

JUNE 1918

Rays from the Rose Cross



A Magazine of Mystic Light

EDITED BY MAX HEINDEL

THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY
OF GOD

COMMENTARY ON OMAR KHAYYAM

HUMAN ANCESTRY OF APES

THROUGH OTHER PEOPLES EYES

THE MOON AND PLANT GROWTH

A SONG OF THE CITY PAVEMENTS

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RAYS FROM THE ROSE CROSS



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MAX HEINDEL

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Commentary on the Rubaiyat of Omar Kayyam of Naishapur

(An exegetic study in Comparative Religion)

H. Gentis

INTRODUCTION

WITH the exception of students of Comparative Religion and of Eastern Philosophy, the modern citizen of the Empire is not well versed in the knowledge of those great poetical and philosophical works of the East, which the course of Ages has not been able to destroy. Their contents were certainly of stronger tissue, of higher value, than the great stream of literary products which has flowed from the human mind during the later centuries, especially so in our Western hemisphere. A large part of these modern products is not worth the paper on which it is printed, and many a piece of fiction disappears as quickly as it came into being; they are like fungi, short of duration, and some of them dangerous and poisonous.

But the great esoteric and philosophical epics of antiquity have in comparison to the ephemeral modern products a resistance like diamonds and rubies. They are real gems, of a brightness and brilliancy which shine through the history of mankind. They reflect, as those jewels the light of the physical sun, the great Spiritual Light of the Spiritual Sun, without which life would be extinct, without which nothing that is could be.

Kingdoms have come, and Kingdoms have gone. Dynasties fought their way into supremacy and, exhausted and degenerate, dwindled and rotted away into nothingness. Nations have won their place in the Sun and disappeared in the shad-

ows of the past, from being history, they become myths; from rulers, slaves; from slaves, shadows; from shadows, queries; but through all these ages, some of the great songs of Light have remained undisturbed, untouched, undefiled. They *seemed* less important, less strong, less real, less intense, than the Kings that recommended, or forbade them; than the people that adored or scoffed at them. But the Kings have turned into ashes, and the peoples, where are they? And still the Light of these divine songs is with us, and leads us on our pathway, if we wish to be led at all.

If we look backwards into the hoary ages, thousands of years ago, then we see the *Book of Dzyan* and the *Book of the Golden Precepts*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bagavad Gita*, or we find the wonderful *Tao Teh King* of the Chinese Sage. Or two thousand years ago we find the records of the rites of initiation, as told in the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Or still nearer our present date, approaching the period of the Crusades, we come across, "Omar's lovesong to the few," and we ask ourselves: When then shall the present generation fully appreciate these spiritual things?

In those ancient times when it was dangerous to express a difference of religious opinion, when a still greater percentage of mankind had the character of the tiger and the cannibal than in these modern times, though they are terrible even now, it was an absolute necessity to be prudent in what one said. And so the Goddess of truth had to cover

her beautiful nakedness with often coarse garments to protect herself against the sacrilegious hands of her half animal devotees. Presumably that became custom, if not condition to things spiritual, which had to be kept esoteric, and so we find in anyone or all of these great Epics of the Evolution of the Soul, Symbology again and again to cover the serenity and the subtlety of the conquered Secrets of Life. As Mother Nature provides the kernel in its tender fragility with a stone-hard scale, until the times are ripe for the sprouting of the New Tree, so were these Truths encased in Metaphors, and for centuries we have swallowed them, scale and all, until now it dawns upon some of us that thus they are indigestible. Now let us crack the nut—now let us taste the kernel and maybe we shall learn something—even it is only our own lack of knowledge.

Of all the books mentioned, except the little-understood Bible, one of the most widely known is the song of Omar, the Tentmaker. As few Westerners understand Persian, we have to thank the great poetical talent of Fitzgerald, in the first instance, for his melodious translation of its contents. But that is all that is due to the translator-poet, for if any of these legacies of the inner life of man is misunderstood and misjudged, even by its very interpreter, it is certainly the *Rubaiyat*.

Translators are traitors—traitors to truth, traitors to beauty—but they are that involuntarily, so there being no *dolus*, let us acquit them. Nicolas, the French translator, sees that Omar sings the Soul Song, sings of God; but Fitzgerald pooh-poohs that idea, and is the poorer for it, and so are his readers.

Fitzgerald, considers Omar to be a Lucullian, a drunkard and a sensualist, whose advice to mankind is, “Drink and be merry, for tomorrow you will die!” and if that were the case, why translate such an advice? Have we not enough without. For the sake of some clingclang of words? Nay, then throw that book in the fire, it were only more disease—more degeneration; and it might, nay, it would be infectious. But, happily, such is not the fact.

