

**THE WAYSIDE SERIES. FLOWERS
FROM PERSIAN GARDENS:
SELECTIONS FROM THE POEMS
OF SAADI, HAFIZ, OMAR
KHAYYÁM, AND OTHERS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649455898

The Wayside Series. Flowers from Persian Gardens: Selections from the Poems of Saadi, Hafiz, Omar Khayyám, and Others by Edward S. Holden

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EDWARD S. HOLDEN


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FLOWERS FROM PERSIAN
GARDENS: SELECTIONS
FROM THE POEMS OF
SAADI, HAFIZ, OMAR KHAY-
YÁM, AND OTHERS. BY
EDWARD S. HOLDEN

*Only the bird of the morning knoweth
the worth of the book of the rose; for
not every one who readeth the page
understandeth the meaning. — HAFIZ*

NEW YORK · R. H. RUSSELL
PUBLISHER · MDCCCCII



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
A list of some translations of the Persian Poets and of a few essays on Persian poetry	6
Selections from the poems of Firdusi (A.D. 940-1020)	13
Selections from the poems of Omar Khayyám (XI and XII. centuries)	59
Sonnet — Omar Khayyám — J. W. R.	60
Selections from the poems of Nizami (born A.D. 1140/41 — Died A.D. 1202) . . .	67
Selections from the poems of Saadi (A.D. 1190-1291)	75
Sonnet — What Saadi said of his Rose-Garden — E. S. H.	76
Selections from the poems of Hafiz (XIV. Century)	91
Selections from the poems of Jami (A.D. 1411-1492)	133
Selections from the poems of Jalal Uddin Rumi (XIII. century)	151

24

25

26

27

28


29



INTRODUCTION

THE selections that follow have been chosen mostly from well-known books. The sole criterion for each choice has been that the words of the translation should happily set forth the poet's meaning. Oriental words and names are here printed as they are found in the sources from which they are taken. To do otherwise would be pure pedantry in a book which is not addressed to scholars, but to general readers. A few specimens of translation into Greek, Latin, German, and French have been chosen. They are instructive in many respects, and each one is, in its way, famous.

One word may be spoken on the matter of translating Oriental poetry into the languages of the West. One must seek, as Professor Charles Eliot Norton has well said, "not a translation but the re-delivery of a poetic inspiration." Orientals are human beings like unto ourselves. They have our own wants, hopes, fears, delights; and they seek their satisfactions in like fashion. Any graphic and veracious recital of human feeling interests and excites. While the form of the poetry of the Persians is as alien to us as that of the Tartars, the feelings struggling for expression are not foreign. We are of Aryan blood as they are,




FLOWERS FROM PERSIAN GARDENS

and thousands of years of different race-experience have not shut the door between us. During all those centuries the culture of the East has, in one way or another, touched the West. Their Art, their Architecture, their Chivalry, — transformed, it is true, — have influenced our own most intimately.

Alexander the Great destroyed at Persepolis buildings more magnificent than any others ever seen on the round world, not excepting the monuments of Athens.

The looms of Persia made imperial Constantinople splendid. Chemistry is a Persian word, and the Arabs borrowed their knowledge of the art from Iran. All the drugs of Hippocrates and of the ancient Greeks have Persian names. The Persians transmitted the immortal fables and apologues of India to the Arabs, and through them to the West. The works of a Persian sage — Avicenna — were text-books in the University of Paris so late as the time of Louis the Fourteenth. When Benjamin Franklin was seeking for a new chapter of our Bible, he found it in Saadi's parable of Abraham and the Fire-worshipper. Our little children are bred up on the tales of the Arabian Nights, a great part of which are of Persian origin.

In a thousand unacknowledged ways the West has been taught by the East. When England was a wilderness, inhabited by savages, Persia was polite, cultivated, ingenious, learned and illustrious. Whether we know it or not,





INTRODUCTION

we have learned much from them, and our thoughts still respond to theirs.

It is only the form of their thoughts, and especially of their poetic thoughts, that is alien. It is worth while to dwell a little on this point. One of the odes of Hafiz begins, in the Persian, as follows (the Persian is written in italics and necessary words are supplied in parentheses):

(The) entrance (of my) face (that is) my eye (is) thy nest:

(With) courtesy increasing, sit down (in this) house (it is) thy house.

The meaning of Hafiz must, here as elsewhere, be reached by a series of approximations. At each step we must come nearer to occidental forms, always preserving the Oriental feeling — if we can. Hafiz would certainly have accepted the following couplet as his own:

The vestibule of my face (my eye) is a nest for you:

Be gracious, oh, sit down; my house is your house.

The learned editor of Hafiz — Rosenzweig — has versified this in German:

Meines Auges Halle will ich
Dir zum Neste weih'n
Sass' in ihr dich gnädig nieder,
Denn das Haus ist dein!

This ode has also been made part of an English sonnet: