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# THE TRUE
# OMAR KHAYYÁM

by

J. E. C.

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they were of old, for the sympathy and protection afforded of late to the Christians of Turkey by the European powers have only exacerbated their hatred of them. Not a Mussulman beggar meets a non-Mussulman householder in the towns of Asiatic Turkey without taking 'le haut du pavé,' and making him walk in the gutter. It is true that a Christian or Jewish householder may be a member of one of the provincial councils, all of which have had for many years the illusory semblance of being composed of mixed elements; but he is nevertheless contemptuously ordered to sign their decrees, even when the purport of those decrees is prejudicial to the legitimate interests of the non-Mussulman classes of the population. The Turk is thus the lord of creation, and the Christian and Jew are his retainers. His Mussulman faith is a religion of pride, requiring no aliment, but living on itself, and that pride must be abased before any reform growing out of the Christian doctrine of equality can be successfully introduced. Like the haughty exclusiveness of the Jewish polity of old, the insolent usurpation of superiority by Islamism must ultimately cause its own downfall; but the time may not yet have come for such a sweeping change in the Turkish domination in Western Asia, and the means of producing it, though they have certainly now been called into existence, may not have reached that degree of maturity which is necessary for its completion, if violent convulsions are to be avoided in effecting it.

Notwithstanding the danger, however, that amicable relations might suffer by our insistance, and that serious disturbances might be produced in the country by compliance with it, still the only advisable course for England to follow with regard to Asiatic Turkey, if the Anglo-Turkish Convention is to become more than a dead letter, must be to merge her chivalrous courtesy into a stern declaration that her counsels will be enforced in the event of their being disregarded.' The Porte, having seen the deplorable excesses of the Turks in the late war glossed over and palliated in England, may have conceived, by dint of impunity, the erroneous notion that England will assume no other tone, whatever ultimate answer may be given to her advice; and, if the negotiations regarding the application of reforms to the Asiatic provinces are not carried on by England in a manner proving that no more trifling with the subject will be allowed, it will soon become evident that only one alternative will remain open to her, namely, the repudiation of the responsibilities assumed by her in the Anglo-Turkish Convention. Those responsibilities having been very properly made conditional on the application of reforms, such a conclusion of the question would be perfectly justifiable in itself; and it would be less unsatisfactory than to go on receiving vacuous assurances of the fulfilment of a condition which is opposed by too many obstacles to admit the probability, or even the possibility, of its being fully realised under the Turkish domination in Western Asia.

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# THE TRUE OMAR KHAYAM.

[by J. E. C.]

THAT we have heard a good deal of late about Omar Khayam is not due, we fear, to any increase in the number of Persian scholars, but to the fact that the existing translation harmonises with a special phase of modern thought. It has been much read, and notices of it have appeared in different places, of which the earliest was one in *Fraser's Magazine* for June 1870. 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 for the infusion of a modern element, which we believe to exist in the Persian only in the sense in which the deepest questions of human 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 points have less attraction for those who, knowing Khayam in the original, have learnt to value him for himself.

It is true that there are obscurities in the Persian, but they are in great part technical difficulties, natural enough in a work handed down for nearly eight centuries in manuscript, and which has been interpolated, imitated, and borrowed from to a truly marvellous extent. It is not always easy to know exactly what Khayam has said: but that known, there is not much difficulty in seeing what he means.

The position of Khayam among Persian poets is peculiar. Von Hammer speaks of him as 'one of the most notable of Persian poets, unique in the irreligious tone of his verses.' He died about a hundred years after Firdusi, and with him, according to the authority above quoted, closes the period of 'primitive purity in Persian verse.' He may be said to stand midway between the age of Firdusi, and that of the great Sufi poets. He still writes the pure simple Persian of the former, but he gives us no narrative poetry, and occupies himself with the problems of life and death, sin and fate, past, present, and future, which, dealt with unsatisfactorily to Persian minds by Mohammedan theology, gave rise to the mysticism of Attar, Jelal-ud-din Rumi and Sáadi. He is the sole representative of the age of free thought, which is said to be everywhere the forerunner of mysticism Though he is certainly not orthodox, he seems to us more of a doubter than a disbeliever. He questions, mocks, and rebels, but produces nothing positive of his own. However, we are not in a position to say even this with certainty. He wrote very little, and that little has been so mixed up with later additions as to be difficult

