

mental and practical considerations must go hand in hand, and whom timidity in the latter respect deters from trusting fully their instincts in the former. It were therefore much to be desired that Mr. Mill should publish his whole mind on the subject of divorce and of the family, without delay or reserve.

We shall not touch upon any of the other points the work presents, nor even say what they are; for it ought to be read by every one who cares in the least degree for social questions, — and who does not? — in its original form. No one can read it without feeling his thought stimulated and enlarged; numbers of those who are at present sceptical or indifferent will be converted by it; and many will be toughened in their resisting conservatism by the suggestive glimpse it affords of the ultimate tendencies of the democratic flood which is sweeping us along. It may be that Mr. Mill's fervid passion for absolute equality, "justice," and personal independence, as the *summum bonum* for every one, is a personal peculiarity. It may be that he is only more far-seeing than the majority, and that the wiping out of everything *special* in any man's relations to other men — of every moral tie that can possibly be conceived of as varying in varied circumstances, and therefore as artificial — is but the inexorable outcome of the path of progress on which we have entered. If this is so, there can be little doubt that this small volume will be what the Germans call "epoch-making," and that it will hereafter be quoted as a landmark signaling one distinct step in the progress of the total evolution.

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3. — 1. *Les Quatrains de Khèyam, traduits du Persan.* Par J. B. NICOLAS, ex-Premier Drogman de l'Ambassade Française en Perse, Consul de France à Resht. Paris: Imprimé par Ordre de l'Empereur à l'Imprimerie Impériale. 1867. 8vo. pp. xv., 229.
 2. *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, the Astronomer-Poet of Persia.* Rendered into English Verse. London: Bernard Quaritch. 2d ed. 1868. Sq. 8vo. pp. xviii., 30.

THE prevailing traits of the genius of Omar Khayyám are so coincident with certain characteristics of the spiritual temper of our own generation, that it is hardly surprising that his poetry, of which hitherto the Western world knew nothing, is beginning to excite the interest it deserves, and has lately been made accessible to us in translation. The fame of Omar, certainly one of the most remarkable poets of Persia, has been narrowly confined within the limits of his own language, and even his name has scarcely been heard outside his own land.

This is hardly to be wondered at; for there is much in the quality of his verse to render it unacceptable to the generality of orthodox readers of poetry, and to those who read only *with* and not *through* their eyes. The transcendental character of much of his poetry takes it out of the range of common appreciation, and that it may be understood at all it requires to be read with something of the same spirit with which it was written.

Omar Khayyám was born near Naishápúr in Khorassan in the second quarter of our eleventh century, and died, it is said, in the year 1123; thus preceding Hafiz by more than three centuries, and Saadi by about a century. It is a striking illustration of the early bloom of Persian culture, that Omar precedes Dante by two hundred years.*

The slender story of his life is curiously connected with two very prominent figures in their time and country, one of whom — Nizám-ul-Mulk, Vizier to Alp Arslán, the second Sultan of the Seljukian dynasty — tells the story of all three in a testament which he left as a memorial for future statesmen. He relates as follows:—

“One of the greatest of the wise men of Khorassan was the Tmám Mowaffak of Naishápúr, a man highly honored 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 traditions in his presence would assuredly attain to honor and happiness. For this cause did my father send me from Tús to Naishápúr with Abd-us-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 favor 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 Tmám 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 Naishápúr, while Hasan Ben Sabbáh'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 Tmám Mowaffak will attain to fortune.

* Omar has always held a high place in Persian esteem, both as man of science and as poet. He was famous as an astronomer, at a time when all astronomical science belonged to the Persians and Arabians. Information concerning his astronomical and mathematical works is to be found in the introduction to the *Algèbre d'Omar Alkhayyámé*, translated, and illustrated with extracts from unpublished manuscripts, by M. Woepeke (Paris, 1861, 8vo).

Now, 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 himself.' 'Be it so,' we both replied, and on those terms we mutually pledged our words. Years rolled on, and I went from Khorassan to Transosicana and wandered from Ghazni to 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, having found him out, came to claim a share in his good fortune, according to the school-boy 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. D. 1090 he seized the castle of Alamút, in the province of Búdbar, 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 his followers left to the languages of Modern Europe as their dark memorial, is derived from the *hashish* or opiate of hemp-leaves (the Indian *bhāng*), 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 Naishápúr. One of the countless victims of the assassin's dagger was Nizam-ul-Mulk himself, the old school-boy friend.

Omar Khayyám also came to the Vizier to claim the 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 1200 mithkals of gold from the treasury of Naishápúr.

* The narrative may be found in the preface to each of the works whose titles stand at the head of this paper. The English author cites from the Calcutta Review, No. 59, where the account is in its turn taken from Mirkhond's History of the Assassins.

At Naishápúr thus lived and died Omar Khayyám, "busied," adds the Vizier, "in winning knowledge of every kind, and especially in astronomy, wherein he attained 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 favors upon him."

We have only one more anecdote to give of his life, and that relates to its close; it is told in the anonymous preface which is sometimes prefixed to his poems.*

"It is written in the chronicles of the ancients that this King of the Wise, Omar Khayyám, died at Naishápúr in the year of the Hegira 517 (A. D. 1123). In science he was unrivalled, — the very paragon of his age. Khwájah Nizami of Samarcand, who was one of his pupils, relates the following story: 'I often used to hold conversations with my teacher, Omar Khayyám, in a garden; and one day he said to me, "My tomb shall be in a spot where the north wind may scatter roses over it." I wondered at the words he spake, but I knew that his were no idle words. Years after, when I chanced to revisit Naishápúr, I went to his final resting-place, and lo! it was just outside a garden, and trees laden with fruit stretched their boughs over the garden wall, and dropped their flowers upon his tomb, so as the stone was hidden under them!'"

Little more is known of the life of the poet, and there is little in his writings to illustrate its external conditions and course.

In obedience to the custom that prevails in Persia, that every poet should take a distinguishing name in addition to his own, Omar chose that of Khayyám, or Tent-maker, as indicating, it is said, the occupation which he himself carried on and which had been that of his father. The Persians declare that it was the modesty of the poet that prevented him from assuming a more brilliant name, such as that of *Firdusi*, "the Celestial," or *Hafiz*, "the Preserver."

His poetry is wholly composed of independent stanzas, called *Rubáiyát*, "consisting each of four lines of equal, though varied, prosody; sometimes all rhyming, but oftener the third line a blank. As usual with such Oriental verse, the *Rubáiyát* follow one another according to alphabetic rhyme, — a strange succession of grave and gay." And not merely a strange succession of grave and gay, but of such dark interior meaning that the two translators, M. Nicolas, and the anonymous English versifier, though apparently not at odds as to the literal meaning, are completely at variance as to the true interpretation and significance of Omar's verse. They agree, indeed (for this at least is plain), that

* The Persian text has been printed in the appendix to Hyde's *Veterum Persarum Religio*, p. 499; and D'Herbelot refers to it under "Khiam."

Omar was a sceptic, a free-thinker, no true believer, but a very thorn in the side of the orthodox disciples of the prophet. But while M. Nicolas regards him as essentially a mystic, concealing secret meanings in his verse, — a *Sûfi*, — in a word, devoted to the contemplation of Divinity, and to the attainment of perfection, shadowing the Deity in his poetry under figures and tropes of Wine, Wine-bearer, and the like, the English translator, on the other hand, believes him to have been a materialistic Epicurean, audacious in thought and expression, who, “having failed of finding any Providence but Destiny, and any World but this, set about making the most of it; preferring rather to soothe the soul through the senses into acquiescence with things as he saw them, than to perplex it with vain disquietude after what they *might be*.” “Omar flung his own genius and learning with a bitter or humorous jest into the general ruin which their insufficient glimpses only served to reveal; and, pretending sensual pleasure as the serious purpose of life, only *diverted* himself with speculative problems of Deity, Destiny, Matter and Spirit, Good and Evil, and other such questions easier to start than to run down, and the pursuit of which becomes a very weary sport at last. . . . The old Tent-maker, after vainly endeavoring to unshackle his steps from Destiny, and to catch some authentic glimpse of To-morrow, fell back upon To-day (which has outlasted so many To-morrows!) as the only ground he got to stand upon, however momentarily slipping from under his feet.”

The study of Omar's verse helps but little to reconcile this wide difference of judgment. Many of his quatrains, as the English translator admits, seem unaccountable unless mystically interpreted; but many more as unaccountable unless literally. May it not be that there are two sides to Omar's shield, — one of mystic gold, the other of plain silver? It belongs to the true poet to represent more completely than other men the double nature of man, — the spiritual and the sensual alike; in him the vision and the faculty divine are indissolubly bound to the delight of the eye in the beauty of the actual world, and to the joy of the heart in the present life. The higher the spiritual imagination reaches, the broader must be the foundation on which it rests, of love and knowledge of material existence. Omar may have sung, in a literal sense, the praises of the wine which gladdens the hearts of men, without any feeling of incongruity when he sings that wine which is the spiritual reviver and comforter of the soul. The common literal object easily becomes a type of divine excellence, and other Persian poets have used wine and beauty as images to illustrate the divinity they were celebrating. The English translator, indeed, who denies to Omar's verse the spiritual significance which

