
**Rubáiyát of Omar
Khayyám, the
astronomer-poet of
Persia**

Newton A Edward

Title: Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, the astronomer-poet of Persia

Author: Newton A Edward

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RUBÁIYÁT
OF
OMAR KHAYYÁM,

THE ASTRONOMER-POET OF PERSIA.

Translated into English Verse.

LONDON:
BERNARD QUARITCH,
CASTLE STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.
1859.





*Facsimile of the First Edition of FitzGerald's
Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

One Spring day in 1856 Edward B. Cowell discovered in the Bodleian library at Oxford a manuscript containing 158 quatrains of Omar Khayyam which he transcribed and sent to his friend and pupil Edward FitzGerald. Later Cowell sent him from India a transcript of the so-called Calcutta manuscript. In 1857 FitzGerald completed his first draft of the poem and in January, 1858, sent it to Fraser's Magazine. After many months, in January, 1859, FitzGerald recovered his neglected manuscript and made a re-draft of the poem, which he printed privately in an edition of 250 copies, most of which he gave to Quaritch, who had ill success in disposing of them, and the remainder were sold from a clearance box at a penny each.

Since the appearance of this modest book more than two million copies have been sold in over two hundred editions, and it has been translated into almost all the tongues of modern Europe, as well as into Greek and Latin.

A soiled and penciled copy of the rare original would readily bring \$300, while an uncut copy is *priceless*.

This facsimile is made from the fine copy owned by Charles Dana Burrage, to whose interest and courtesy Omarians owe so much.

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OMAR KHAYYÁM,

THE

ASTRONOMER-POET OF PERSIA.

OMAR KHAYYÁM was born at Naishápúr in Khorassán in the latter half of our Eleventh, and died within the First Quarter of our Twelfth, Century. The slender Story of his Life is curiously twined about that of two others very considerable Figures in their Time and Country : one of them, Hasan al Sabbáh, whose very Name has lengthen'd down to us as a terrible Synonym for Murder : and the other (who also tells the Story of all Three) Nizám al Mulk, Vizyr to Alp the Lion and Malik Shah, Son and Grandson of Toghrul Beg the Tartar, who had wrested Persia from the feeble Successor of Mahmúd the Great, and founded that Seljukian Dynasty which finally roused Europe into the Crusades. This Nizám al Mulk, in his *Wasýat*—or *Testament*—which he wrote and left as a Memorial for future Statesmen—relates the following, as quoted in the Calcutta Review, No. 59, from Mirkhond's History of the Assassins.

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" ' One of the greatest of the wise men of Khorassan was
 ' the Imám Mowaffak of Naishápur, a man highly honoured
 ' and revered,—may God rejoice his soul; his illustrious
 ' years exceeded eighty-five, and it was the universal belief
 ' that every boy who read the Koran or studied the tradi-
 ' tions in his presence, would assuredly attain to honour and
 ' happiness. For this cause did my father send me from
 ' Tús to Naishápur with Abd-u-samad, the doctor of law,
 ' that I might employ myself in study and learning under
 ' the guidance of that illustrious teacher. Towards me he
 ' ever turned an eye of favour and kindness, and as his pupil
 ' I felt for him extreme affection and devotion, so that I
 ' passed four years in his service. When I first came there,
 ' I found two other pupils of mine own age newly arrived,
 ' Hakim Omar Khayyám, and the ill-fated Ben Sabbáh.
 ' Both were endowed with sharpness of wit and the highest
 ' natural powers; and we three formed a close friendship
 ' together. When the Imám rose from his lectures, they
 ' used to join me, and we repeated to each other the lessons
 ' we had heard. Now Omar was a native of Naishápur,
 ' while Hasan Ben Sabbah's father was one Ali, a man of
 ' austere life and practice, but heretical in his creed and
 ' doctrine. One day Hasan said to me and to Khayyám, ' It
 ' is a universal belief that the pupils of the Imám Mowaffak
 ' will attain to fortune. Now, even if we *all* do not attain
 ' thereto, without doubt one of us will; what then shall be
 ' our mutual pledge and bond?' We answered ' Be it
 ' what you please.' ' Well,' he said, ' let us make a vow,
 ' that to whomsoever this fortune falls, he shall share it
 ' equally with the rest, and reserve no pre-eminence for him-

‘self.’ ‘Be it so,’ we both replied, and on these terms we mutually pledged our words. Years rolled on, and I went from Khorassan to Transoxiana, and wandered to Ghazni and Cabul; and when I returned, I was invested with office, and rose to be administrator of affairs during the Sultanate of Sultan Alp Arslán.’ ”

“ He goes on to state, that years passed by, and both his old school-friends found him out, and came and claimed a share in his good fortune, according to the school-day vow. The Vizier was generous and kept his word. Hasan demanded a place in the government, which the Sultan granted at the Vizier’s request; but discontented with a gradual rise, he plunged into the maze of intrigue of an oriental court, and, failing in a base attempt to supplant his benefactor, he was disgraced and fell. After many mishaps and wanderings, Hasan became the head of the Persian sect of the *Ismailians*,—a party of fanatics who had long murmured in obscurity, but rose to an evil eminence under the guidance of his strong and evil will. In A. B. 1090, he seized the castle of Alamút, in the province of Rúdbar, which lies in the mountainous tract, south of the Caspian sea; and it was from this mountain home he obtained that evil celebrity among the Crusaders as the OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAINS, and spread terror through the Mohammedan world; and it is yet disputed whether the word *Assassin*, which they have left in the language of modern Europe as their dark memorial, is derived from the *hashish*, or opiate of hemp-leaves (the Indian *bang*), with which they maddened themselves to the sullen pitch of oriental desperation, or from the name of the founder of the dynasty, whom we have seen

in his quiet collegiate days, at Naishápur. One of the countless victims of the Assassin's dagger was Nizám-ul-Mulk himself, the old school-boy friend."

"Omar Khayyám also came to the Vizier to claim his share; but not to ask for title or office. 'The greatest boon you can confer on me,' he said, 'is to let me live in a corner under the shadow of your fortune, to spread wide the advantages of Science, and pray for your long life and prosperity.' The Vizier tells us, that, when he found Omar was really sincere in his refusal, he pressed him no further, but granted him a yearly pension of 1,200 *mithkals* of gold, from the treasury of Naishápur."

"At Naishápur thus lived and died Omar Khayyám, 'busied,' adds the Vizier, 'in winning knowledge of every kind, and especially in Astronomy, wherein he attained to a very high pre-eminence. Under the Sultanate of Malik Shah, he came to Merv, and obtained great praise for his proficiency in science, and the Sultan showered favours upon him.'"

"When Malik Shah determined to reform the calendar, Omar was one of the eight learned men employed to do it: the result was the *Jaláli* era, (so called from *Jalal-ul-din*, one of the king's names,)—"a computation of time," says Gibbon, "which surpasses the Julian, and approaches the accuracy of the Gregorian style." He is also the author of some astronomical tables, entitled *Ziji-Maliksháhi*," and the French have lately republished and translated an Arabic Treatise of his on Algebra.

These severer Studies, and his Verses, which, though happily fewer than any Persian Poet's, and, though perhaps