to recognise. What we feel most sure of, reads like the product of leisure hours: his moods vary, he is not always consistent; he will say the same thing in two or three shapes, or will contradict himself in quatrains which we cannot help believing to be genuine if there ever existed a Khayam. And though not much is known of his life, there is quite enough to establish his identity. He was an astronomer and mathematician, and his school-boy connection with Nizam ul Mulk, and Hasan ibn Sabbah, gave him a place in history. The *Calcutta Review* of March 1858 tells us all that is known of his life, which is repeated in Mr. Fitzgerald's preface: but his fame, which extends wherever Persian is read, rests on his poetry.

This consists only of rubáis, i.e. four-line stanzas or quatrains, from the Arabic numeral '*arba*,' four. There are great numbers of these current under his name, of which there seems no doubt that the larger portion are spurious. We have collected 1,040 of them from the material within our reach. The MS. copies are rare, both in Europe and the East, though some of the older MSS. are so short that they could be transcribed in a few hours by an apt penman. Still they are not as rare as Mr. Fitzgerald seems to consider. We have seen eleven MS. copies, of which seven are in England and four in Paris. Then there is M. Nicholas's edition of his text, published in Paris, 1868. Of these collections the smallest contains 158 rubáis, the largest 516. Some of the rubáis are mere paraphrases one of another, and some, not many, are repetitions; but after all possible weeding has been done, there will remain at least a thousand which we have collected from these MSS., and a few minor sources, claiming to be the work of Khayam. The opinion of those best qualified to judge would place the number of undoubtedly genuine quatrains at about 250 to 300. The copyists seem to have been calmly indifferent as to true or false readings. Helped very much by the fame of this particular poet, this has been for ages the common form of epigram in the East; and rubáis, scored by an imitator on the margin of one copy, have been included in the text of the next; or the copyist, if something of a poet, has thought well enough of work of his own as to give it the chance of immortality under the famous name. By some processes of this kind extraneous matter has been lent wholesale to Khayam, till the original is in danger of being lost in the mass of additions. On the other hand, we find rubáis previously known to us as Khayam's in the works of well-known poets, such as Hafiz (in Brockhaus's careful edition), Anwari, Sulman Savah Sáadi, and, above all, a mysterious person named Afzul Kashi, who in style and mode of thought has very much in common with Khayam.

Besides manuscript evidence, the tests most to be trusted are simplicity of language, perfection in rhythm and sound, and epigrammatic completeness. Khayam was a clear-headed person, and master of his own language in its best days, and we may discard rubáis at once when there is looseness of grip in the thought. We do not believe he wrote the following:

> Until the loved one gives me the soul-entrancing wine,
> The heavens will shower no kisses upon my head and feet.
> They tell me to repent, when repentance's hour shall come:
> If God Himself command it not, be sure I'll not repent.

Here the first two lines refer to divine ecstasy, and the last two are derived from a saying of Khayam,

which we find in other places, that the command to repent and renounce wine, evil, or whatever it may be, must come from the God who made him and his fallible nature.

Each rubái is complete in itself, and has no connection with what goes before or follows after. The first three lines introduce the subject, and the fourth is thus described by Mirza Sáib: 'The last line of a rubái drives the nail through the heart.' They are arranged by the terminal letters of the rhyming word or phrase: all those ending in *a* are classed together, and followed by those in *b*. It occasionally happens that succeeding verses take up the same subject, but this is rare, and one is never a continuation of the other. We quote two from M. Nicholas:

227.

They have gone, and of the gone no one comes back
From behind the secret veil, to bring you word
That matter will be opened to your need, not prayers:
For what is prayer without faith and earnest longing?

228.

Go, thou, cast dust on the heaven above us,
Drink ye wine, and beauty seek to-day!
What use in adoration? What need for prayer?
For of all the gone no one comes back again.

Here we have in the latter verse something very like a contradiction of the former, certainly written in a different mood, possibly by another hand. It is the last which has the genuine Khayam flavour.