many of his Persian readers attribute to it, admits that the chief Persian poets, including Háfiz, borrowed largely of Omar's material, "but turning it to a mystical use more convenient to themselves and the people they addressed, — a people quite as quick of doubt as of belief; as keen of bodily sense as of intellectual, and delighting in a cloudy compound of both, in which they could float luxuriously between heaven and earth, and this world and the next, on the wings of a poetical expression, that might serve indifferently for either." It is true that, however much of spiritual significance may be allowed to Omar's verse, many of his quatrains refuse to be thus interpreted, and compel us to accept them as simple expressions of earthly passion and of sensual delights. But whatever allowance be required for the sensual side of Omar's character, his quatrains give proof of the delicacy no less than of the strength of his poetic nature, of the subtlety no less than of the elevation of his thought. The deepest questions that perplex mankind occupy him. Seeking with a shrewd, inquisitive, and independent intelligence, he fails to find a trustworthy answer to the problems of existence and eternity; and his penetrating imagination serves him no better than his understanding in the attempt to reach assurance concerning the nature of God and man. But he does not rest in simply negative conclusions, in mere denial of the unfounded assertions, and reaction from the vain superstitions, of the popular religious creed. He doubts, indeed, at times, as he watches the perverse course of human affairs, whether there be a God; he presents clearly the dilemmas involved in the conception of a divine power creating and sustaining the universe; for him there is neither heaven nor hell outside of his own soul. If there be a God, he has made man weak, liable to error, and full of passions, and has left him in doubt as to his destiny; but if there be a God, he must know the nature of the beings he has made, and is surely not worse than they, and will not punish them for being such as he has made them. If we interpret some of Omar's quatrains mystically, we find him sometimes seeking satisfaction in pantheistic abstractions, in efforts toward communion with, and absorption in, the Divine, and sometimes betaking himself to atheistic speculations, and admitting no other guiding principle in the universe than a blind, impartial fate. But, perplexed or baffled as he may be, he maintains a manly independence, and, finding nothing outside or beyond this world to rest upon, fixes himself solidly here, and resolves, while all things are fleeting and changing around him to enjoy at least the present hour, and to make the best of the life which is his to-day, but may not be his to-morrow. However shifting and uncertain are his thoughts respecting the invisible and the un-

known, his practical philosophy does not vary, and, like the Hebrew preacher, he constantly repeats: "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw that it was from the hand of God."

Strokes of a vigorous imagination, strongly grasping the reality, constantly occur in his verse. His boldness of expression often runs into audacity. Things held sacred he treats with a free hand, and what he ventures to think he ventures also to speak. The bitter contrast between the wretchedness of men in this life and their undefined expectations of a better lot in another life moves him at times to contemptuous irony of human hopes and efforts, at times to indignant scorn of the supposed divine order of the universe. From the illusions of earth,—the palace of misery,—he turns to the real, if transient, gladness of wine, and celebrates the joys of self-forgetfulness in the embrace of the twisted tendrils of the grape. He professes no wisdom but that of honest integrity of thought, which authorizes him to speak plain truth whether it be acceptable or not. He has no disposition to make terms with the true believers. He is unsparing in his rebukes of pretenders to religion, and in his satire of its ministers. But his fancy chiefly occupies itself with the transitoriness and uncertainty of human affairs, with the ignorance of man concerning his own destiny, with the quick passage of life, and with the means of enjoyment which the hour affords.

In a literal translation much of the charm of the original must be lost, and much of its spirit evaporates. But even in the dry version of M. Nicolas the transcendental character of Omar's poetry is apparent, and its essential qualities do not altogether disappear.* The English anonymous translator, of the character of whose version I have yet to speak, has confined his work within such narrow limits that, before proceeding to it, it may be well to give some passages from the French rendering, which illustrate the nature of the genius and of the speculations of the poet:—

"In this world, which for an instant serves us as an asylum, we have experienced naught but trouble and misfortune. Alas! no problem of creation has been solved for us; and yet we quit this earth with hearts full of regret."

"Since no one can assure us of to-morrow, hasten to rejoice thy sad heart. Drink, O beloved! drink from the ruby cup; for the moon shall long turn around the earth without again finding us."

* M. Nicolas gives the original text as well as the translation of Omar's work, — four hundred and sixty-four quatrains in all. His notes are copious and useful.

"When I take in my hand a cup of wine, and in the joy of my heart am drunken, then in the fire that consumes me — behold! — a hundred miracles become real, and words clear as limpid water seem to explain the mystery of the universe."

