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RUBÁIYÁT OF  
OMAR KHAYYÁM  
OF NAISHÁPUR

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# INTRODUCTION.

THE OMAR KHAYYAM CLUB was founded in October, 1892; the intervening years have synchronised with a quite wonderful outburst of interest in the work of Edward FitzGerald. The Club was founded by three friends, George Whale, Frederic Hudson, and the present writer; eight others joined these at Pagani's Restaurant as their guests. One, Arthur Hacker, A.R.A., designed a weird menu: another, William Simpson, told of a visit to the grave of Omar Khayyám at Naishápur: a third, William Watson, wrote two quatrains in honour of the occasion: a fourth, Edward Clodd, recalled his memories of FitzGerald in the flesh: while a fifth member of the party, Justin Huntly McCarthy, was elected President of the Club for its first year. It may be safely said that not one of the eleven had any premonition of the world-wide interest that such a club would excite in the years to come. They deemed it merely an excuse for a pleasant function at which they could hold discourse with one another now & again upon their common liking for a beautiful poem. At the second dinner, however, there was a considerable accession of men of letters and artists including Sir Walter Besant, Augustine Birrell, Walter Crane, Edmund Gosse, J.J. Shannon, Solomon J. Solomon, & Marriott Watson. From that day to this the banquets of the Club have been at-

tended by a succession of well-known men associated with letters and affairs; practically no distinguished writer of our time but has been a member or the guest of a member. At one notable banquet, under Edward Clodd's presidency, George Meredith and Thomas Hardy sat side by side. At another, under Edmund Gosse's chairmanship, might have been seen Lord Wolseley, Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema, Sir Mount-stuart Grant Duff, & indeed a remarkable assembly of famous men. At a further dinner, when Henry Norman was in the chair, John Hay, the American ambassador, read a beautiful little paper. Thus from year to year the Club has carried on its interesting career, & unlike most dining clubs, has shown no diminution of power or popularity. The poems which the Club has inspired would alone have more than justified its existence; Edmund Gosse, William Watson, Austin Dobson, Sir Frederick Pollock, Andrew Lang, Grant Allen, Owen Seaman, William Sharp, Sir George Douglas, are some of the members who have thus embellished the menu card of the Club. But perhaps the culminating point of the Club's merry life has been attained in the issue of this splendid edition of the poem, a reprint of the first edition which Mr. Quaritch brought out in 1859. FitzGerald gave the world four separate versions of his incomparable paraphrase, but one need have no hesitation in accepting the estimate of Mr. Swinburne that "the

first is the only edition worth having." In this connection I cannot do better than print the following letter, written to me to be read at a dinner of the Club at which I had the honour to preside:

"The Pines," Putney Hill, S.W.  
March 4, 1896.

Dear Mr. Shorter,

I am sorry that I must—with many thanks—decline the invitation of the Omar Khayyám Club. As to the immortal tent-maker himself, I believe I may claim to be one of his earliest English believers. It is upwards of thirty-six years since I was introduced to him by D. G. Rossetti, who had just been introduced himself—I believe by Mr. Whitley Stokes. At that time the first and best edition of FitzGerald's wonderful version was being sold off at a penny a copy—having proved hopelessly unsaleable at the published price of a shilling. We invested, I should think, in hardly less than sixpenny-worth apiece—and on returning to the stall next day for more, found that we had sent up the market to the sinfully extravagant sum of twopence—an imposition which evoked from Rossetti a fervent and impressive remonstrance. Not so very long afterwards, if I mistake not, the price of a copy was thirty shillings. It is the only edition worth having—as FitzGerald, like the ass of genius he was, cut out of later editions the crowning stanza which is the core or kernel of the whole.<sup>o</sup> As to the greatness of the poem I can say no more than I have tried to say in print. I know none to be compared with it for power, pathos and beauty, in the same line of thought & work, except possibly Ecclesiastes: and magnificent as that is, I can hardly think the author comparable to Omar either as philosopher or as poet.

Yours very truly, A. C. SWINBURNE.

The poem fell upon stony ground. The age was not yet ready for such an outlook upon life. Now things have changed: & Omar Khayyám is perhaps more widely read to-day than any other poem.

CLEMENT K. SHORTER.

