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1879: the first printing of the Fourth Version, London, with one hundred and one quatrains.

1884: the first illustrated edition: Boston, with Vedder's drawings.

1885: the first New York edition, issued by The Grolier Club.

1889: the first printing of the Fifth Version, London.

1894: the first printing in Portland, Maine: the first of Thomas B. Mosher's many editions of this poem.

1906: the first Australian printing, at Melbourne.

1910: the first German printing, at Leipzig.

The Centennial Edition planned for publication by the Colby College Press this month presumably marks the first time that this famous work has been published in Waterville. The printing has been done in Portland by the distinguished Anthoensen Press.



### PREPARING FOR THE CENTENARY OF FITZGERALD'S RUBAIYAT

*By* CARL J. WEBER

EMILY DICKINSON remarks in one of her poems that the bustle in a house the morning after death is the solemnest of industries. The bustle in the house of the literary historian as he prepares for the arrival of the year 1959 is, if not so solemn, at least as noticeable and as emphatic as the bustle of which Emily Dickinson writes. And with good reason. For the year 1859 was the most phenomenally productive year of the entire Victorian Age, and libraries will be kept busy throughout the year 1959 celebrating one centenary after another.

One of these anniversaries is bound to stand out—at least in the literary world—with great prominence, for in that world men have quite generally come “to think of

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FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát* as the crowning glory of Victorian poetry." <sup>1</sup>

When, however, the anniversary-minded Victorian scholar tries to dust off the furniture in the literary house in preparation for the centenary of this "crowning glory of Victorian poetry," he runs into difficulty, in fact into a whole series of difficulties. The "authorities" and the text-book-makers do not agree. To begin with: on exactly what date does the FitzGerald centenary fall?

When *The Variorum and Definitive Edition of the Poetical and Prose Writings of Edward FitzGerald* was published with an Introduction by Edmund Gosse, there seemed little doubt about the date of publication of the *Rubáiyát*. With an assurance that seemed based on certitude, Gosse referred to "the now so-precious pamphlet which Quaritch issued stillborn on the 15th of February, 1859." <sup>2</sup> Two years later, when Thomas Wright's *Life of Edward FitzGerald* appeared, the biographer repeated this assurance that FitzGerald's "poem was ready for issue on February 15th as a small quarto pamphlet." <sup>3</sup> By this time, however, Gosse had either changed his mind, or had been overruled by Richard Garnett (who had the weight of the British Museum to support him); for when *English Literature: An Illustrated Record* by Garnett & Gosse appeared, it specified "publication on the 15th of January, 1859, of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam*." <sup>4</sup> Obviously, the date given in the Definitive Edition was not definitive after all.

The scholar who works his way through FitzGerald's correspondence eventually discovers that both these dates must be wrong. The January date is impossible because FitzGerald was then just reclaiming his manuscript from

<sup>1</sup> Hardin Craig, *A History of English Literature* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 570.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to the *Definitive Edition* (New York, Doubleday, Page & Co., 1902), p. xxxi.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Wright, *Life* (London, Grant Richards, 1904; 2 vols.), II, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Garnett and Edmund Gosse, *English Literature: An Illustrated Record* (London, Macmillan & Co., 1904, 4 vols.), IV, 333.

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the timid and hesitant hands of J. W. Parker, editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, where it had been lying for an entire year. The February date is similarly negated by Fitzgerald's announced plan to enlarge his manuscript "to near as much again." Finally, by the end of March, the pamphlet was in print and "old Fitz" had a copy to send to his friend E. B. Cowell in India. On March 31, 1859, Fitzgerald wrote to ask Bernard Quaritch to advertise the work, and on April 5 he asked for forty copies for himself, out of the 250 which had been printed. In the *Athenaeum* for April 9, Quaritch advertised the poem as "just published." In view of the fact that magazines often make their appearance a week or ten days before the date printed upon the cover or upon the title-page, we are left in doubt as to just how long before April 9, 1859, Fitzgerald's work was actually published. Presumably, some time during (or shortly before) the first week in April. The first day of April cannot be far wrong. If one should choose to fix the date of publication as March 31, 1859, that would have the additional appropriateness of its being Fitzgerald's fiftieth birthday.

What happened *after* the date of publication? In the course of looking over all the comments which deal with the memorable first appearance of this "crowning glory of Victorian poetry," one becomes aware of the fact that there are many weeds to be cleared from the Persian garden before it can be called ready for visitors on the centenary occasion.