"Unbelief is divided from faith but by a breath; doubt from certainty but by a breath; life from death but by a breath. Pass gayly over the dividing line."

"My life runneth out in a brief space: it passeth as the wind of the desert. Therefore, while a breath remaineth to me, there are two days concerning which I will not disquiet myself, — the day that hath not come, and the day that hath gone."

"Who can believe that he who fashioned the cup meaneth to break it to pieces? All these fair heads, these beautiful arms, these delicate hands, — by what love are they made? by what hate are they destroyed?"

"O Khayyám! why grievest thou because of thy sin? What solace findest thou in thus tormenting thyself? He who hath not sinned shall not taste the sweet of forgiveness. It is for sin that forgiveness exists. How then canst thou fear?"

"That day when the heavens shall melt, and the stars be darkened, I will stop Thee on Thy way, and, seizing Thee by the hem of Thy garment, will require of Thee to tell me, Why, having given me life, Thou hast taken it from me."

"I asked of the world, — the bride of man, — what was her dowry; and she answered me, My dowry is the joy of thy heart."

"The heart on whom the light of love hath shone, whose name is written in the book of love, that heart, whether it frequenteth mosque or synagogue, is free from fear of hell, or hope of heaven."

"If I drink wine it is not for mere delight of the taste, nor that I should become disorderly and renounce religion and morality; no, it is that I may for one moment exist outside of myself."

"I know not whether He who hath created me belongeth to paradise or to hell; but this I know, that a cup of wine, my beautiful love, and a lute on the edge of a meadow, are three things which I enjoy to-day, while thou livest on the promise of a paradise to come."

"At this moment, when life is not yet gone out of my heart, it seemeth to me there are few problems that I have not solved. But when I appeal to my understanding, and turn inward on myself, I perceive that my life hath flowed away, and as yet I have defined nothing."

"O Thou! in whose eyes sin is of no account, order the wise to proclaim this truth; for there is no folly equal to that of making the divine foreknowledge the accomplice of iniquity."

"My being was given me without my consent, so that my own existence is a wonder to me. Yet I leave the world with regret, having comprehended neither the object of my coming, of my stay, nor of my departure."

"They who by their learning are the cream of the world, who by their understanding traverse the heights of heaven, even they, in their search after knowledge of the divine, have their heads turned, whirling in vertigo, like the firmament itself."

"Give thyself to joy, for grief will be infinite. The stars shall again meet together at the same point of the firmament; but out of thy body shall bricks be made for a palace-wall."

"The day when I shall be a stranger to myself, and when my name shall be as a tale that is told, then make of my clay a wine-jar for use in the tavern!"

"The secrets of existence no man hath penetrated; a step beyond himself no man hath taken. From the scholar to the master I behold only incompetence, — the incompetence of all of woman born."

"Who hath found access behind the curtain of destiny? Who hath knowledge of the secrets of Providence? Night and day, for threescore years, have I meditated, yet have I learned nothing; the riddle remaineth unsolved."

"Drink wine! for wine putteth an end to the disquietudes of the heart, and delivereth from meditations on the two-and-seventy sects. Abstain not from this alchemy, for if thou drinkest but one jarful, a thousand infirmities shall fall away from thee."

"The devotee comprehendeth not as we the divine mercy. A stranger knoweth thee not so well as a friend. If Thou sayest, 'Behold, if thou committest sin I will cast thee into hell,' — go, say it unto one who knoweth Thee not."

"The rolling heavens do naught but multiply our woes. What they set upon earth they quickly snatch away. Ah! if they who have not yet come knew what suffering the world inflicts, they would take good heed how they came."

"O friend! why busy thyself concerning *existence*? Why trouble thy heart and soul with idle thoughts? Live happy; pass joyful days; for in truth thy advice was not asked concerning creation."

"O Thou, in quest of whom the whole world hath gone astray and is in distress, neither prayers nor riches avail to find thee out: Thou takest part in every conversation, but all are deaf; Thou art before the eyes of all, but all are blind."

"Though I have not pierced the pearl of obedience that is due to Thee, though never with my heart have I swept up the dust of Thy steps, yet I despair not of reaching the sill of Thy throne of mercy, for never have I importuned Thee with my complaints."

"We are puppets with which the heavens amuse themselves; we are pieces on the chess-board of being, whence we are laid aside, one by one, into the coffin of nothingness."

"I saw on the walls of the city of Thous a bird, with the skull of Kay-Kavous before him. The bird said to the skull, Where now is the noise of thy glory? where now is the sound of thy clarion?"

"If the rose be not ours, yet have we not its thorns? If the light reach us not, have we not the fire? If Heaven refuse me peace, am I not ready for war?"