Mr. Fitzgerald's No. 69 (of the 1872 edition):

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—

is rather the expression of an idea found in many rubáis than the translation of any one, and it lacks the point. It would be easy enough to put 'the door of darkness' into Persian, but we have not found it there. Khayam does not stop to wonder, but he does make some practical suggestions. He says in many shapes, 'While you live enjoy all that is.' The following, which is as close as any to Mr. Fitzgerald, may be taken as a specimen of the rest:

Of all the trav'llers on that weary road,
Where's one returned to bring us news of it?
Take heed that here, in feigned goodness, you
Pass nothing pleasant by—you'll not come back.

More interesting than parallels of this kind may be an examination of what we have found in Khayam, with occasional references to Mr. Fitzgerald. Our translations are as near as possible literal, and come from what we believe to be the best reading of the given rubái. We have not followed any one MS.

The leading ideas are pleasure, death, and fate, and his predominant states of mind are the sensuous, the gruesome, and the rebellious. 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, nor questions the reality of sorrow any more than that of death. He can feel strongly the charms of nature:

The day is sweet, its air not cold nor hot,
From the garden's cheek the clouds have washed the dew;
The bulbul softly to the yellow rose
Makes his lament, and says that we must drink.

Again:

The new day's breath is sweet on the face of the rose:
A lovely face among the orchards too is sweet;
But all your talk of yesterday is only sad.
Be glad, leave yesterday, to-day's so sweet.

This is on spring time:

To-day, when gladness overpowers the earth,
Each living heart towards the desert turns;
On every branch shine Moses' hands to-day,
In every loud breath breathes Jesus' soul.

Of these allusions, the hand of Moses signifies the white blossoms of spring, and the soul or breath of Jesus is His power of giving life to the dead—the shape taken in Persian by all metaphorical allusions to our Lord.

We find in the Persian other two variations of this; but we think it the best, and Mr. Fitzgerald has used it in the fourth of his stanzas:

Now the New Year, reviving old desires,
The thoughtful soul to solitude retires
When the white hand of Moses on the bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the ground suspires.

Here is another kind of pleasure:

Drink wine, for it is everlasting life;
It is the very harvest of our youth
In time of roses, wine, and giddy friends.
Be happy, drink, for that is life indeed.

Of the love verses of the collection the following are specimens:

When my heart caught thy fragrance on the breeze,
It left me straight and followed after thee.
Its sad master it no more remembers.
Once loving thee, thy nature it partakes.

Each drop of blood which trickles from mine eye
Will cause a tulip to spring freshly up,
And the heart-sick lover, seeing that,
Will get hope of thy good faith.

For love of thee I'll bear all kinds of blame,
Be woe on me if I should break this faith.
If all life long thy tyranny holds good,
Short will the time from now to judgment be.

Love which is feigned has no lustre;
Like a half-dead fire it burns not:
Nights, days, months, years, to the lover
Bring him no rest or peace, no food or sleep.

Both of these last might be claimed by those who hold the mystic interpretation of Omar's wine and love as proof of their theory. He certainly wrote little about love. His sense of the beauty of nature is marred perpetually by the thought of the death and decay in store for all.

See the morning breeze has torn the garment of the rose.
With its loveliness the nightingale is wildly glad.
Sit in the rose's shade, but know, that many roses,
Fair as this is, have fallen on earth and mixed with it.

Another in much the same mood:

The cloud's veil rests on the rose's face still,
Deep in my heart is longing for that wine.
Sleep ye not yet, this is no time for sleep.
Give wine, beloved, for there's sunshine still.

Wine is the favourite theme; we get wearied with the constant recurrence of the praise of wine, and with exhortations to drink and be drunken, through hundreds of musical lines; till at last, 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. We have heard much of those of Harun-al-Rashid and the Barmakides, and we learn that such parties owed great part of their charm to music and song, witty talk, and sparkling verse. 'Vers de société' were then, and have always been, a

rage in Oriental good society. 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 these idolising the pleasure which seemed so fertile as a metaphor for the rest. This seems to us to account for a great deal of Khayam's wine. Still there are some good quatrains which seem undeniably mystic, and modern explanations given in the East point that way. But we do not believe that Khayam habitually used his own language in the strained and artificial sense of the great Sufi writers. We believe that, in as far as he was mystic, he was so at first hand, and was certainly much else into the bargain. We find the more mystic verses are generally those of least authority, and most of the genuine verses on wine are explicable on the hypothesis that it means social enjoyment. The reiterated 'Drink, you will sleep in the dust,' seems to show that the wine was something practical. 'Drink, the past day comes not back again;' 'time will not return on its steps;' 'other moons will rise;' 'no one stays or returns,' all this would be without point if the wine were some draught of love, or longing for the divine which might be enjoyed equally in any stage of being. The same may be said for the following: 'I am the slave of that coming moment when the Saki says, "Take another cup," and I shall not be able.' This moment is the hour of death, putting an end to human pleasure in whatever shape our poet cared most for it.

Khayam's view of death is coloured by a strong dash of materialism; whatever he may think, he talks of nothing but the death of the body—a kind of materialism common enough in Eastern thought, and which even its mystics never escape. In pious biography no spiritual grace is ever conferred without its visible sign—a fragment of dirty paper on which is inscribed the name of God, a piece of roast fowl from a master's mouth, a praying mat, a well-worn blanket—such are the media by which the highest spiritual graces reach the soul of man. No wonder that there should be confusion between seen and unseen; that Eastern mysticism is open to all sorts of interpretation, and that a shrewd, many-sided doubter like Khayam has been classed as a mystic while contemplating death mainly from the gruesome side of bodily corruption and decay.

He refers again and again to burial, the washing of the body, the making of the bier, the loosening of joints, the separation of the members, the mixing with earth, and the return to the elements—being used in the course of time by the builder and the potter to build walls, porticos, and palaces, to make jars, jugs, and pots: the future he contemplates with most complacency is that of returning to his old haunts and old friends in the form of a wine jug, when he is sure the wine will revive some sort of life in him. The grievance to him of death is not the dim future for his soul, but rather the leaving of pleasant things in his mouth and by his side. When he thinks of the future, death is no trouble to him:

I am not the man to fear to pass away,
That half to me better than this half seems;
God as a loan my life has given me;
I'll give it back when payment time shall come.

And another, which Mr Fitzgerald's readers will recognise:

In the sphere's circle, far in unseen depths,
Is a cup which to all is given in turn;
Sigh ye not then, when it to thy turn comes,
Its wine drink gladly, for 'tis time to drink.

Of these, the first is certainly genuine, the second doubtful. But there is very little of this strain in proportion to the talk about the decay of the body and its afterwards serving natural purposes:

Wherever there is a garden of tulips or roses,
Know that they grow from the red blood of kings;
And every violet tuft which is springing
From earth, was once a mole on some fair cheek.

Or this:

As I mused in the workshop of the potter
I saw the master standing by his wheel;
Boldly he made covers and handles for his jars
From the head of the king or the foot of the beggar.

The following is found in every MS. we have seen:

To the potter's shop yesterday I went,
Noisy or mute, two thousand pots I saw,
There came a sudden shout from one of them—
'Where is the potter, the seller, the buyer of pots?'

We would draw the reader's attention to stanzas 82, 83 and 87 of Mr. Fitzgerald's translation, for which this one rubái, beat out thin and otherwise freely dealt with, has served as foundation. We have so far seen no other rubái we could connect with Mr. Fitzgerald's from 82 to 88 inclusive.

As another specimen of the way the translation has been made we quote two beautiful stanzas on this part of the subject—death and the future—though they have less to do with it in the Persian than in the English:

66.

I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some letter of that after life to spell,
And by-and-bye my soul returned to me,
And answered—I myself am heaven and hell.

67.

Heaven's but the bosom of fulfilled desire,
And hell the shadow of a soul on fire,
Lost in the darkness into which ourselves,
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

No. 66 is found in all the oldest MSS. we have seen in this shape:

On the first day, my heart above the spheres
Was seeking pen and tablet, hell and heaven,
Till the right-thinking master said at last,
'Pen, tablet, heaven and hell are with thee.'