Gosse's statement in 1902 has already been quoted: the pamphlet "issued stillborn."<sup>2</sup> Thomas Wright explains what this word "stillborn" means. Speaking of the 210 copies of the *Rubaiyat* which Fitzgerald left in Quaritch's hands, Wright says: "For many months little was heard of them."<sup>3</sup> Garnett, however, reduces the "little" to zero. The *Rubaiyat*, he says, "attracted no attention at first."<sup>4</sup> And it is this statement which has been accepted—and has

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been quoted, usually without change of language—by the great majority of later commentators. “It attracted no attention.” These words are parroted by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,<sup>5</sup> George B. Woods,<sup>6</sup> Stephens, Beck & Snow,<sup>7</sup> and A. C. Baugh.<sup>8</sup> It “attracted little attention”;<sup>9</sup> “. . . absolutely no attention”;<sup>10</sup> “it lay neglected.”<sup>11</sup> Tens of thousands of American students have learned their “facts” from these books.

And after the “many months” of neglect, what then? The weeds in the garden now multiply apace. Garnett & Gosse lead off in scattering the seeds of confusion. The poem, they report, “sank to the penny box on the book-stalls.”<sup>4</sup> What book-stalls (plural)? Garnett & Gosse do not say. Cunliffe, Prye & Young specify that the stalls (plural) were “second-hand bookstalls.”<sup>11</sup> Snyder & Martin are equally specific about the “second-hand,” but they reduce the stalls to the singular: “a second-hand book stall.”<sup>12</sup> Whose they do not say. Every one knows that Bernard Quaritch was the first-hand dealer. But who was the implied *second* bookseller? No one names him. Humphrey Hare says the books were “remaindered.”<sup>13</sup> If so, to whom did Quaritch sell them? We are never told. Harold Nicolson, writing in his *Swinburne* for the English-Men-of-Letters series, spoke of “a discarded copy of *Omar*

<sup>5</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed. (1929), IX, 335.

<sup>6</sup> George B. Woods, *Poetry of the Victorian Period* (Chicago, Scott, Foresman & Co., 1930), p. 994.

<sup>7</sup> James Stephens, Edwin L. Beck, and Royall H. Snow, *Victorian and Later English Poets* (New York, American Book Co., 1934), p. 903.

<sup>8</sup> A. C. Baugh, *A Literary History of England* (New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 1417.

<sup>9</sup> J. W. Bowyer and J. L. Brooks, *The Victorian Age* (New York, F. S. Crofts & Co., 1938), p. 469; repeated *verbatim* in Second Edition, 1954.

<sup>10</sup> B. D. N. Grebanier and Stith Thompson, *English Literature* (New York, Cordon Co., 1940, 2 vols.), II, 662.

<sup>11</sup> J. W. Cunliffe, J. F. A. Pyre, and Karl Young, *Century Readings in English Literature* (New York, Century Co., 1910), p. 860; repeated in 2nd ed. (1925), 3rd ed. (1929), and 4th ed. (1937).

<sup>12</sup> F. B. Snyder and R. G. Martin, *A Book of English Literature* (New York, Macmillan, 1916), p. 819; 2nd ed (1924), p. 945; 3rd ed. (1932); 4th ed. (1943), II, 577.

<sup>13</sup> Humphrey Hare, *Swinburne* (London, Witherby, 1949), p. 74.

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*Khayyam*” discovered in 1862 “on a cheap bookstall.”<sup>14</sup>

After all this apparent agreement about remaindered copies, discarded copies, second-hand copies—an agreement that stretches back over more than half a century—a literary historian must be bold indeed to denounce all these reports as false; and his statement that the *Rubáiyát* was *not* remaindered, and *not* discarded, and *not* sold second-hand will doubtless sound like the “weke, weke” of Fra Lippo Lippi’s “softling of a wee white mouse” in Robert Browning’s poem, and will doubtless have just as much effect as would that mouse in correcting the false impressions made upon the minds of the tens of thousands of readers of the books referred to and quoted from above.

How long did FitzGerald’s poem have to wait before the apparently “stillborn” waif was rescued and revived? Bowyer & Brooks say “in time.”<sup>9</sup> Grebanier & Thompson content themselves with “eventually.”<sup>10</sup> “After a time” is the non-committal report of Thomas Wright.<sup>3</sup> Other braver souls, or rash adventurers, are more specific. The rescue, according to Stephens, Beck & Snow, took place “the year following . . . publication.”<sup>7</sup> The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says “in 1860”<sup>5</sup> and Woods repeats that it was “in 1860.”<sup>6</sup> Hare, however, says “towards the end of 1861,”<sup>13</sup> and Edmund Gosse votes for “early in the year 1862.”<sup>15</sup> This disagreement about the date of the rescue is all the more surprising—and regrettable—in that many of the quoted statements were written long after the published correspondence of Edward FitzGerald made it possible to cast light into dark places. Even more regrettable is the fact that the name of FitzGerald’s rescuer has been allowed for more than half a century to drop almost entirely out of sight, and the badges and medals for heroic rescuing have been handed out to other men.

