

OMAR IN WRITING.

THE PIRATE OF THE RUBAIYAT INTERVIEWED.

Special to the Leader.

In a quaint little bookshop at the tail-end of one of the busiest thoroughfares in Leicester I found the writer of the manuscript edition of Omar Khayyam's famous Rubaiyat (writes a correspondent of *The Morning Leader*). He is a white-haired, blue-eyed, bent, and feeble little man in Mr. Holyoak.

"It was in March, 1876," he said, "that I first saw some 30 or 40 verses of Omar Khayyam's work. They were printed in the *Contemporary Review*, and began at the twenty-seventh verse:

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 wherea I went.

"The beautiful words made a great impression on me, and filled me with enthusiasm to possess the complete work. The price, however,—a guinea for a single copy—was altogether beyond my means. One day I casually mentioned to a friend at Brighton the great desire I had to read the book, and to my delight he said he had Quaritch's edition, published in 1872, and would lend it me.

Filled with Enthusiasm.

"I shall never forget the pleasure I experienced in reading the hundred odd verses. Indeed it was my enthusiasm for the beauty of the poet's song that led me to copy it.

"First of all, I wrote 100 copies and gave them away, and in consequence of the demand that followed I determined to charge two pence per copy, and later one shilling. It was at the latter price that I sold copies up to a few weeks ago."

"And how many have you sold?" I asked.

"I cannot say. I would if I could, for the solicitors acting for the owners of the copyright asked the same question. I wrote copies at my leisure, as the title page of the last few indicates—'An Octogenarian's Recreation.'"

Infringing the Copyright.

"And you have not a copy of your MS. edition left?"

"Oh, yes; but not for sale. Here is one of six copies I kept as a reminder of my work. The other 52 I had in stock have been returned to Messrs. Macmillan and Company."

Going to a shelf, Mr. Holyoak brought me a neatly cyclostyled little book—one of the remaining six copies retained as a reminder of many happy hours spent over the words of Omar Khayyam.

"When did you first hear," I asked, "that you were doing wrong in selling this book?"

He brought me a large diary, and at the page for 21 March was correspondence that had passed between him and the solicitors acting for Messrs. Macmillan and Company. Their letter read:

Sir,—The attention of our clients, Messrs. Macmillan and Company, Limited, has been brought to a pirated edition of the "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam," issued by you. The copyright of the book is a valuable one, and belongs to our clients, and we must ask you, by return of post, to give an undertaking to issue no more copies of your pirated edition; and also to send an account of all copies sold with the amount received therefrom, in default of which we shall, on Thursday next, apply for an injunction and action against you without further notice.

The next day Mr. Holyoak replied that what wrong he had done was unintentional, and he offered to send Messrs. Macmillan the unsold copies.

All But Six.

"To cut a long story short," remarked the little man, "52 copies were sent back, the whole of my stock with the exception of six."

"Why keep six?" I asked.

"Because I could not bear the thought of parting with every copy of a little book I had learned to love with deep affection, so I put in the agreement sent me to sign, and asking for the return of the whole of the books, 'save and excepting six copies, which I retain as a reminder of my work.'"