

# **THE BOOK OF KHALID**

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The Book of Khalid by Ameen Rihani

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**AMEEN RIHANI**

**THE BOOK  
OF KHALID**



THE  
BOOK OF KHALID

BY  
AMEEN RIHANI



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1911

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## AL-FATIHAH

**I**N the Khedivial Library of Cairo, among the Papyri of the Scribe of Amen-Ra and the beautifully illuminated copies of the Korân, the modern Arabic Manuscript which forms the subject of this Book, was found. The present Editor was attracted to it by the dedication and the rough drawings on the cover; which, indeed, are as curious, if not as mystical, as ancient Egyptian symbols. One of these is supposed to represent a New York Skyscraper in the shape of a Pyramid, the other is a dancing group under which is written: "The Stockbrokers and the Dervishes." And around these symbols, in Arabic circlewise, these words:—  
*"And this is my Book, the Book of Khalid, which I dedicate to my Brother Man, my Mother Nature, and my Maker God."*

Needless to say we asked at once the Custodian of the Library to give us access to this Book of Khalid, and after examining it, we hired an amanuensis to make a copy for us. Which copy we subsequently used as the warp of our material; the woof we shall speak of in the following chapter. No, there is nothing in this Work which we can call ours, except it be the Loom. But the weaving, we assure the Reader, was a mortal process; for the material is of such a mixture that here and there the raw silk of Syria is often spun with the cotton and wool of America. In other words,



## AL-FATIHAH

the Author dips his antique pen in a modern inkstand, and when the ink runs thick, he mixes it with a slabbering of slang. But we started to write an Introduction, not a Criticism. And lest we end by writing neither, we give here what is more to the point than anything we can say: namely, Al-Fatihah, or the Opening Word of Khalid himself.

With supreme indifference to the classic Arabic proem, he begins by saying that his Book is neither a Memoir nor an Autobiography, neither a Journal nor a Confession.

"Orientals," says he, "seldom adventure into that region of fancy and fabrication so alluring to European and American writers; for, like the eyes of huris, our vanity is soft and demure. This then is a book of travels in an impalpable country, an enchanted country, from which we have all risen, and towards which we are still rising. It is, as it were, the chart and history of one little kingdom of the Soul,—the Soul of a philosopher, poet and criminal. I am all three, I swear, for I have lived both the wild and the social life. And I have thirsted in the desert, and I have thirsted in the city: the springs of the former were dry; the water in the latter was frozen in the pipes. That is why, to save my life, I had to be an incendiary at times, and at others a footpad. And whether on the streets of knowledge, or in the open courts of love, or in the parks of freedom, or in the cellars and garrets of thought and devotion, the only *saki* that would give me a drink without the asking was he who called himself Patience. . . .

## AL-FATIHAH

“And so, the Book of Khalid was written. It is the only one I wrote in this world, having made, as I said, a brief sojourn in its civilised parts. I leave it now where I wrote it, and I hope to write other books in other worlds. Now understand, Allah keep and guide thee, I do not leave it here merely as a certificate of birth or death. I do not raise it up as an epitaph, a trade-sign, or any other emblem of vainglory or lucre; but truly as a propylon through which my race and those above and below my race, are invited to pass to that higher Temple of mind and spirit. For we are all tourists, in a certain sense, and this world is the most ancient of monuments. We go through life as those pugreed-solar-hatted-Europeans go through Egypt. We are pestered and plagued with guides and dragomans of every rank and shade; — social and political guides, moral and religious dragomans; a Tolstoy here, an Ibsen there, a Spencer above, a Nietzsche below. And there thou art left in perpetual confusion and despair. Where wilt thou go? Whom wilt thou follow?

“Or wilt thou tarry to see the work of redemption accomplished? For Society must be redeemed, and many are the redeemers. The Cross, however, is out of fashion, and so is the Dona Dulcinea motive. Howbeit, what an array of Masters and Knights have we, and what a variety! The work can be done, and speedily, if we could but choose. Wagner can do it with music; Bakunin, with dynamite; Karl Marx, with the levelling rod; Haeckel, with an injection of protoplasmic logic; the Pope, with a pinch of salt

## AL-FATIHAH

and chrism; and the Packer-Kings of America, with pork and beef. What wilt thou have? Whom wilt thou employ? Many are the applicants, many are the guides. But if they are all going the way of Juhannam, the Beef-packer I would choose. For verily, a gobbet of beef on the way were better than canned protoplasmic logic or bottled salt and chrism. . . .

"No; travel not on a Cook's ticket; avoid the guides. Take up thy staff and foot it slowly and leisurely; tarry wherever thy heart would tarry. There is no need of hurrying, O my Brother, whether eternal Juhannam or eternal Jannat await us yonder. Come; if thou hast not a staff, I have two. And what I have in my Scrip I will share with thee. But turn thy back to the guides; for verily we see more of them than of the ruins and monuments. Verily, we get more of the Dragomans than of the Show. Why then continue to move and remove at their command?—Take thy guidebook in hand and I will tell thee what is in it.

"No; the time will come, I tell thee, when every one will be his own guide and dragoman. The time will come when it will not be necessary to write books for others, or to legislate for others, or to make religions for others: the time will come when every one will write his own Book in the Life he lives, and that Book will be his code and his creed;—that Life-Book will be the palace and cathedral of his Soul in all the Worlds."