"All things that the world contains are images and illusions, and he hath little wisdom who includeth not himself among these images. Be quiet, then, O friend! drink, and deliver thyself from vain fancies and thoughts that cannot reach their goal."

"If I am drunken with old wine, so be it. If I am infidel, or idolater, so be it. Let each man think of me as he will, what matters it? I belong to myself, and I am that which I am."

"The circle of the universe is a ring of which you and I are the graven gem."

"Lift Thou from my heart the weight of the vicissitudes of life. Hide from men's eyes my faults. Give me happiness to-day, and to-morrow deal with me according to Thy mercy."

"I beheld a man withdrawn into a desert place. He was neither heretic nor Mussulman; he possessed neither riches, nor religion, nor God, nor truth, nor law, nor certitude. Who is there in this world or in the other who hath such courage?"

"The wheel of Heaven runs to thy death and mine, O beloved! it conspires against thy soul and mine. Come, come, sit beside me on the grass, for little time remaineth before the grass shall spring from my dust and thine."

"Tell me what man is there who hath not fallen into sin! Can man exist and not sin? If because I do ill Thou punishest me with ill, say, what difference is there between Thee and me?"

"Thou hast set a hundred snares round about us. Thou sayest, 'If ye fall into them ye shall surely die!' It is Thou that spreadest the net, and if a man be taken in it Thou condemnest him, Thou deliverest him to death, Thou callest him rebel!"

"A sheikh said to a harlot: 'Thou art drunken; thou art taken in the net of whoso will.' And she answered: 'O Sheikh! I am that which thou sayest; but thou, art thou what thou professest to be?'"

"At times Thou art hidden, disclosing Thyself unto no one; then again Thou revealest Thyself in all the images of the universe. Verily, it is for Thyself and for Thine own pleasure that Thou workest these marvels, for lo! Thou art both the show and the spectator."

Such passages as these, suffering from the accumulated injuries of a double translation, and reproducing neither the poetic form nor the style of the original verse, while they but imperfectly render its substance, can hardly fail in spite of all these drawbacks to leave a strong impression on the mind of the reader — especially if he be a little versed in the usual manner of the Persian poets — of the originality of Omar's genius, and of the vigor of his character as shown in the independence of his attitude toward the popular belief and predominant opinions of his time. The individual quality of the poet's imagination, the clear, defined precision of his expression, the spiritual insight of his speculation, and the realistic truth of his rendering of feeling, unite to give him a high place among the poets of his country; while his direct dealing with subjects of universal import, and his grasp of thoughts and moods common to the latest generation, set him among the few poets who have more than a mere historic or literary interest for men of different race, of different language, and of another age than his. Leaving altogether out of view the striking contrast which his poetry offers to the contemporary poetic productions of the Western world, and the picture it affords of the material civilization no less than of the spiritual culture of Persia at the period when it was composed, it possesses an intrinsic claim to record, as the imaginative utterance of one who in his time was busied with the questions which from the days of Adam to the latest day have occupied the best and wisest of the sons of men, and to which each has striven — and shall we say each as vainly as Omar himself? — to discover the answer which shall satisfy the doubting, sceptical, sad heart of man. That such a view, at least, of the significance and worth of the poetry of Omar has been held by his English translator, is plain from the manner of the work which he has given us. He is to be called "translator" only in default of a better word, one which should express the poetic transfusion of a poetic spirit from one language to another, and the re-presentation of the ideas and images of the original in a form not altogether diverse from their own, but perfectly adapted to the new conditions of time, place, custom, and habit of mind in which they reappear. In the whole range of our literature there is hardly to be found a more admirable example of the most skilful poetic rendering of remote foreign poetry than this work of an anonymous author affords. It has all the merit of a remarkable original production, and its excellence is the highest testimony that could be given, to the essential impressiveness and worth of the Persian poet. It is the work of a poet inspired by the work of a poet; not a copy, but a reproduction, not a translation, but the redelivery of a poetic inspiration.

Much in the English work has been simply suggested by the original. Hints supplied by Omar are enlarged; thoughts touched upon by him are completely grasped; images faintly shadowed by him, fully developed. The sequence of the Persian quatrains, depending on the rhyme and not upon the contents of the verse, admits of no progressive development of feeling, and no logical continuity of thought. The poet is compelled by his form into sententiousness, into gnomic sayings, into discontinuous flashes of emotion, and finds himself obliged to recur often to the same idea, in order to present it under a new image or in a different aspect. The English Omar has not troubled himself to follow this peculiarity of his model. He has strung his quatrains together in an order which, if it fail to unite them all in a continuous and regularly developed whole, into a poem formed of the union of the separate stanzas, does at least so bind together many of them that the various portions seem like fragments of an Oriental eclogue. Moreover, a minor key of sadness, of refined melancholy, seems to recur in the English composition more frequently than in the Persian. The sentiment of the original Omar is often re-enforced by the English, is expressed in stronger, tenderer, and more delicate strokes. Every now and then a note of the nineteenth century seems to mingle its tone with those of the twelfth; as if the ancient Oriental melody were reproduced on a modern European instrument. But it is very striking to see, and much more to feel, how close the thought and the sentiment of the Persian poet often are to the thought and sentiment of our own day. So that in its English dress it reads like the latest and freshest expression of the perplexity and of the doubt of the generation to which we ourselves belong. There is probably nothing in the mass of English translations or reproductions of the poetry of the East to be compared with this little volume in point of value as *English* poetry. In the strength of rhythmical structure, in force of expression, in musical modulation, and in mastery of language, the external character of the verse corresponds with the still rarer interior qualities of imagination and of spiritual discernment which it displays.

It needs no further introduction. The English Omar gives us one hundred and ten quatrains in all, from which the following citations are selected :—

“ Wake ! for the sun behind yon eastern height
 Has chased the session of the stars from night ;
 And, to the field of heaven ascending, strikes
 The sultan's turret with a shaft of light.

“ Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of spring
 Your winter garment of repentance fling :

- The bird of time has but a little way
To flutter, — and the bird is on the wing.
- “ Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
Whether the cup with sweet or bitter run,
The wine of life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The leaves of life keep falling one by one.
- “ Morning a thousand roses brings, you say ;
Yes, but where leaves the rose of yesterday ?
And this first summer-month that brings the rose
Shall take Jamshýd and Kaikobád away.
- “ Well, let it take them ! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great or Kaikhosrú ?
Let Rustum cry, ‘ To battle ! ’ as he likes,
Or Hatim Tai, ‘ To supper ! ’ — heed not you.
- “ With me along the strip of herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of slave and sultan is forgot, —
And peace to Máhmúd on his golden throne !
- “ Here with a little bread beneath the bough,
A flask of wine, a book of verse, — and thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness, —
O, wilderness were paradise enow.”
-
- “ Some for the glories of this world, and some
Sigh for the prophet's paradise to come ;
Ah, take the cash, and let the promise go,
Nor heed the music of a distant drum !
- “ Were it not folly, spider-like, to spin
The thread of present life away to win —
What ? for ourselves, who know not if we shall
Breathe out the very breath we now breathe in !
- “ Look to the blowing rose 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.’ ”
-
- “ 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.
- “ Think, in this battered caravanserai
Whose portals are alternate night and day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his pomp
Abode his destined hour, and went his way.

- “ They say the lion and the lizard keep
The courts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep ;
And Bahrám, that great hunter, the wild ass
Stamps o'er his head, but cannot break his sleep.
- “ The palace that to heaven his pillars threw,
And kings the forehead on his threshold-drew,
I saw the solitary ringdove there,
And ‘ Coo, coo, coo,’ she cried ; and ‘ Coo, coo, coo.’ ”*
-
- “ Ah ! my belovèd, fill the cup that clears
To-day of past regret and future fears ;
To-morrow ! Why, to-morrow I may be
Myself with yesterday's seven thousand years.
- “ For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his vintage rolling Time has prest,
Have drunk their cup a round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.
- “ 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 ?
- “ 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, and — sans end.”
-
- “ I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Cæsar bled ;
That every hyacinth the garden wears
Dropt in her lap from some once lovely head.
- “ And this delightful herb whose living 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 ! ”
-
- “ 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.
- “ With them the seed of wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand wrought to make it grow ;
And this was all the harvest that I reaped, —
' I came like water, and like wind I go.'

* “ This quatrain Mr. Binning found inscribed by some stray hand among the ruins of Persepolis. The ringdove's ancient *Pehlevi*, *Coo, coo, coo*, signifies also in Persian, ‘ Where ? where ? where ? ’ ”

