

**THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM <sup>1</sup>**  
**by Edward FitzGerald**

1

AWAKE! For Morning in the Bowl of Night  
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:  
And lo! the Hunter of the East has caught  
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

2

Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky  
I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,  
"Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup  
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."

3

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before  
The Tavern shouted – "Open then the Door!  
You know how little while we have to stay,  
And once departed, may return no more."

4

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,  
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,  
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the bough  
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

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<sup>1</sup> This version differs slightly from existing editions. Selection was based on a text designed to be heard rather than read.

5

Iram indeed is gone with all its Rose,  
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no-one knows;  
    But still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,  
And still a Garden by the Water blows.

6

And David's Lips are lock't; but in divine  
High piping Pehlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!  
    *Red Wine!*" — the Nightingale cries to the Rose  
That yellow Cheek of her's to incarnadine.

7

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

8

Whether at Naishapur or Babylon  
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,  
    The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop;  
The Leaves of Life keep dropping One by One.

9

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

10

Well let it take them, what have we to do  
With Kaikobad and Kaikhosru?

Let Zal and Rustum thunder as they will  
Or Hatim call to supper — heed not you.

11

With me along some Strip of Herbage strown  
That just divides the desert from the sown,  
Where name of slave and Sultan scarce is known,  
And pity Mahmud on his golden Throne.

12

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

13

"How sweet is mortal Sovranty!" — think some:  
Others — "How blest the Paradise to come!"  
Ah, take the Cash and let the Credit go  
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

14

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!

15

Look to the Rose that blows about us – "Lo,  
Laughing," she says, "into the World I blow:  
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse  
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

16

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.

17

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

18

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

19

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep;  
And Bahram, that great Hunter – the Wild Ass  
Stamps o'er his head, but cannot break his Sleep.

20

I sometimes think that never blows so red  
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;

That every Hyacinth the Garden wears  
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.

21

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

22

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

23

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

24

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?

25

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!

26

Alike for those who for TO-DAY prepare,  
And those that after a TO-MORROW stare,  
    A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries  
"Fools! Your reward is neither Here nor There!"

27

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

28

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

29

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 where in I went.

30

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

31

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.

32

*What*, without asking, *hither* hurried, *whence*?  
And without asking, *whither* hurried, *hence*?  
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine  
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

33

Up from Earth's Centre though the Seventh Gate  
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,  
And many a knot unravel'd by the Road;  
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

34

There was a Door to which I found no Key:  
There was a Veil past which I could not see:  
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE  
There seem'd - and then no more of THEE and ME.

35

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind  
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find  
A Lamp amid the Darkness and I heard  
As from Without – “THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!”

36

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen urn  
I lean'd the Secret of my Life to learn  
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd – “While you live,  
“Drink! – for once dead you never shall return.

37

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

38

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

39

For has not such a Story from of Old  
Down Man's successive generations roll'd  
    Of such a clod of saturated earth  
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

40

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw  
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below  
    To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye  
There hidden — far beneath and long ago.

41

As then the Tulip for her morning sup  
Of Heavenly Vintage lifts her chalice up  
    Do you, devoutly, do the like, till Heav'n  
To Earth invert you like an empty cup.



42

Perplext no more with Human and Divine  
Tomorrow's tangle to the winds resign  
And lose your fingers in the tresses of  
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

43

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press  
End in what All begins and ends in — Yes;  
Think then you are TODAY what YESTERDAY  
You were — TO-MORROW you shall not be less.

44

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

45

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,  
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,  
Wer't not a Shame — wer't not a Shame for him  
In this clay carcass crippled to abide?

46

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest  
A Sultan to the realm of Death address;  
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash  
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

47

And fear not lest Existence closing your  
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;

The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has pour'd  
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

48

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 the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

49

A Moment's Halt – a momentary taste  
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste –  
And LO! – the phantom Caravan has reach'd  
The NOTHING it set out from – Oh make haste!

50

Would you that Spangle of Existence spend  
About THE SECRET — quick about it, Friend!  
A Hair perhaps divides the False and True —  
And upon what, prithee, may life depend?

51

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True  
Yes, and a single Alif were the clue —  
Could you but find it — to the Treasure-house,  
And peradventure to The MASTER too;

52

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins  
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;  
Taking all shapes from Mah to Mahi; and  
They change and perish all — but He remains.

53

A moment guess'd — then back behind the Fold  
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd  
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,  
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

54

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor  
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door  
You gaze TODAY, while You are You — how then  
TOMORROW when You shall be You no more?

55

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit  
Of This and That endeavour and dispute;  
Better be merry with the fruitful grape  
Than sadden after none, or bitter, fruit.

56

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

57

For "IS" and "IS-NOT" though with Rule and Line,  
And "UP-AND-DOWN" without, I could define,  
Of all that one should care to fathom, I  
Was never deep in anything but – Wine.

58

Ah, but my Computations, People say,  
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?--Nay,

'Twas only striking from the Calendar  
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

59

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

60

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

61

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

62

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare  
Blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?  
    A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?  
And if a Curse — why, then. Who set it there?

63

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,  
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,  
    Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,  
To fill the Cup — when crumbled into Dust!

64

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.

65

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd  
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,  
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep  
They told their fellows, and to Sleep return'd.

66

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,  
Some letter of that After-life to spell:  
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,  
And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell":

67

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,  
And Hell the Shadow of a Soul on fire,  
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,  
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

68

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

69

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

70

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

71

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,  
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,  
    Lift not your hands to It for help — for It  
As impotently moves as you or I.

72

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.

73

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

74

And 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.

75

What! Out of senseless Nothing to provoke  
A conscious Something to resent the yoke  
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain  
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

76

What! from his helpless Creature 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!

77

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil round  
Enmesh me and impute my Fall to Sin!

78

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,  
And ev'n with Eden didst devise the Snake:  
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man  
Is blacken'd — Man's Forgiveness give — and take!

79

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

80

And once again there gather'd a scarce heard  
Whisper among them; as it were, the stirr'd  
Ashes of some all but extinguisht Tongue  
Which mine ear kindled into living Word.

81

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.”

82

Another said — “Why, ne'er a peevish Boy,  
“Would break the Bowl from which he drank in Joy;  
“And He that with his hand the Vessel made  
“Will surely not in after Wrath destroy.”

83

After a momentary silence spake  
Some Vessel of more ungainly Make:  
“They sneer at me for leaning all awry;  
“What! Did the Hand then of the Potter shake?”

84

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot —  
I think a Sufi pipkin — waxing hot —  
“All this of Pot and Potter — Tell me then,  
“Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?”



85

“Why”, said another, “Some there are who tell  
“Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell  
“The luckless Pots he marr’d in making — Pish!  
“He’s a Good Fellow, and ‘twill all be well.”

86

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

87

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

88

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

89

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

90

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before  
I swore – but was I sober when I swore?



