



POEMS FROM THE DIVAN OF HAFIZ

GERTRUDE LOWTHIAN BELL

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**POEMS FROM THE DIVAN OF
HAFIZ**

**TRANSLATED BY
GERTRUDE LOWTHIAN BELL**

Poems from the Divan of Hafiz by Gertrude Lowthian Bell.

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CONTENTS

To Hafiz of Shiraz

Introduction

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

arabes. Il y faut voir une révolte de l'esprit arien contre l'effroyante simplicité de l'esprit sémitique, excluant par la rigueur de sa théologie toute dévotion particulière, toute doctrine secrète, toute combinaison religieuse vivante et variée."¹⁵

Those who have written poems "réellement à double sens" are careful to insist upon the mighty secrets that their words convey. "The things which wise men, who are sometimes called drunkards and sometimes seers," says one of them, "wish to express by the words wine, cup and cup-bearer, musician, magian, and Christian girdle, are so many profound mysteries which sometimes they translate by an enigma and sometimes they reveal." The symbols used by each writer are more or less the same; there is an accepted Sufi code with which the initiated are acquainted. "The nightingale, and none beside, knows the full worth of the rose," sings Hafiz, "for many a one reads the leaf and understands not the meaning thereof." But though we may not all be nightingales, we have some guide to the interpretation of the leaf. Many of the words in the Sufi dictionary have been expounded to the outer world. The tavern, for instance, is the place of instruction or worship, of which the tavern-keeper is the teacher or priest, and the wine the spirit of divine knowledge which is poured out for his disciples the idol is God; beauty is the divine perfection shining locks the expansion of his glory; down on the cheek denotes the cloud of spirits that encircles his throne; and a black mole is the point of indivisible unity. The catalogue might be continued to any extent; almost every word has a vague and somewhat shifting significance in the language of mysticism, which he who has a mind for such exercises may decipher if he choose.

Hafiz is rather the forerunner than the founder of this school of poets. It is equally unsatisfactory to give a completely mystical or a completely material interpretation to his songs. He wrote of the world as he found it. In his experience pleasure and religion were the two most important incentives to human action; he ignored neither the one nor the other. I am very conscious that my appreciation of the poet is that of the Western. Exactly on what grounds he is appreciated in the East it is difficult to determine, and what his compatriots make of his teaching it is perhaps impossible to understand.

¹⁵ *Cantique des Cantiques.*