- “ 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.
- “ What ! without asking, hither hurried *whence* ?
And, without asking, *whither* hurried hence !
Ah, contrite Heaven endowed us with the vine,
To drug the memory of that insolence ! ”
-
- “ Up from earth's centre through the seventh gate
I rose, and on the throne of Saturn sate,
And many knots unravelled by the road ;
But not the master-knot of human fate.
- “ There was the door to which I found no key :
There was the veil through which I could not see :
Some little talk awhile of *ME* and *THEE*
There was, — and then no more of *THEE* and *ME*.
- “ Earth could not answer, nor the seas that mourn
In flowing purple, of their Lord forlorn ;
Nor Heaven, with those eternal signs revealed
And hidden by the sleeve of night and morn.
- “ Then of the *THEE IN ME* who works behind
The veil of universe I cried to find
A lamp to guide me through the darkness ; and
Something then said, ‘ An understanding blind.’
- “ Then to the lip of this poor earthen urn
I leaned, the secret well of life to learn :
And lip to lip it murmured, ‘ While you live,
‘ Drink ! for, once dead, you never shall return.’
- “ I think the vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answered, once did live
And drink ; and that impassive lip I kissed,
How many kisses might it take — and give !
- “ For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a potter thumping his wet clay ;
And with its all-obliterated tongue
It murmured, ‘ Gently, brother, gently, pray ! ’ ”
-
- “ When you and I behind the veil are past,
O but the long, long while the world shall last !
Which of our coming and departure heeds
As much as ocean of a pebble-cast.
- “ And fear not lest existence closing *your*
Account, should lose, or know the type no more ;
The Eternal Saki from that bowl has poured
Millions of bubbles like us, and will pour.

"And if the cup you drink, the lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in, — yes ;
Imagine then you *are* what heretofore
You *were*, — hereafter you shall not be less.

"So when at last the Angel of the drink
Of darkness finds you by the river-brink,
And, proffering his cup, invites your soul
Forth to your lips to quaff it, — do not shrink."

"And if in vain down on the stubborn floor
Of earth, and up to heaven's unopening door,
You gaze to-day, while you are you, — how then
To-morrow, when you shall be you no more ?

"O, plagued no more with human or divine,
To-morrow's tangle to itself resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The cypress-slender minister of wine.

"Waste not your hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of this and that endeavor and dispute ;
Better be merry with the fruitful grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter fruit.

"The grape that can with logic absolute
The two-and-seventy jarring sects confute :
The sovereign alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into gold transmute."

"Strange, is it not ? that of the myriads who
Before us passed the door of darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

"The revelations of devout and learned
Who rose before us, and as prophets burned,
Are all but stories which, awoke from sleep
They told their fellows, and to sleep returned."

"I sent my soul through the invisible
Some letter of that after-life to spell :
And after many days my soul returned
And said, ' Behold, myself am Heaven and Hell.'

"Heaven but the vision of fulfilled desire,
And hell the shadow of a soul on fire,
Cast on the darkness into which ourselves,
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire."

" We are no other than a moving row
Of visionary shapes that come and go
Round with this sun-illuminèd lantern held
In midnight by the master of the show."

" Impotent pieces of the game he plays
Upon this checker-board of nights and days,
Hither and thither moves and checks and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.

" The ball no question makes of ayes and noes,
But right or left, as strikes the player, goes ;
And he that tossed you down into the field,
He knows about it all, — *he* knows, *he* knows !

" The moving finger writes ; and, having writ,
Moves on : nor all your piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor shall your tears wash out a word of it."

" For let philosopher and doctor preach
Of what they will, and what they will not, — each
Is but one link in an eternal chain,
That none can slip, nor break, nor overreach.

" And that inverted bowl we call the sky,
Whereunder crawling, cooped we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *it* for help, — for it
As impotently rolls as you or I.

" With earth's first clay they did the last man knead,
And there of the last harvest sowed the seed :
And the first morning of creation wrote
What the last dawn of reckoning shall read.

" Yesterday *this* day's madness did prepare, —
To-morrow's silence, triumph, or despair :
Drink ! for you know not whence you came, nor why :
Drink ! for you know not why you go, nor where.

" But this I know : whether the one true light
Kindle to love, or wrath consume me quite,
One flash of it within the tavern caught
Better than in the temple lost outright."

" What ! out of senseless nothing to provoke
A conscious something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted pleasure, under pain
Of everlasting penalties if broke !

" What ! from his helpless creature be repaid
Pure gold for what he lent as dross allayed, —

Sue for a debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer, — O, the sorry trade !

“ Nay, but for terror of his wrathful face,
I swear I will not call injustice grace ;
Not one good fellow of the tavern but
Would kick so poor a coward from the place.

“ O 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 ?

“ O Thou, who man of baser earth didst make,
And ev'n with paradise devise the snake :
For all the sin the face of wretched man
Is black with, man's forgiveness give — and take ! ”

“ As under cover of departing day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazan away,
Once more within the potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the shapes of clay.

“ And once again there gathered a scarce-heard
Whisper among them, as it were, the stirred
Ashes of some all but extinguished tongue,
Which mine ear kindled into living word.

“ Said one among them : ‘ 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 shapeless earth again ? ’

“ Another said : ‘ Why, ne'er a peevish boy
Would break the cup from which he drank in joy :
Shall he that of his own free fancy made
The vessel, in an after-rage destroy ? ’

“ None answered this ; but after silence spake
Some vessel of a more ungainly make :
‘ They sneer at me for leaning all awry ;
What ! did the hand then of the potter shake ? ’

“ Thus with the dead as with the living, *What ?*
And *Why ?* so ready, but the *Wherefor* not.
One on a sudden peevishly exclaimed :
‘ Which is the potter, pray, and which the pot ? ’

“ Said one : ‘ Folks of a surly master tell,
And daub his visage with the smoke of hell ;
They talk of some sharp trial of us, — pish !
He 's a good fellow, and 't will all be well. ’

“ ‘ Well,’ said another, ‘ whoso will, let try,
 My clay with long oblivion is gone dry :
 But fill me with the old familiar juice,
 Methinks I might recover by and by !’

“ So while the vessels one by one were speaking,
 One spied the little crescent all were seeking :
 And then they jogged each other, ‘ Brother ! brother !
 Now for the porter’s shoulder-knot a-creaking !’ ” *

“ 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, and whither flown again, who knows !

“ Would but the desert of the fountain yield
 One glimpse, if dimly, yet indeed revealed,
 Toward which the fainting traveller might spring,
 As springs the trampled herbage of the field !

“ Ah, with the grape my fading life provide
 And wash my body whence the life has died,
 And lay me, shrouded in the living leaf,
 By some not unfrequented garden-side.

“ Whither resorting from the vernal heat,
 Shall old acquaintance old acquaintance greet,
 Under the branch that leans above the wall
 To shed his blossoms over head and feet.

“ That ev’n my buried ashes such a share
 Of vintage shall fling up into the air,
 As not a true believer passing by
 But shall be overtaken unaware.”

“ O, if the world were but to re-create,
 That we might catch, ere closed, the Book of Fate,
 And make the writer on a fairer leaf
 Inscribe our names, or quite obliterate !

“ Better, O better cancel from the scroll
 Of universe one luckless human soul,
 Than drop by drop enlarge the flood that rolls
 Hoarser with anguish as the ages roll.

“ Ah love ! could you and I with fate conspire
 To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,

* “ At the close of the fasting-month, Ramazan, the first glimpse of the new moon is looked for with the utmost anxiety and hailed with acclamation. Then it is that the porter’s knot may be heard — toward the cellar, perhaps.”

Would not we shatter it to bits, and then
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire !

“ But see ! the rising moon of heaven again
Looks for us, sweetheart, through the quivering plane :
How oft hereafter rising will she look
Among those leaves — for one of us in vain !

“ And when yourself with silver foot shall pass
Among the guests star-scattered on the grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made one, — turn down an empty glass ! ”

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4. — 1. *Friedrich Rückert und seine Werke.* Von C. FORTLAGE. Frankfurt am Main : J. D. Sauerländer's Verlag. 1867. 12mo. pp. vi., 182.
 2. — *Friedrich Rückert. Ein biographisches Denkmal.* Von DR. C. BEYER. Frankfurt am Main : J. D. Sauerländer's Verlag. 1868. 8vo. pp. xvi., 471.
 3. — *Friedrich Rückert's Gesammelte Poetische Werke. Erste Gesamtausgabe.* Frankfurt am Main : J. D. Sauerländer's Verlag. 1869. 12 Bände. 8vo.

FRIEDRICH RÜCKERT died at Neussess, January 31, 1866. During the three years that have elapsed since his decease, the most widely diverse opinions have been expressed as to the character of his poetic faculty and the nature and extent of his influence on German letters. While some critics have assigned him a niche in the Walhalla of illustrious *Musensöhne* by the side of Goethe and Schiller, others have failed to discover in him any original creative power, except a certain talent for form, a peculiar vigor and ingenuity as a neologist, a facile exuberance of rhymes and metres, and a remarkable virtuosoship in language ; which, however, have too often tempted him into excessive artificialities and affectations of style, and into verbal quirks and quibbles extremely offensive to the purists, and corrupting to the younger generation of poets, who, in taking him as their model, have, like all servile imitators, exaggerated the defects which they copied.

But, however much truth there may be in these strictures, nothing certainly could be more unjust than to hold Rückert responsible for the pompous and weary platitudes of feeble imitators, who embody their languid sentimentalities in Oriental metres, and imagine that they have fathomed the depths and caught the spirit of Persian poetry because they praise the roses of Shiraz, talk of houris and peris, apostrophize the nightingale as the bulbul, and dignify that peculiar species of Teu-