The *Rubaiyat* is a song written by a poet who had a certain degree of initiation into the myster-

ies of the Evolution of the soul, and who spoke to those few who were almost on their way to the path which leads to that expansion of consciousness. For that is what real initiation means, not some superficial rites, some hand pinching, some valueless secrets; not husks, but grain. And he spoke to them, telling them his adventures of the Soul, his struggles, his victory, nay, even of his fall! And may be, he so enlightened their difficult path—and if he did not? they had ears to hear, and eyes to see. Was he to blame that they wanted to swallow the nut without cracking it?

Let us try to prove this thesis by explaining some of his metaphors, by comparing them with other scriptures of similar tradition, and similar aim. For this much is certain, that if we taste the fruits, we shall be able to determine the kind of tree on which it grows; and their very similarity will make it clear to our minds that, independent of life and death, independent of distance in time, or distance in location, independent of language or religious rites, the same fruits have been produced by the same Divine Tree for the illumination of Mankind throughout the Ages.

Of course if we prefer to be narrow, if we prefer to be religiously or materialistically biased, or if we think that we Christians hold the *only* spiritual communication, if we consider all other men, “except we of the fold,” fit only to keep the Hell fires burning; if we stupidly and arrogantly label our Divine Image with human faults similar to our own, then it becomes impossible to appreciate the idea that it is more probable, more plausible, that the Divine Cause of our being has given to all mankind such spiritual food as their diverse developments were able to digest and assimilate. From that viewpoint we shall be able to see how, over and over again, clothed in changing forms similar moral, intellectual, and spiritual instruction was given to those who went before us, whether they were the Chinese of Lao Tze, or the Persians of Zoroaster, or the Hindus of Shri Krishna, or the Egyptians of Thoth, or the Jews of Moses, or many, many others, all according to their necessities, their desires, their merits, their growth.

Then we get a better idea of the divine patience

of our Teacher, The Divine Love of our Father, and we feel safe, even on the steep Way of the Narrow Path, sure of the Future, because of the past, sure of the Victory, because of the Aim. We the Eternal, we the Indestructible, we the Virgin Souls, the great Wave of Humanity, from the Cannibal to the Saint, including the Scoffer and the Sinner, in its stupendous upward surge to the Higher Life.

We, in *stadis nascendi!*

Let us now try to explain some of the Verses of Omar, the Tentmaker. The translator has taken great liberties, and maybe we shall take greater, but nuts, although hard, are not pebbles, so we should seek for the contents.

Omar then said:

*Wake! for the Sun, who scatter'd into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Draws Night along with them from Heaven and
strikes*

The Sultan's Turret, with a shaft of Light!

(or better)

*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!
Before the Phantom of false morning died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried;
"When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy worshipper outside?."*

Of this the first line reads in the first edition of Fitzgerald's translation: "Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky." These differences prove with what a beautiful wideness of conception the translation is made.

So at the raise of the curtain a Reveille is sounded, and a symbolical reveille to boot. The theatre that is shown to us is that of an Aurora on the Spiritual Battlefield of the Soul, in which the Hunter of the East, with a magic Noose of Light has lassoed the Sultan's Turret. We have the mention of a *false* Dawn; further, among the personae dramatica there appears an enemy, symbolized by a reference to 'the Hunter in the East, or the *Left* Hand, which latter symbol is from hoary antiqui-

ty, a word used for the evil, and not for the good side of things, the *Right* Hand side, and therefore it is a warning of danger. We hear further that a Voice somewhere within calls even before that Phantom has died, even while that Left Hand is still binding the Soul's attention to such an extent that it cannot escape the noose thrown magically over its head. Then we have a wailing of that Small Voice within, a soft, earnest, divine appeal, not even yet a complaint. "Why nods the slumbering worshipper outside?"

In comparing this with other religious scriptures, what was the complaint of the Christ when he had gone up into Gethsemane and returned to his disciples: "And cometh and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter: 'Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation [the beguiling of the dreams]; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'" (Mark 14:37-38).

The New Testament is a Vade-me-cum for the Soul on its way of spiritual growth. It may be a book of history; but it is also a book of the present and the future, insofar as it describes that which occurs to the aspirant on his way to Initiation. Suppose Peter, the Stone, to be evolved (i. e. concentrated) mind, therefore firm as a stone, maybe not a perfect product of concentration as yet but one which is sufficiently determined not to be thrown out of balance, so that the Spirit *can* build its Temple upon that concentrated mind.

That cannot be done on a vague consciousness, or a stupid one. The mind needs to have discrimination, or it will lose itself in the illusion of the desire world, and bewitched by the glamour cast over it, becomes a lunatic; the mind must be calm, quiet and thirsting for truth, for wisdom.

But even when it is sufficiently far advanced to go up to the mountain of the spiritual world, how difficult it is to keep it concentrated, and anyone who has tried meditation and concentration, in the hope of reaching contemplation, knows that these very first steps on the probationary path are liable to be frustrated by the mind *falling asleep*. The strain on the brain, the exertion on the mind to keep quiet are too great to be borne by the personality, and now we hear the Spirit wailing: