

THE FREE LANCE.

*His good blade carves the casques of 'men, for the Free Lance
thrusteth sure."*

VOL. XVI.

JANUARY, 1903.

No. 7.

SOME READINGS OF OMAR KHAYYAM.

Neither Omar Khayyám the man, nor Omar the poet, was ever popular in his own country, Persia. He lived at Naishápûr, in the province of Khorásson, during the latter half of our eleventh and the first quarter of our twelfth centuries. Under the sultanate of Malik Shah he came to Merv, and obtained great praise and favor from the sultan for his proficiency in science. "But (to quote Fitzgerald's account of his life and writings) though the Sultan showered favors upon him, his Audacity of Thought and Speech caused him to be regarded askance in his own Time and Country." Especially was he hated and dreaded by the Súfi, with whose mysticism and formal recognition of Islamism the thought of the time was permeated.

Omar Khayyám, as well as being in disfavor in his own country, has had his writings but little transmitted abroad. There are but few translations of the *Rubáiyát*, the French version by J. B. Nicolas, the English ones by Whinfield and Edward Fitzgerald being probably the only ones worthy of mention. It is usually supposed that in Fitzgerald's translation (the best known of the three) there is more of Fitzgerald than Khayyám, but Persian scholars tell us nothing could be further from the truth. The versions of Nicolas and Whinfield are said to supply a closer mechanical reflection of the sense of each quatrain; but no one denies that Fitzgerald's