July 19, 1905.

<sup>o</sup>This is quatrain xlv.

## LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE OMAR KHAYYĀM CLUB.

- L. F. Austin, Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.  
J. M. Barrie, Leinster Corner, Hyde Park, W.  
Augustine Birrell, 3 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, W.C.  
Wm. Bligh, Dalestead, Caterham Valley.  
Edward Clodd, 5 Princes Street, E.C.  
Moncure D. Conway, c/o Cassell & Co., Belle Sauvage Yard.  
◦ Rev. E. G. Doughty, Martlesham, near Woodbridge, Suffolk.  
Sir George Douglas, Bart., Springwood Park, Kelso, Scotland.  
Alfred East, A.R.A., 2 Spenser Street, S.W.  
A. Forestier, Lutetia, Alleyn Park, West Dulwich, S.E.  
Edmund Gosse, LL.D., 17 Hanover Terrace, Regent's Park, N.W.  
F. Carruthers Gould, 3 Endsleigh Street, Tavistock Square, W.C.  
◦ Sir W. Brampton Gurdon, K.C.M.G., M.P., Assington, Boxford, Suffolk.  
Arthur Hacker, A.R.A., 7 Cavendish Buildings, Old Cavendish Street, W.  
Anthony Hope Hawkins, 41 Bedford Square, W.C.  
John Henderson, Ingleside, Weybridge.  
Maurice Hewlett, 7 Northwick Terrace, N.W.  
Frederic Hudson, 6 Mincing Lane, E.C.  
Arthur Hutchinson, Howard Hotel, Norfolk Street, Strand, W.C.  
W. W. Jacobs, The Outlook, Upper Park, Loughton.  
Frederick Jameson, Saxonbury Lodge, Frant, Swansea.  
Henry Arthur Jones, 38 Portland Place, W.  
Coulson Kernahan, 16 Norfolk Square, Brighton.  
◦ Capt. W. FitzGerald Kerrich, Jock's Lodge, Beccles, Geldestone.  
◦ Col. E. Kerrick, Denton Lodge, near Harleston.  
Sidney Lee, 108a Lexham Gardens, Kensington, W.  
Rt. Hon. Sir Alfred Lyall, K.C.B., 18 Queen's Gate, S.E.  
Justin H. McCarthy, National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, S.W.  
Henry Newbolt, 23 Earls Terrace, Kensington, W.  
W. Robertson Nicoll, LL.D., Bay Tree Lodge, Frognaal, Hampstead, N.W.  
Henry Norman, M.P., Kitcombe Farm, Alton, Hants.  
Louis N. Parker, 3 Pembroke Road, Kensington, W.  
Max Pemberton, Heathcote, 56 Fitzjohn's Avenue, N.W.  
A. W. Pinero, 14 Hanover Square, W.  
H. G. Plimmer, Queen's House, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, S.W.

- A. T. Rake, 58 Delaney Street, Regent's Park, N.W.  
 James Rhodes, 5 FitzJames's Avenue, Kensington, W.  
 Sir George Robertson, K.C.S.I., 11 Harley House, Harley Street, W.  
 Arthur Ropes, 31 Addison Mansions, Kensington, W.  
 W. Pett Ridge, 24 Amptill Square, N.W.  
 Thomas Seccombe, 8 Churchfield Road, East, Acton, W.  
 William Sharp, Grosvenor Club, Dover Street, W.  
 Owen Seaman, The Tower House, Putney, S.W.  
 Clement Shorter, 16 Marlborough Place, St. John's Wood, N.W.  
 W. B. Slater, 19 Belsize Square, N.W.  
 S. J. Solomon, A.R.A., 60 Finchley Road, N.W.  
 Washington Sullivan, 51 Campden House Court, Kensington, W.  
 Sir W. Thiselton-Dyer, K.C.M.G., Royal Gardens, Kew.  
 John Todhunter, Orchardcroft, Bedford Park, W.  
 Sidney Turner, Stanton, Anerley, S.E.  
 ° Elihu Vedder, 68 Capo de Case, Rome.  
 W. R. Walkes, 33 Campden House Court, Kensington, W.  
 A. B. Walkley, 36 Tavistock Square, W.C.  
 William Watson, G 1, The Albany, W.  
 Theodore Watts-Dunton, 11 The Pines, Putney Hill, S.W.  
 George Whale, 17 Vanbrugh Park, Blackheath, S.E.  
 ° Wilfred Whitten, 31 Carlton Hill, St. John's Wood, N.W.  
 Thomas J. Wise, 23 Downside Crescent, Hampstead, N.W.

° Hon. Members.





RUBAIYAT

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.

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.

Iram indeed is gone with all its Rose,  
And Jamshyd'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 lockt; but in divine  
High-piping Pehlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!  
Red Wine!" the Nightingale cries to the Rose  
That yellow Cheek of hers to incarnadine.


## VII.

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring  
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To fly and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.

## VIII.

And look! a thousand Blossoms with the Day  
Woke and a thousand scatter'd into Clay:  
And this first Summer Month that brings the  
Rose  
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobad away.



IX.

But come with old Khayyam and leave the Lot  
With Kaikobad and Kaikhosru forgot:  
Let Rustum lay about him as he will,  
Or Hatim 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 Sultan scarce is known,  
And pity Sultan Mahmud on his Throne.

XI.

Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,  
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse  and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness   
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

## XII.

“How sweet is mortal Souranty” think some:  
Others “How blest the Paradise to come!”  
Ah, take the Cash in hand and waive the Rest;  
Oh, the brave Music of a distant Drum!

## XIII.

Look to the Rose that blows about us “Lo,  
Laughing,” she says, “into the world I blow;  
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse  
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw.”

## XIV.

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

XV.

And those who husbanded the Golden Grain,  
And those who flung it to the Winds like Rain,  
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd  
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

I sometimes think that never blows so red  
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;  
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears  
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.

XIX.

And this delightful Herb whose tender Green  
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean  
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows  
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!


XX.

Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears  
To-day of past Regrets and future Fears  
To-morrow? Why, To-morrow I may be  
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.


XXI.

Lo! some we loved, the loveliest and the best  
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,  
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

XXII.

And we, that now make merry in the Room  
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,  
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth  
Descend, ourselves to make a Couch  for whom?

XXIII.

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,  
Before we too into the Dust descend;  
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,  
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, &  sans End!

XXIV.

Alike for those who for To-day prepare,  
And those that after a To-morrow stare,  
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries,  
“Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There.”

XXV.

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd  
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust  
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn  
Are scattered, & their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

XXVI.

Oh, come with old Khayyam, and leave the Wise  
To talk; one thing is certain, that Life flies;  
One thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies;  
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

## XXVII.

Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument  
About it and about; but evermore  
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

## XXVIII.

With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,  
And with mine own hand labour'd it to grow;  
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd  
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

## XXIX.

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




XXX.

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

XXXI.

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate  
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,  
And many Knots unravel'd by the Road;  
But not the Knot of Human Death and Fate.

XXXII.

There was a Door to which I found no Key:  
There was a Veil past which I could not see;  
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee  
There seemed  and then no more of Thee & Me.

### XXXIII.

Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,  
Asking, "What Lamp had Destiny to guide  
Her little children stumbling in the Dark?"  
And "A blind Understanding!" Heav'n replied.

### XXXIV.

Then to this earthen Bowl did I adjourn  
My Lip the secret Well of Life to learn:  
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd "While you live  
Drink! for once dead you never shall return."

### XXXV.

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive  
Articulation answer'd, once did live,  
And merry-make; and the cold Lip I kiss'd  
How many Kisses might it take and give!

### XXXVI.

For in the Market-place, one Dusk of Day,  
I watch'd the Potter thumping his wet Clay:  
And with its all obliterated Tongue  
It murmured ☞ "Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

### XXXVII.

Ah, fill the Cup: ☞ what boots it to repeat  
How Time is slipping underneath our Feet:  
Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday,  
Why Fret about them if To-day be sweet!

### XXXVIII.

One Moment in Annihilation's Waste,  
One Moment, of the Well of Life to taste ☞  
The Stars are setting and the Caravan  
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing ☞ Oh, make haste!


### XXXIX.

How long, how long, in definite Pursuit  
Of This and That endeavour and dispute?  
Better be merry with the fruitful Grape  
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.


### XL.

You know, my Friends, how long since in my  
House  
For a new Marriage I did make Carouse;  
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,  
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

### XLI.

For "Is" and "Is-not" though with Rule & Line,  
And "Up-and-down" without, I could define,  
I yet in all I only cared to know,  
Was never deep in anything but  Wine.

XLII.

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,  
Came stealing through the Dusk an Angel Shape  
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and  
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas  the Grape!

XLIII.

The Grape that can with Logic absolute  
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:  
The subtle Alchemists that in a Trice  
Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute.

XLIV.

The mighty Mahmud, the Victorious Lord,  
That all the misbelieving and black Horde  
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul  
Scatters and slays with his enchanted Sword.

## XLV.

But leave the Wise to wrangle, and with me  
The Quarrel of the Universe let be:  
And, in some corner of the Hubbub coucht,  
Make Game of that which makes as much of Thee.

## XLVI.

For in and out, above, about, below,  
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,  
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,  
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

## XLVII.

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,  
End in the Nothing all Things end in ☞ Yes ☞  
Then fancy while Thou art, Thou art but what  
Thou shalt be ☞ Nothing ☞ Thou shalt not be less.

XLVIII.

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

XLIX.

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days  
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays;  
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

L.

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,  
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;  
And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,  
He knows about it all ☉ He knows ☉ He knows!

LI.

The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,  
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a word of it.

LII.

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

LIII.

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man  
knead,  
And then of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:  
Yea, the first Morning of Creation wrote  
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.



LIV.

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

LV.

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

LVI.

And this I know: whether the one True Light  
Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me quite,  
One Glimpse of It within the Tavern caught  
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LVII.

Oh, Thou, who did'st with Pitfall and with Gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with Predestination round  
Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin?

LVIII.

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth did'st make  
And who with Eden did'st devise the Snake;  
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man  
Is blacken'd, Man's Forgiveness give and take!

KUZA NAMA.

LIX.

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

LX.

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

LXI.

Then said another ☞ “Surely not in vain  
My substance from the common Earth was ta'en,  
That He who subtly wrought me into Shape  
Should stamp me back to common Earth again.”

LXII.

Another said ☞ “Why, ne'er a peevish Boy  
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in  
Joy;  
Shall He that made the Vessel in pure Love  
And Fancy, in an after Rage destroy?”

LXIII.

None answer'd this; but after Silence spake  
A Vessel of a more ungainly Make:  
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry;  
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

LXIV.

Said one "Folks of a surly Tapster tell,  
And daub his Visage with the Smoke of Hell;  
They talk of some strict Testing of us Pish!  
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

LXV.

Then said another with a long-drawn Sigh,  
"My Clay with long oblivion is gone dry:  
But, fill me with the old familiar Juice,  
Methinks I might recover by and by."

LXVI.

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,  
One spied the little Crescent all were seeking,  
And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother,  
Brother!  
Hark to the Porter's Shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

LXVII.

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



LXVIII.

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a Snare  
Of Perfume shall fling up into the Air,  
As not a True Believer passing by  
But shall be overtaken unaware.


LXIX.

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

LXX.

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before  
I swore  but was I sober when I swore?  
And then  then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand  
My thread-bare Penitence a pieces tore.

LXXI.

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,  
And robbed me of my Robe of Honour  well,  
I often wonder what the Vintners buy  
One half so precious as the Goods they sell.

LXXII.

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!  
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should  
close!  
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,  
Ah, whence, & whither flown again, who knows?

LXXIII.

Ah, Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire  
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,  
Would not we shatter it to bits and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire?

LXXIV.

Ah, Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane,  
The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again:  
How oft hereafter rising shall she look  
Through this same Garden after me in vain!

LXXV.

And when Thysself with shining Foot shall pass  
Among the Guests star-scatter'd on the Grass,  
And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot  
Where I made one ☉ turn down an empty Glass!

TAMAM SHUD.

HERE ENDS THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR  
KHAYYAM, RENDERED INTO ENGLISH  
VERSE BY EDWARD FITZGERALD, AND  
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WHOM IS ALSO THE FRONTISPIECE.





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This is No. 69

















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