The trouble began when mere hearsay or idle gossip was set down in printed books. John Glyde, for example,

<sup>14</sup> Harold Nicolson, *Swinburne* (New York, Macmillan, 1926), p. 67.

<sup>15</sup> Edmund Gosse, *Life of Swinburne* (London, Macmillan, 1917), p. 94.

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reported in 1900 that "there is a legend floating about that such remarkable men as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Algernon Charles Swinburne, and Captain Richard Burton were among those who discovered the hidden treasure."<sup>16</sup> Four years later, Thomas Wright gave further support to this "legend" by stating that "by great good fortune, copies fell into the hands of D. G. Rossetti, Mr. Swinburne, Sir Richard Burton, and other men."<sup>3</sup> The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* identified one of these "other men": "in 1860 Rossetti discovered it, and Swinburne and Lord Houghton quickly followed."<sup>5</sup> The belief that "Rossetti discovered it" is shared by a long list of commentators: Woods<sup>6</sup> in 1930, Snyder & Martin (3rd ed.)<sup>12</sup> in 1932, Stephens, Beck & Snow<sup>7</sup> in 1934, Bowyer & Brooks<sup>9</sup> in 1938, Grebanier & Thompson<sup>10</sup> in 1940, Chew (in *Baugh*)<sup>8</sup> in 1948, all assign the discovery to Rossetti. Hare is quite circumstantial about Rossetti's appearance in the rôle of Christopher Columbus: "Rossetti, with his usual astonishing perception, . . . found them [the pamphlets . . . and] bought a copy."<sup>13</sup> Nicolson, on the other hand, will have none of Rossetti's services. According to him (Nicolson), it was Algernon Charles Swinburne who, drifting back to London in 1862, "discovered on a cheap bookstall a discarded copy of FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyam*. Waving the book above his flaming head he fluttered into Meredith's cottage. . . ." <sup>13</sup>

Even with the knowledge that the assertion will sound like another "weke weke" of the "wee white mouse" of pedantry, one can only state that *all* of these claims of discovery are false. In preparing for the FitzGerald centenary, one should certainly make every effort to set the story of the rescue of the *Rubáiyát* straight, and the best way to begin is to root up all the weeds that have grown in the Persian garden.

<sup>16</sup> John Glyde, *Life of Edward Fitz-Gerald* (Chicago, Herbert S. Stone & Co., 1900), p. 170.

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1. The *Rubāiyāt* was *not* published "on the 15th of January 1859."
2. It was *not* published "on the 15th of February."
3. The first edition was *not* "remaineder."
4. It was *not* sold second-hand.
5. It was *not* discarded, unless one means by that word no more than the fact that the price was reduced.
6. It did *not* lie neglected in bookstalls: it was never in any stall other than Quaritch's.
7. It was *not* discovered the year after publication.
8. It was *not* discovered "in 1860" and *not* "towards the end of 1861."
9. It was *not* discovered by Rossetti.
10. It was *not* discovered by Swinburne.
11. It was *not* discovered by Lord Houghton.
12. It was *not* discovered by "Captain Burton."

The amazing thing about the discovery of the *Rubāiyāt*, as well as about the date of the discovery, is the fact that both the name of the discoverer and the date have long been available to scholars and literary historians; and yet, among recent American editors and historians of English literature, no one except FitzGerald's biographer, Alfred McKinley Terhune (of whose excellent book I shall speak later), seems to have paid any attention to them. In the Introduction which Edmund Gosse wrote in 1902 for the so-called Definitive Edition of FitzGerald's works, he stated: "Mr. Whitley Stokes found it, and he seems to have been the first. . . . He gave a copy to Dante Rossetti on 10th July 1861."<sup>2</sup> In the light of Gosse's notorious carelessness in details of literary history, one might well question his reliability here, especially since his statement contradicts the numerous assertions already quoted. Fortunately, however, we have independent corroboration—and from two different sources—corroboration of the fact that it was Whitley Stokes, and Whitley Stokes alone, who "discovered" the *Rubāiyāt* at Quaritch's bookshop.

Swinburne told the whole story as far back as 1896. In a letter to Clement K. Shorter dated March 4, 1896, Swinburne wrote: "As to the immortal tent-maker . . . I was introduced to him by D. G. Rossetti, who had just been

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introduced himself . . . by Mr. Whitley Stokes.”<sup>17</sup> Swinburne’s report was, of course, given to Shorter nearly thirty-four years after the event, and memory can play funny tricks after such a lapse of time. Fortunately, however, support of Swinburne’s account comes from Quaritch himself. And what Quaritch told FitzGerald, FitzGerald passed on to his friend E. B. Cowell. In a letter dated July 8, 1870, FitzGerald wrote: “Quaritch . . . sent me . . . a funny account of what he calls the Disappearance of the first Edition—which was bought up he says by the Editor of the *Saturday Review* (Wilks?), who (at a penny a piece) gave them to friends.”

FitzGerald’s queried “Wilks?” need puzzle no one. Difficulty in recalling names is so common that few persons will see anything unusual in “old Fitz’s” telescopic transformation of WhItLey stoKeS into “Wilks.” True, Stokes was not “the Editor of the *Saturday Review*.” At this date, the Editor-in-Chief was John Douglas Cook.<sup>18</sup> But throughout Cook’s editorship, there was a distinguished list of contributing editors, and during the period 1857 to 1860 Whitley Stokes contributed learned articles on philology.

Whitley Stokes (1830-1909) is now a shadowy figure,<sup>19</sup> but in 1860 he was well known as a Celtic scholar. His father was Dr. William Stokes (1804-1878), Regius Professor of Medicine in Dublin University. Whitley was born in Dublin and graduated from the university there. Before he left Ireland for London, he acquired an interest in old Irish literature and eventually became quite an authority on Irish texts. Among his earliest publications is a book entitled *Irish Glosses* (1860). This, then, is the man, this thirty-year-old philologist, who, passing Qua-

<sup>17</sup> Swinburne, *Letters* (New York, John Lane Co., 1919), p. 243; and (London, Heinemann, 1927), p. 462.

<sup>18</sup> See M. M. Bevington, *The Saturday Review* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Professor Terhune mentions him but gives no more than a mere mention and does not link him with Quaritch’s “editor.”

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ritch's bookstall, was attracted by the pamphlet with the Persian title, bought a copy, liked what he found in it, later bought additional copies and gave them away. One, for example, went to Stokes' Dublin friend and one-time host, Sir Samuel Ferguson, and another copy went to Dante Gabriel Rossetti.<sup>20</sup> Whitley Stokes is, then, *the* discoverer of the poem. All the others were merely introduced to the discovery, introduced either by Stokes himself or by some one to whom Stokes had made his find known.

In 1862 Stokes went to India, served there as legal Member of Council, and returned to London to find Fitzgerald's *Rubāiyāt* famous and himself forgotten. He died in 1909. In 1911 the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* ignored him, and the 1955 edition of the *Encyclopedia Americana* misspells his name.

Many of the errors which continue to mar the pages of the textbooks and literary histories cited above could have been avoided, if only the authors and editors of those books had carefully scrutinized A. McK. Terhune's authoritative *Life of Edward FitzGerald* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947). True, some of the misleading and inaccurate books were published prior to 1947, before Professor Terhune's biography of the poet was available; but others have been published *after* 1947, and a number of the earlier publications have been revised and republished since that date, but republished without taking advantage of the aid and guidance offered by Terhune's scholarly study. Offered but not accepted. The approaching centenary provides fresh occasion for our lamenting the fact that scholarly services are often ignored. In the course of the past dozen years, the Terhune book in the Colby College Library has been in only six hands other

<sup>20</sup> According to the Census of extant copies printed in the Centennial Edition of the *Rubāiyāt* (Waterville: Colby College Press, 1959; publication date: March 31, 1959), both of these copies are now in American libraries. The Census makes clear, however, that there are less than a score of copies of the 1859 edition in public or institutional libraries in America. One of these is the Colby College Library.

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than those of the present reporter; and if it be thought that this evidence from a small college library is neither typical nor representative, let me add that the copy in the Harvard University Library has been charged out to readers only ten times in twelve years. No wonder the weeds continue to grow in the Persian garden! No wonder fiction is quoted as "fact" and no wonder (as was stated on the first page of this article) "the bustle in the house of the literary historian as he prepares for the arrival of the year 1959 is . . . [and has to be] noticeable and . . . emphatic. . ."



### SOME RECENT ACQUISITIONS

**I**N the February 1958 issue of this quarterly, the editor remarked: "Won't some good friend of the Colby Library find a copy of the second *Amphora* volume [selections from the later catalogues of Thomas Bird Mosher] . . . and . . . present it to the Library?" Our invitation has been accepted. Thanks to the prompt and generous efforts of Dr. Frederic E. Camp (a member of the Board of Trustees), the Library now boasts a mint copy of *Amphora No. 2*, one of the 925 copies printed in 1926. As a frontispiece it carries the portrait of Mosher of which Dr. Frederick A. Pottle spoke in his address to the Library Associates in April 1958, and we are happy in finding among the contents of the volume two contributions by Colby graduates: (1) the tribute to Mosher by Harry Lyman Koopman, '80 (pages 98-99), and (2) the glowing account of Mosher by Dr. Pottle, '17 (pages 115-126). This gift from Dr. Camp is a perfect illustration of those features of Mosher's books to which Dr. Pottle called attention in the last three sentences of his affectionate tribute to the Portland publisher: "Every book he made a work of art, lavishing on it every attention to make it perfect in size and shape, in texture of