

THE PROPHET'S PARADISE

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The Prophet's Paradise by Howard Hall

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HOWARD HALL

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PARADISE**



Howard Hall

The Prophet's Paradise

BY

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HOWARD HALL.

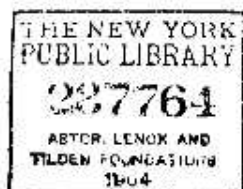
"Some for the glories of this world—and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come."

—*Omar Khayyam.*

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THE PROPHET'S PARADISE.

I.

To-night I stand upon the Mount of Hope,
While darkness veils the scene above, below,
And thro' this veil of mystery I grope,
The riddle of my life to see—to know.

II.

Behold! a traveler, bent and seared with age,
Calls loudly—"I have found the Only Way!
'Tis here revealed upon this sacred page
Believe, and ye shall see the Light of Day."

III.

A million voices answer—"We believe!"
A million voices cry—"We see the Light!"
A million more the Light cannot perceive,
And still with me are groping in the Night.

IV.

Doubt's shadows fell across the Vale of Youth
When o'er the Book I pored, and not one leaf
Revealed to me—though eager for the truth—
The evidence that must precede belief.

V.

"Ye must believe, or perish!" What, I must?
You tell me this is day, and yet 'tis night?
I must believe 'tis day, or else be thrust
Into Hell's torments?—Oh, the sorry plight!

VI.

Here's everlasting joy, if I believe;
There's everlasting pain, if I deny.
And will not God then send some kind reprieve?
Or must the souls who doubt forever die?

VII.

Why, if He made my soul, who made the doubt?
I vainly strive to think that black is white.
Meant He that some should ever stand without,
While others bask within His glorious light?

VIII.

Lo! Simon seeks to buy with ready cash
The Gift of Grace, and 'scape the chast'ning rod.
And is enforced belief a whip to lash
The sons of men into the Church of God?

IX.

"Ye must believe!"—Oh, give me proofs; for lo!
No power of will can my belief compel;
And, if it suits my selfish wish, or no,
I'll straight believe your scheme of Heaven and Hell.

* * * * *

X.

"I am the Light and Way."—What, did He mean
That in His name alone could Heaven be found?
Or was it that the lowly Nazarene
But used an "I" a metaphor to sound?

XI.

That what was true of Him is true of all?
That each within himself must find the Way?
The scales from off thy inner sight let fall,
And learn to know thyself, O man of clay!

XII.

"He meaneth this; he meaneth that."—Oh, say,
Who is so wise to tell, when none concur;
Who teacheth right, who wrong?—Oh, tell me, pray,
Who is the only true interpreter?

XIII.

Oneself? And, were it so, my point of view
Might haply serve some portion to reveal
Of the great scheme of things denied to you;
And yours, some grain of truth for earthly weal.

XIV.

And, were it given to one to see the Whole,
And he should tell his neighbors all about
The secret of his own immortal soul,
Without the evidence they still must doubt.

XV.

And who is there who claims, with spirit-eyes,
The Heavenly spectacle to have beheld?
Who e'er could ope' the gates of Paradise
To those whom Fate to grope in doubt compelled?

XVI.

"There is a destiny that shapes our ends."
"Fate guides our barque across the sea of life."
If this be true, how foolish then, my friends,
To waste a moment in the toil and strife?