English literature as a proof of the supreme importance of grand form; so may hers as an instance of the power of love and zeal to neutralize serious technical defects.

Mrs. Cadell was the authoress of two novels, *Ida Craven* (1876) and *Worthy*, published posthumously in 1895. The former is not only a clever but a highly interesting and individual book, giving a lively picture of life on the Indian frontier, noble and bracing in its moral tone, and a mirror of the animating personality of the authoress. The comparative languor of *Worthy*, a story of the Franco-German war, with some scenes in Corsica, is due to the depression of ill health. Both stories reproduce the scenery and embody the experience of the authoress's life; invention was not a strong point with Mrs. Cadell. They tell more of her, however, than she could convey as the interpreter of the thoughts of another, if hardly more than might have been inferred from her own motto and confession of faith, the dedicatory quatrain in the front of her translation, by which, had she written nothing else, she would have deserved to live.

R. GARNETT.

MAY 23, 1899.

THE RUBA'YAT OF OMAR KHAYAM



THE RUBA'YAT  
OF  
OMAR KHAYAM

I.

Since none can promise thee to-morrow's light,  
Make glad, my love, thy weary heart to-night;  
Yea, by the moonlight nectar's goblet drain,  
For many moons will seek us, but in vain.

2.

When I am dead wine on my body pour,  
Above my corse the goblet's praises tell;  
And would you find me at the judgment's knell  
Seek in the dust beside the tavern door.

3.

Men call the Koran, God's Almighty word,  
Yet read it rarely, or forget it quite ;  
Yet doth a graven verse the cup engird  
That all men con, and all their tongues recite.

4.

You drink not wine, but why the drinker flout?  
Must I repent? First will I God forsake.  
You always boast that wine you do without,  
And yet a hundred weightier precepts break.

4a.

As far as in you lies give no man pain,  
Subject him not unto your anger's fire ;  
And would you to eternal peace aspire,  
Grieve for yourselves, from grieving man refrain.



Both scorn and proud hypocrisy eschew,  
 Taunt not the drinkers if you can refrain;  
 And if some pleasure from your life you'd gain,  
 Keep him who revels well within your view.

## 5.

So much wine will I drink, that from the clay  
 'Neath which I'm laid, will rise its sweet perfume;  
 And as the reveller passes o'er my tomb,  
 O'ercome by odorous sweet, he'll swoon away.

## 6.

'Mid scattered treasures we, with wine and mirth  
 Are free from hope of peace or fear of pain.  
 Life, heart, cup, vesture, pawned for wine; no chain  
 Confines in air or water, fire or earth.

7.

O heaven! our woe is offspring of thy hate.  
From all time 'tis thy way to be unjust!  
O earth! if men would cleave thy bosom's dust,  
What precious gems they would accumulate!

8.

To-day, which is the season of my youth,  
I drink, for in that is my happiness ;  
Slander not wine as bitter, for 'tis sweet ;  
In me, my life alone is bitterness.

9.

Thou canst not help to-morrow by to-day,  
Care for the morrow is but folly's spray ;  
If thy heart wake, forbear this hour to waste  
Dreaming of joys that thou may'st never taste.

10.

This cup was once a man disconsolate,  
Yea, such as I, wooing a stately queen;  
That handle there, which on its neck is seen  
Was then an arm, around his lovely mate.

11.

Long, long ago, man's fate was graven clear,  
The pen left nought unwrit of joy or woe;  
Since from eternity God ruled it so  
Then senseless are our grief and striving here.

12.

He who has formed the goblet from the clay  
Can ne'er destroy his art's surpassing token.  
These hands and feet and face of beauty — say,  
Why framed in love, and why in fury broken?

13.

O Khayam! why for sin this sorrowing?  
What gain its less or more, can any say?  
On him who sins not, shines not mercy's ray.  
Where then their harm, since sins God's mercy bring

14.

Behind that veil no man has found a way,  
Nor knows he anything of life's array,  
He has no home but underneath the clay;  
Thy truth thy sorrow is, O woeful lay!

15.

In the proud mosque, in Magian temple tall  
And in Christ's church men supplicating fall,  
Would hell escape and heaven's joy attain.  
But he who has God's secret learnt is sure  
That the fair fruits of His rich blessings pure  
Can never ripen from such mouldy grain.

16.