No. 67 is also undoubtedly genuine, and, in its Persian form, found in every copy we have seen, with one exception:

The universe is a girdle for our worn bodies,
The Oxus but a trace of our blood-stained tears;
Hell is a spark from our senseless sorrow,
And heaven a breath from a moment of ease.

These translations are absolutely literal. We feel dissatisfied with Mr. Fitzgerald's verses, fine as they are, for in them we get some ideas the Persian lines do not contain, and lose many that they do.

The shadow on the darkness from which we have come and to which we shall return, we seem to have met with somewhere, but not in Khayam. We lose the 'right-thinking master,' who is a striking feature in the Persian in the one rubái, and in the other we lose the stupendous claim the Persian poet is making, as well as the peculiar beauty of what he has to say of heaven and hell.

After this we shall not expect much deference from Khayam to the religious system in which he had been educated, nor much recognition of eternal consequences to follow the keeping or breaking Mohammedan laws; what we wonder at is the heed he seems to take to them after all, and the presence of a rueful semi-penitent strain in some very authentic verses. 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. Hence what we have said about Fate. One of his main

ideas is Fate's cruelty, and his most frequent state of mind the rebellious. This is his originality; others have moaned and lamented, he attacks, and boldly. Fate is immutable; he says:

Long, long ago, what is to be was fixed,
The pen rests ever now from good and bad;
That must be, which He fixed immutably,
And senseless is our grief and striving here.

In a cruder form, 'whether you drink or not, if you are bound for hell you will not enter heaven.' Fate appears commonly under the title of the 'wheel of heaven,' and the doings of the wheel are very unsatisfactory:

This tyrannous wheel which is set on high
Has never loosed hard knots for any man,
And when it sees a heart which bears a scar,
It adds another scar to that sore place.

Again:

Never has a day been prosperous to me;
Never has a breath blown sweetly towards me;
And never was my breath drawn in with joy,
But the same day my hand was filled with grief.

But we doubt the authenticity of these; beside manuscript argument the tone is too much of a lament. Khayam prefers to accuse the wheel of being 'ungrateful, unfaithful, and unkindly.' In the following he deprecates its ill will in a whimsical style, of which we have other specimens:

O wheel, I am not content with thy turnings;
Free me, I am not fit to be thy slave.
The fool and the unwise you favour most;
Why not me too? I am not over-wise.

Fate favours fools, it is indifferent to the sighs of its victims, it rubs salt on wounds, it adds sore to sore, it delights in ruthlessly cutting short the moment when, by help of wine or love, a man has drawn in his breath in ease 'that breath returns not.' It is fertile in devices to cause and prolong suffering in life, and ever holds death as a final blow over every head—the one certainty amid the changing possibilities of both worlds.

About the origin of things, the only fact of which Khayam is quite sure is that they were not made to please him.

About existence, O friend, why fret thee?
And weary soul and heart with senseless thought?
Enjoy it all, pass gaily through the world:
They took no counsel with thee at the first.

Far better it would have been not to have come at all. 'If those who have not come only knew what we endure from life, they would stay away.' Again, 'We come with anguish, we live in astonishment, we go with pain, and we know not the use of this coming, being, and going.' Stronger even than the above is the following:

If coming had been of myself, I'd not have come,
Or, if going was of myself, I would not go;
But, best of all if in this world of earth
Were no coming, no being, no going.

He is sad enough, and we know of no outward cause for his sadness. When he speaks of his favourite wine, he says, 'Slander it not, it is not bitter: the bitterness is that of my life.' Though many of the moaning rubáis are interpolations (Khayam's style was rather bold than plaintive), it is he who cries out: 'Oh, oh, for that heart in which there is no burning!' and, 'As mine eyes are never without tears, I must either die or sorrow will overwhelm me.'

After this we must either suspect him of being sad for sheer idleness, or believe that he was oppressed by the awfulness and weariness of life and its mystery of evil to the extent of real suffering. His longings towards good were real and sincere; but meeting with death and sin, and making no more of them than other men, he was, perhaps, the readier to despair that he had put his estimate of the good in life very low. The pleasant thing he sings of could not help him

much in lessening the pains of doubt, or in softening his discontent at the hypocrisy and wrong about him. He says:

Of the eternal secret none has loosed the knot,
Nor trod one single step outside himself.
I look from the pupil to the master.
And each one born of woman helpless see.

From deepest heart of earth to Saturn's height
I solved all problems of the universe;
I leapt out free from bonds of fraud and lies,
Yea, every knot was loosed but that of Death.

Of the eternal past and future, why
Discourse? they pass our powers of wit and will;
There's nought like wine in pleasant hours, be sure:
Of every tangle it doth loose the knots.

This last has the mocking tone in which he scouted at the learned of his day who chose to discourse of the past and future, of which they knew so very little. They might not unfairly retort that his wine and cupbearer had not saved him from the sorrows of life. However, he mocks on: it is his pleasure. He mocks at believers and unbelievers, priests and mystics; and when he comes to moral responsibility, he mocks at the God in whom he believes, as it were, in spite of himself. In the following quatrain he mocks at the Moslem Paradise:

They tell us in heaven that houris will be,
And also honey, sugar, and pure wine;
Fill then the wine cup and place it in my hand,
For better is one coin than boundless credit.

Here he uses the promise of the Koran as an excuse:

We hear of houris in heaven and fountains
That will run with honey and pure wine:
If here we worship these, what is the harm,
Since at the end of time we meet the same?

It is no inanimate wheel of heaven which is ultimately responsible for his sorrow, for he says, 'Do not accuse the wheel of causing joy and sorrow, good and evil, for verily it is more helpless than you are,' and he holds the Creator responsible for evil as for the rest.

Some God has fashioned thus my body's clay;
He must have known the acts I should perform:
No sin of mine but comes from laws of his:
What reason then for burning fires at last?

He asks what is evil? what is sin? The law taught him that some things were permitted, some forbidden; and he asks why? What is it that makes this action right and that wrong, when there is not much to choose between them, and when towards both he has the same strong natural desire, which after all seems so much more like a Divine command than the capricious utterances of the Mollahs. Still sin exists; he can but rebel; he can conquer nothing, not even peace of mind. He says:

Abstain then from impossible commands.
How can the soul triumph o'er the body?
Wine is my sin, but so is abstinence forbidden.
To sum all up, he says, 'Hold the cup awry, and spill it not.'

What are we that he should speak evil of us,
And make a hundred of each one of our faults?
We are but his mirrors, and what he sees in us
And calls good or evil that sees he in himself.

After this we can at least understand how it came to pass that Khayam was very miserable. We must now quote Mr. Fitzgerald:

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 creatures be repaid
Pure gold for what he lent us dross-allay'd,
Sue for a debt we 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 e'en with Paradise devise the snake,
For all the sin wherewith the face of man
Is blacken'd, man's forgiveness give, and take!

Rebellious as Khayam certainly was, we do not think he went as far as this. Mr. Fitzgerald's stanzas 78, 79 are a free rendering of various things scattered through the Persian, which hardly have quite the same meaning in their own places, those we have recently quoted being the nearest we know to them. Khayam has at least the grace to be miserable, not jaunty, when he says: 'We are helpless: thou hast made us what we are—we sin—and suffer profoundly, but do not see any way out of it.' For the 80th we find the following:

In my path in many places thou layest snares,
Saying, I will take thee if thou put foot in one.
No least atom of the world is empty of thy law;
I but obey that law, and thou callest me a sinner.

We think the 81st is a misconception of the meaning of a Persian line. We speak under correction, for the readings of the various MSS. differ so greatly that this may be a translation of something we do not know; but we doubt it, as we seem to have the material of which the most important line was compounded.

We remember several quatrains on repentance. One is as follows:

As this world is false, I'll be nothing else.
And only remember pleasure and bright wine:
To me they say, May God give thee repentance!
He does it not; but did He, I would not obey.

Here we have the Mohammedan notion of repentance as the gift of God, and such repentance is strong on the practical side of the renunciation of evil. Khayam speaks of repentance as something outside him, but often adds that he would rebel against it if it were given him. Another on the same subject:

May there be wine in my hand for ever,
And ever love of beauty in my head.
To me they say, May God give thee repentance!
Say He gives it, I'll not do it, far be it from me.

The following is, we think, where Mr. Fitzgerald has got his line about forgiveness. We have no notion where the snake, Paradise, and blackened face may come from, they are not unlikely allusions, but we do not know them:

Oh Thou, knower of the secret thoughts of every man,
Thou in the time of weakness the helper of every man,
O God, give me repentance and accept the excuse I bring,
O giver of repentance and receiver of the excuses of every man!

This last line Mr. Fitzgerald seems to have read—

O repent ye and excuse thyself to every man—

a sense which we believe the Persian will not naturally convey; but we again remark that Mr. Fitzgerald may have had another quatrain or another reading of this. Khayam was bold enough at times, but we do not think he reached the point of offering forgiveness to God for man's sins. What we have just quoted is nct bold at all, being evidently a prayer for a better mind. Its authenticity is doubtful, however. The following is a more trustworthy expression of Khayam's better mood:

Ever at war with passion am I. What can I do?
Ever in pain for my actions I am. What can I do?

True thou may'st pardon all the sin, but for the shame
That thou hast seen what I have done, what can I do?

Another:

Though I've ne'er threaded thy obedience's pearl,
And though through sin I have not sought thy face,
Still of thy mercy hopeless am I not,
For I have never called the great One two.

Here he hopes for mercy, spite of sin, because he has never attacked the unity of God.

Of course, in such a collection, much stress cannot be laid upon one or two quatrains, but there is much else to justify us in holding that our poet was not without some faith in God and duty. 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. Finally, though we have at times disagreed with Mr. Fitzgerald in reading Khayam, we are not much the less grateful for his poem and the introduction.

J. E. C.

# THE DARK SIDE OF A BRIGHT PICTURE.

By a Colorado Settler.

A BRIGHT sunny picture of this land of colours appeared in your pages a few months since, descriptive of her gentler and more inviting moods; but Colorado, like every other country, has a darker side; there are thunder-storms as well as sunshine; waterspouts and hurricanes as well as spotless skies of ethereal blue.

A few facts from my own experience will quickly open your readers' eyes to some of the drawbacks of the country, and those who desire to form an impartial judgment will be able to see both sides of their subject. We had a long talk about it a few evenings since at Charpiot's, myself and two friends, D. and C., the latter of whom is on the point of leaving for England in disgust. You shall hear the story told, just as we three Englishmen discussed it over our dinner at Denver.

'So you are really going back to England, C.?'

'Most decidedly,' he replied, 'as soon as I can get even a moderate price for my ranches.'

'Not much money about,' observed D.

'Money!' replied C., 'not a dollar, I do believe. Tax-time came only the other day, the dollars have gone East, as they always do: those Yankees take good care of that. An ingenious piece of mechanism is this Government for robbing the people. The party that rules is determined to know nothing but dollars. Nothing like a huge sum of cash to handle. When America took to selling State-lands men suspected what it would come to. But when they undertake to pay off a monstrous National Debt in a generation— Faugh! the trick is too thin—the rascality too transparent. There's no public spirit in this country; men are but foolish and ignorant dupes of patriotic charlatans and hypocritical swindlers.'

'Halloa! why, C., when did you acquire this bombastic slang? I shall see you yet stumping it.'

'It would have made Job a carpet-bagger had he passed three years in this country, such three years as I have,' answered C. 'My own school-fellow drew the stocking over my eyes. I knew him when he was himself as true a piece of metal as ever rang. But he bought a ranch with my money from which no one ever got a dollar before or since. The purchase, no doubt, brought several hundreds to him; to me it brought nothing but vexation and disquiet. Had not my poor little wards clung round my neck I would have gone back home by the next train. I did make the attempt. The words of an intelligent person, whom I met in the train on the Rio Grande railway, are always sounding in my ears. "You'll go back, sir, you'll go back." I have almost turned guinea-fowl from the constant recurrence of those ominous words to my mind. I suggest that useful bird as the crest of the new State—the Centennial—a guinea-hen.'

'You look well, C.,' interposed D. 'You look, I should say, ten years younger than when you came. The climate, sir, is splendid. Give me six months on the Divide or in the mountains, and six months at Denver or Colorado springs; I say there is no such climate in the world. You are always in health and spirits; the children rude and boisterous from too great vitality.