'Twas while I slept, that thus a wise man spoke:—  
“Sleep never caused joy’s rose in man to bloom,  
“Why court you thus the fellow of death’s yoke?  
“Drink now, you’ll sleep enough in earth’s dark womb.”

17.

Bad men must not behold Thy secrets bright,  
And fools Thy mysteries may never see;  
O God! How Thou would’st harm humanity  
If from it all Thou didst conceal thy light!

18.

Not fit for heaven, nor quite worthy hell,  
God only knows, why thus He me has made;  
Ugly as sin, poor as an infidel,  
Faith, hope and fortune all within me fade.

19.

I swear, I drink not my poor thirst to slake,  
Nor is it that I faith or manners lack;  
I drink, am drunken, but to breathe one breath  
Of ecstasy, and hope for that ere death.

20.

They tell me I am doomed eternally;  
It is a lie, in which I'll put no trust;  
If all who love, and drink, in hell are thrust,  
Then heaven as empty as my hand will be.

21.

In those old halls which rang to Bahram's jest,  
The wolf now casts her young, the hind takes rest.  
Bahram, who respite to the game ne'er gave,  
Is now in turn the booty of the grave.

22.

O love! As life brings sorrow to thine eye,  
As soon from flesh thy spirit forth must fly;  
Sit on the grass, and let these few days be  
Joy to thy heart, ere grass grow forth from thee.

23.

O Khayam! This thy body is a tent,  
Thy soul its Lord, eternity his home;  
Death, the tent pitcher, strikes this tent of thine  
For life's next stage, when thy Lord hence must roam.

24.

Khayam, as deepest lore he sought to win  
Fell in grief's brazier and was burned therein;  
Fate's scissors midst life's tent ropes havoc wrought,  
And then Death's broker sold the bits for nought.

25.

When a fair face is by me in the spring  
To fill my cup beside the desert's brink;  
(Though this, my saying, doubtless you will blame)  
Worse than a hound were I of heaven to think.

26.

Thou shalt be parted from thy soul, and then,  
Enter God's veil of mystery again;  
Be glad! For whence you came you do not know;  
Drink! For you wist as little where you go.

27.

My life I've spent in praise of ruby wine,  
My home is but the temple of her shrine.  
Is she thy mistress? Saint of Wisdom say!  
Thy mistress is my slave, therefore be gay.



28.

The world a girdle for our bodies worn,  
The Oxus but a trace of blood-stained tears,  
Hell but a spark from senseless sorrow's fears,  
And heaven a breath of roses opening morn.

29.

A rebel slave am I, and I would know  
Where is, O God, Thy will's all-swaying sword?  
My heart is dark, where is Thy light and grace?  
If heaven is only servitude's reward,  
It is but barter and a poor exchange;  
Where then is Thy forgiveness, Mighty Lord?

30.

I know not if it be the will divine  
To call me to heaven's gladness or hell's woe.  
A lute, a cup, my love where sweet flowers blow,  
Such is my coin, be heaven's credit thine.

31.

I drink, and enemies with all their might  
Say, "Do it not, wine is the true faith's foe."  
So be it, then I drink, for well I know  
To drink the foeman's blood is ever right.

32.

The good and evil which in man you see,  
The joy and sorrow which may come to thee;  
Impute these not to fickle fortune's wheel,  
For in love's path 'tis certain sure that you  
Are not so weak as is the giddy whirl  
Which that wheel makes beyond our vista's view.

33.

He who has sown by love joy in his soul  
Has not spent fruitlessly life's brightest days;  
For either he has tried to tread God's ways,  
Or sought his own peace in the lifted bowl.

34.

Since God has thus my body fashionèd  
Each deed I shall perform, He first must know.  
No sin of mine but from His dictates flow ;  
Why then should hell-fires with my bones be fed ?

35.

O pity me the heart where no fires be,  
That is not sorrow-stamped with pure love's kiss.  
That day you drink not wine, remember this,  
That day is lost, no day is it to thee.

36.

Since we possess not truth and certainty  
We must not sit in hope's expectancy ;  
But hold we ever a full cup to cheer ;  
That we shall sober die, we need not fear.

37.

As my first coming was no wish of mine  
So my departure I can not devise.  
Gird thyself, Saki! Fair bright Saki rise,  
Lest time should fail to drink this skin of wine.

38.

How long will you of heaven's blessings tell,  
Or drone of torments of lost souls in hell?  
How long discuss the dim mosque's scented light?  
Look at the tablet, read what's writ aright  
By the great Lord of fate's uncertainty  
For all the future from eternity.

39.

Drink deep, for long you'll sleep beneath the rose  
Without companion, neighbour, wife or friend;  
Beware, let none this dark veil's secret rend:  
The withered bloom no second freshness knows.

40.

The world by joy has o'ercome sorrow's death,  
Each living heart turns from the desert drear;  
On every branch to-day white blooms appear,  
And full of life is every clamorous breath.

41.

He, from whose stem springs not Truth's fruit of gold,  
Be sure he is not well met in the way;  
But he will be, who bears that tender spray  
To-day as yesterday, to-morrow as of old.

42.

On the first day my heart, exalted high,  
Craved pen and tablet, heaven and hell to see;  
Till at the last the Master made reply,  
"Pen, tablet, heaven and hell are all in thee."

43.

Sweet to the rose is dewy morn in May,  
Sweet is a lovely face midst orchards gay;  
'Tis only sad to talk of yesterday.  
Rejoice, for every thing is sweet to-day.

44.

Be ye then bold, for fate doth sorrow yield,  
Sit not at ease, the sword of time is keen;  
If fortune place some sweet your lips between,  
Beware! Eat not! Poison is there concealed.

45.

How long shall I fling spears at the smooth sea?  
I loath all pious men's idolatry.  
Khayam! who say that hell shall be thy doom?  
Who goes to hell? And who from heaven hath come?

46.

As the brook's water, or the desert's wind,  
Another day of this my life has fled;  
Griefs of two days I ne'er will bring to mind;  
The one has not yet come, the other's sped.

47.

To those who sit with fairy-facèd maids  
By rose, or stream, or fields of waving corn  
Bring the full wine cup; those who drink at morn  
Are free from mosque's or temple's servile shades.

48.

They say, in heaven joy's shining face shall glow;  
I answer, sweet earth's vintages now are;  
Hold fast the coin, let future credit go;  
An empty drum sounds pleasant from afar.

49.

Wine's melted ruby, the jug the mine;  
The cup the body, its soul the wine;  
And the crystal cup where the wine shines through,  
A tear where the heart's blood is hid from view.

50.

Drink wine, for it is everlasting day,  
It is the very harvest of our youth;  
In time of roses, wine and comrades gay,  
Be happy, drink, for that is life in sooth.

51.

Where e'er the tulips or the roses bloom,  
Know that they sprout where blood of kings has  
flowed;  
Each violet tuft that bursts in fresh perfume,  
Was once a mole where Beauty's visage glowed.



51*a*.

Arise! Bring wine! What need is there to speak?  
To me thy doubts to-night are sunlight's glare.  
Give me one draught as rosy as thy cheek,  
For my repentance wavers like doth thy hair.

51*b*.

“You long for joy,” my spirit said to me,  
“Then show me that you gladness comprehend.”  
I answered: “a—.” He stopped me; “Hold there, end,  
One letter is enough if wit there *be*.”

51*c*.

Give wine, my wounded heart is scored with pain,  
Our path has scarce got any other gain;  
I love the clay from which the cup is wrought  
More than yon wheel, where skulls do count for nought.

51*d.*

A cup, a loved lip, cornfields' waving swell,  
These are my cash, be heaven's credit thine;  
Some men existence pawn for heaven and hell.

Who goes to hell? Who comes from heav'n divine?

51*e.*

O thou, whose cheek is but the counterfeit  
Most perfect of wild roses blooming sweet,  
Whose face is formed in mould of eastern grace!  
When on the chess board of life here below  
Thou dost thy magic glance benignly throw,  
Pawns, castles, kings and knights all give thee place.

52.

Why Baghdad or why Balkh? Our life's near done,  
Its cup is full. Joy—sorrow, which is gain?  
Rejoice, for after us, the phases run;  
Inconstant moons will ever wax and wane.

53.

Life's caravan passes in wonder by,  
Unknown the hour is which most blessing bears.  
Saki, why fret for our friend's future cares?  
'Twere best the cup to bring, the dawn is nigh.

54.

Behold! now strengthen me with blood-red wine  
And make my amber visage ruby red;  
Wash me with wine when I have passed away,  
And with the vin 's wood line my earthy bed.

55.

The road of love we must have purified,  
Destruction in death's hand we'll surely see;  
O sweet-faced Saki! liquid-almond-eyed,  
Now give us water, dust we soon shall be.

56.

Nought else is left of joy but some poor names,  
New wine the one friend faithful as of old;  
Therefore, from that, do not joy's hand withhold  
To-day when thereof nothing else remains.

57.

In tavern wine alone can purge life's pangs,  
The name once sullied none can ever clean;  
Rejoice, for now our reputation's screen  
Can ne'er be mended, in such rags it hangs.

58.

In life no man can pluck love's rosy wreath  
Without a scratch from thorns all pointed keen;  
E'en as 'the comb, till cut in many teeth  
Cannot caress the curl tips of a Queen.

59.

May to my hand the brimming cup ne'er fail,  
And may some beauty always love me true;  
They say God showers on me repentance' dew;  
He does not, if He did, 't would not avail.

60.

The day is sweet, the air not hot, not cold,  
The clouds from off the rose have washed the dust;  
And to the rose the bulbul's chant is trolled  
And this methinks the burden, "Drink ye must."

61.

Ere death's assault fall on that head of thine,  
Say: "Sweetheart bring to me the rosy wine."  
Thou art not gold, oh senseless fool! that men  
Should bury thee to dig thee up again.

62.

My advent on the world no gain conferred,  
Nor will my going raise its rank or state;  
Nor have mine ears from any mortal heard  
The reason why I came, or what my fate.

63.

The love which is but feigned is nothing worth.  
'Tis like a half dead fire, a flameless coal;  
Nights, days, months, years are by the faithful soul  
Passed without food or sleep, or rest or mirth.

64.

'Tis writ that houris shall our heaven complete  
Where fountains flow with honey and pure wine;  
What harm then here to worship at their shrine,  
Whom at life's ending we above shall meet?

65.

No man has trod one step outside himself,  
None have the ravel of dark death untwined;  
When I from pupil to the master turn  
All woman's offspring do I helpless find.

66.

Live ye content, yearn less for this world's gain,  
Of earthly good and bad break loose the chain;  
Rejoice! For ever as the heavens move  
So all things pass, and will our life remain?

67.

Drink, it will cut uncertainty in two  
And pacify the doctors seventy-two;  
Hold none then back from it, yea quaff it too,  
And one good draught will all your frets subdue.

68.

Wine is unlawful. 'T were best first to think,  
Who drinks, how much, what his companions be;  
Be sure, if answered well these questions three,  
That no one but the wise of wine will drink.

69.

I drink, and he who is as wise as I  
Wine's evil finds a simple thing I wot;  
God from all time has known futurity,  
And I should prove Him wrong, if I drank not.

70.

Each draught on thirsty earth that Saki pours  
Quenches the fire of sorrow in hot eyes;  
Then praise ye God, when ye recall, ye wise,  
This water frees the heart from many sores.



71.

Agree my friends to meet at rising sun  
And each the other's perfectness extol;  
And when the Saki has poured forth the soul,  
Say as you pray: "Alas for such an one."

72.

One cup is worth a hundred hearts or creeds,  
One draught of wine all China's realm is worth;  
In wine alone, a bitterness on earth  
We find, whose worth a thousand sweets exceeds.

73.

The slaves of reason, prudence, human lore  
For what "is not" and "is," sigh helplessly;  
Choose ye, my friends, the red grape's juicy core:  
Pride made these fools like shrivelled raisins dry.

74.

Be not ensnared by sorrow's witching charms  
Or grief for fortune's ill will thee enslave;  
Rest by the sown field's or river's the edge,  
For soon cold earth shall lull thee in her arms.

75.

As those, who sink in deserts' dusty ways  
This life's foundations, separation raise  
Between man's heart and his rejoicing soul;  
So ere, like barn-door cock o'erfilled with pride,  
They with the knife my crimson gorge divide,  
I'll press my lips to the wine's gladsome bowl.

76.

I'm not the man, the coming death to fear;  
That half may well brighter than this half be.  
God as a loan my life has given me.  
I'll give it back, when reckoning time draws near.

77.

The sage who on the path of peace doth go  
Is told a hundred times a day, by God:  
“Seek thou the hour of fellowship for lo!  
“The grass you tread, is ne'er by you retrod.”

78.

The matter which this earth of ours contains  
Disturbs the wise man's proud omniscience.  
Hold to — tight if you can — the rope of sense,  
For we have teachers with bewildered brains.

79.

Fortune's offspring, elected from on high,  
Shall come, go, live again, and it, may hap  
That some of them shall live in heaven's lap  
Or in earth's pocket hid, till God shall die.

80.

Some men there be, who quaff pure wine alway;  
Some in prayer's places night-long vigils keep;  
They all in water splash, no, none live dry,  
And if one wakes, the rest are all asleep.

81.

My soul! O let not fools thy feet allure!  
Nor meddle with what can't be understood;  
By circling round the threshold of the poor,  
Thou mayest be accepted of the good.

82.

Your love, has in a net, my old head caught,  
Nor can my hand from wine cup be withdrawn.  
Love the repentance broke which wisdom taught,  
The garment patience sewed, by life is torn.

83.

As I, a solitary hermit passed  
He with contempt struck hard blows at the clay;  
And as it could, I heard it murmuring say: —  
“Withhold! you’ll eat such blows as these at last.”

84.

The month Ram’zan is gone, and Shawàl comes,  
The time of talk and joy and pleasure comes;  
'Tis here and see — bent-backed and stooping low —  
Bearing the wine skin full, the porter comes.

85.

Drink, for thy body in the earth shall dwell,  
And of that dust shall cups and jugs be made;  
Keep thyself free from thoughts of Heaven and Hell;  
The wise man can such cheating words evade.

86.

Spring breezes now to earth new freshness bring,  
From the cloud's eyes the fountains overspring ;  
With Moses' blanching hand the bough is crowned,  
And Jesus' breathing issues from the ground.

87.

Each morning when the dew the lily bathes  
And bends o'er violets on the garden side,  
At least the rosebud does me justice when  
She sees me grasp the robe of selfish pride.

88.

O my dear friends, as oft as ye shall meet,  
Ye must remember me, who your friend was;  
And as in turns you sip wine's pleasure sweet  
When my turn cometh round, o'erturn the glass.

88*a*.

Though wine has torn my honour's veil, 'tis well,  
I will not part from it while life is mine;  
I marvel what the vendors of pure wine  
Can find to buy, better than that they sell.

88*b*.

Those who all grace and morals can explain,  
Who through their perfectness have mastered light,  
No way have found out of this life's dark night;  
Each tells his story and then sleeps again.

89.

Nought can be changed of what was first decreed,  
Grieve as thou wilt, no heart but thine will bleed;  
If thy life long, thine eyes shed tears of blood,  
'T will not increase one drop woe's raging flood.

90.

Drink of that wine which is eternal life,  
It is the spring from which youth's pleasures flow ;  
It burns like fire, yet calms our sorrow's strife,  
Therefore drink wine, it as life's water know.

91.

Circumcise not, all legal rites forgo;  
Withhold from none the morsel that is thine.  
Slander not — seek not man to harm — then know  
I pledge thee heaven to come — and now bring win

92.

Bring ye that ruby in the glass of wit,  
Of the free man the comforter and friend ;  
Bring wine, for know, that dust is this world's end  
In the short days the wind will scatter it.



93.

In the bazaar, I saw but yesterday  
A potter hitting hard at his wet clay;  
And it, as best it could, cried out; "Let be;  
"I was as thou art once, be good to me."

94.

O happy youth arise! 'tis morn, fill up  
From yonder crystal jug the brimming cup;  
For this sweet hour of fleeting time in vain  
We oft shall seek, but never find again.

95.

Yon jar-lid there, all Jamshid's crown is worth,  
That goblet's smell more than full ears of corn,  
The sigh the waking reveller breathes at morn  
Gives more delight than planetary mirth.

96.

Wouldst thou be His? From son and wife be free,  
Yea, boldly close the door on loves most true;  
Existent things are bonds which tether thee.

With bonds how canst thou journey? Cut them through

97.

Arise and salve my dull heart's discontent,  
Bring musky scented, rosy tinted wine;  
As bribe to sorrow, bring the charms divine,  
Wine's ruby and thy hands' soft blandishment.

98.

Wine's the red rose, rose water that we quaff,  
Or ruby pure contained in crystal cup,  
Or ruby in the fountain melted up,  
Or moonlight tinted with the sunlight's laugh.

99.

Each vow we make, at once we break in twain,  
On ourselves shut the gates of rank and fame.  
If we act madly, 'tis—why do you blame?—  
That love's strong wine has made us drunk again.

100.

O heart! 'tis true that all this world is vain,  
Wherefore then eat the fruit of sorrow's tree?  
To fate thy body yield, endure the pain;  
The once split pen will never mend for thee.

101.

Of all the travellers on that weary way  
Has one returned to show us its display?  
Take heed that thou, in this thy dwelling vain,  
Pass nothing by; thou canst not come again.

102.

“Victorious Ruler of this earth’s empire!  
Say Thou, which day wine sets the soul on fire.”  
“From Monday’s dawn, till Sunday’s waning light,  
On each and every day, by day and night.”

103.

It gives me greater joy to speak to Thee  
Of that dark secret in the tavern gay  
Than without Thee in sombre mosque to pray.  
O Thou of all creation First and Last!  
Say wilt Thou burn me at the end of time  
Or be all goodness then to me and mine?

104.

When on the rose’s face the cloud doth rest,  
Deep in my heart is longing for that wine,  
This is no time with sleep to be oppressed,  
Rise loved one, bring the cup, the sun doth shine.

105.

Go then, cast dust on heaven's sapphire stair,  
    Drink wine, love beauty, in this world of men.  
What place for pious deeds? What need for prayer?  
    Of the departed, none comes back again.

106.

Though I have never, in my way through life,  
    Threaded that pearl — obedience to Thy will;  
And though through all the darkest paths of strife  
    I have not sought to find Thy face; — yet still  
I am not hopeless of Thy mercy's dew  
For I have never called the Great One — Two.

107.

Our evil drinking trade we seek anew,  
    At the five lawful hours we praise not God;  
    But you will see us where the wine cups nod  
Stretching our necks like empty skins thereto.

108.

'Tis not a fancy of disordered brains  
But certain truth, that on life's checkered square  
We men are puppets, whose steps God ordains;  
The time is short in which we dally there,  
Then in death's casket one by one we fall,  
The game is played and earth must cover all.

109.

'Tis morn, arise, O source of life's delight,  
Now gently music woo, wine's joy indite;  
For they who dwell here will not long remain,  
And they who go, never return again.

110.

With strong desire my lips the cup's lip sought  
From it the cause of weary life to learn.  
Its lip pressed my lips close and whisperèd:—  
“Drink, in this world no moment can return.”

111.

Fill up the cup, for snow-like falls the day,  
 With wine, wherefrom the rubies red acquire;  
 Hold the two feasts, make glad our company,  
 Of this make music, and of that make fire.

112.

Eed\* comes, and now all will be well  
 For fair as bride's face he,  
 Wine in the jug that Khayam pours  
 Will bright as bird's eye be.  
 Yes, Eed will snatch from asses' heads again  
 Of prayer the bridle and of fast the rein.

113.

Lend me an ear, a warning I give thee,  
 For God's sake do not wear a cloak of lies;  
 Now is but time, the end eternity,  
 Sell not for time, then, the eternal prize.

\* *Eed* = a feast time.

114.

Khayam! Be happy with the wine of love!  
Rejoice each hour with rosy cheek you spend!  
As nothingness of all will be the end,  
What will be nothing, while it *is*, approve.

115.

I passed the potter's shop by yesterday  
Noisy and mute two thousand pots I saw,  
From one of them a sudden shout did rise:—  
“Where's he who makes the pots? Who sells? Who buys?”

116.

By tens my faults, my good deeds singly come,  
Forgive for God's sake actions reprobate;  
With passion's breath fan not the fire of hate;  
Rather forgive all by the Prophet's tomb.



117.

The spirit, which men here call sorrow pure  
By souls thought-laden is named reprobate;  
Say, why should wine as water be misnamed?  
With wine in stony flagons on me wait.

118.

Be just, there's rare life in that lovely wine,  
In the cup's body lives a laughing sprite;  
No heavy one can be a friend of mine,  
Weight solely in the brimming bowl is right.

119.

O Khayam! Fortune scorns the man who mute  
Sits sulking at his share of Being's woes;  
Drink from the crystal cup to sound of lute,  
Ere on a stone the cup to pieces goes.

120.

A soul, all free from earth's defiling cord,  
From yon far world has come to be thy guest;  
Give it rich wine at morn, then, joy — impressed  
All men shall say: "God has His gift restored."

121.

Why all this talk on earth of grief and woe?  
Arise and pass with joy the present hour;  
Since mile by mile the fields with greenness glow,  
From brimming bumpers rosy wine outpour.

122.

Of the eternal past and future why  
Discourse? They pass our understanding's powers;  
Be sure, there's nought like wine in pleasant hours;  
That every knotty tangle can untie.

123.

From deepest heart of earth to Saturn's zone  
To me the great world's mystery was known.  
I leapt out free from bonds of fraud and lies,  
Each knot was loosed, but death's my hand defies.

124.

O whirling wheel! With thee I'm discontent,  
Free me! I am not fit to be thy tool;  
Thou favorest most the unwise and the fool,  
Why not me too? I'm not so sapient.

125.

This heavenly dome, where we distracted dwell,  
Is likest to a magic lantern made;  
The sun the candle and the world the screen,  
And we the images that flit and fade.

126.

Oh, come my love, we'll drink no morrow's fears,  
And count as dear this life's short span of grace:  
To-morrow we may pass from this earth's face  
To journey through those seven thousand years.

127.

How long shall fasts ensnare our vital power?  
In time what's one day, what a hundred years?  
Bring then a bowl of wine, before that hour  
When we as cups shall stand, but potter's wares.

128.

How long deplore man's pitiful estate  
And bear the blandishments of wily fate?  
Rejoice! Thy days have passed their June at last,  
Eed comes! Come thou, draw wine to break our fast!

129.

With passion ever I'm at war,  
What shall I do, what shall I do?  
For actions past I suffer sore,  
What shall I do, what shall I do?  
E'en should'st Thou all my sin wash clean,  
Its stain lasts new, its stain lasts new;  
What I have done, that Thou hast seen,  
What shall I do, what shall I do?

130.

Since we've no dwelling in this world, 'twould be  
A sin of wine and love to be bereft;  
O Saint! Why worry so with old and new?  
What matters old and new when we have left?

131.

Although to come to the dim mosque I yearn,  
I come not, trust me, that I there may pray;  
I stole a praying mat from thence one day,  
It is worn out, and therefore I return.

132.

All kinds of blame I'll bear for love of thee,  
Break I this faith, may I be sorrow's prey;  
If all my life thy tyranny hath sway  
The time from now till doom will quickly flee.

133.

Deceitful I'll be in this world of fraudulent earth,  
And think upon nothing but wine and mirth,  
"God give thee repentance," to me men will say.  
He does not, but did He, I would not obey.

134.

When at death's foot I've fallen in decay,  
When all life's hope is rooted out by pain;  
Take heed, make wine-jugs only of my clay,  
Perchance when full of wine I'll live again.

135.

'Tis morn, and we our breath with wine will wed,  
Our reputation's cup on stone destroy,  
Draw back our hands from life-long hopes of joy,  
And grasp long locks and trailing robes instead.

136.

If I've committed all the sins on earth,  
Still will I hope Thy ruth will take my hand.  
In weakness, aid Thou promised me at birth,  
Weaker than I am now I cannot stand.

137.

Of "Is" and "Is not" I know the outside,  
The inside, too, of human lore possess.  
In this my knowledge yet I take no pride,  
For I know how to value drunkenness.

138.

Art thou discreet, that I may tell to thee  
What man has been since time began to be?  
Woe, pounded and mixed up with sorrow's clay:  
Something of life he tastes, then slips away.

139.

Dearest, arise! 'tis for pure wine I seek  
That ruby colour'd I may make my cheek;  
Fling in my face, though I should sleeping lie,  
That which can give us wisdom's ecstasy.

140.

A corner and two cakes as this world's gain  
I'll choose, from hope of wealth and power refrain;  
I'll purchase poverty with heart and soul,  
For that I see is of true wealth the whole.



141.

In boyhood oft we to our teacher hied,  
In our own wisdom took a joyous pride.  
What was the matter's end? What do we know?  
"As water came we, and as wind we go."

142.

To those who life's true secrets comprehend,  
Joy, sorrow, suffering must be the same;  
As this life's good and bad all find one end,  
What matter if all's pleasure or all pain?

143.

To help the dissolute do all you can,  
The dome of prayer and fast beat down to ground,  
And Khayam's saying hear, for all time sound: —  
"Drink — if must be, steal — but do good to man."

The sore oppressions of that glassy sky  
And fickle fate that favours fools below,  
Have made my cheek a cup brimfull of tears,  
My heart a goblet overfull of woe.









412438

Omar Khayyám  
The Ruba'iyat; tr. by Cadell.

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