

MEDICAL BOOKS IN TIPPOO SULTAN'S LIBRARY*

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I N the course of my search for old medical books, especially those written by medical men who served in India on the common diseases and treatments prevailing in the country, in the 18th and 19th centuries I fortunately encountered upon a veritable vein of gold in Mysore when I came across a list of books in the library of the Tippoo Sultan of Mysore, distinguished for his enlightened patronage of learning and reputed for his deep and extensive scholarship. He was a great lover of books and owned a magnificent collection of very valuable and rare volumes.

After the fall of Tippoo Sultan and the capture of Srirangapatnam in 1809, the British displayed commendable foresight and devotion to science in their decision to preserve the library of Tippoo Sultan. A few manuscripts were selected for presentation to the Asiatic Society, Universities of Cambridge and Oxford and the East India Company. The major portion of the library, however, was transferred to Calcutta, for the instruction of the Company's employees in the Sciences of Europe and Asiatic languages.

A descriptive catalogue of this collection, "The Oriental Library of Tippoo Sultan" was prepared by Charles Stewart, Professor of Oriental Languages at Hertford College, and printed at the Cambridge University Press in 1809.

According to this author, the library of Tippoo Sultan consisted of nearly 2,000 volumes in Arabic, Persian and Hindustani. Many of the manuscripts were beautifully written and artistically bound, but a great many had unfortunately lost the first and the last pages, making it extremely difficult to discover the author or the period in which they were composed. One would like to know whether there were similar books and manuscripts in the European languages and if so, where they are today.

Professor Stewart writes that they were part of the acquisitions by Tippoo's illustrious father. "Some of them had formerly belonged to the Mohammadan Kings of

Bijapur and Golconda. But the greater number had been the property of Nawab Nasir Addowlah Abd el Vahib Khan, brother of Mohammad Ali of Carnatic and were taken by Hyder in the Fort of Chittor during 1780."

The Arabic books, forming less than a quarter, consist of the standard works of Al Razes, Avicenna, etc. The descriptive catalogue of Oriental books contains 2 lists of medical books (68 in all): (1) The section entitled "Physic books, Persian"; (2) "Arabic Books". Nearly three-fourths of the books are in Persian. They are the more important, as some of them belong to the early part of the 12th and the 13th centuries, and emanated from the great centres of culture such as Khwarizm, Jorjanny, Khorassan, Bokkhara, Shiraz, etc.

Besides many old and authoritative works on Medicine copied from Persia and Turkestan, there are also some treatises which the Persian and Turkish Physicians wrote in India, under the patronage of the Indian Rulers. No. 4 in the section of Persian Medical treatises, is a book on "Gynecology and Pediatrics", written by Mansur Mahommed, and dedicated to Sikander Shah II, of 'Dhely'—round about 1300 A.D.

No. 9 is called "Mine of Remedies", written by Bava Bhauz Khan. The date is given as 1512, and the book is said to be dedicated to Sikander Shah of Dhely. (The book itself must be re-examined to check these points.) -

No. 18 is *Tibbi Akbari* (translation of the Arabic work); No. 19, *Tyurribati Akbari* is a work on physic and personal hygiene; No. 20, *Corababini Cadaru*, contains the Pharmacopæia of Hindustan. All the three books (Nos. 18, 19, 20) were composed by Mohammad Akbar Arziny, Physician to Emperor Aurangazeb, to whom they are dedicated.

No. 21 is a treatise on Medicine, Food and Clothes, by Mohammad Riza and dedicated to Emperor Aurangazeb.

Next, we may mention a few books, important for the history of Medicine in Madras. No. 24 is a treatise on Diseases, composed in 1747; No. 25 is an appendix to the above; No. 26 is a treatise, giving the

* In commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the great Tippoo Sultan of Mysore.

Pharmacopæia of Medicines used in Carnatic and compiled in 1751 A.D. The author of these three books was Sekunder Ben Ismail of Constantinople, Physician to the Nawab Mohammad Aly Khan of Arcot, to whom the books are dedicated.

Lastly, books written under the direction of Tippoo Sultan himself are very interesting and instructive (Cat. page 113). These are important for the history of Medicine in Mysore. Some of them are in the traditional or orthodox style.

No. 42, *Bihral Munafi* (The Sea of Profit) is a treatise on midwifery, treatment of children, enchantments, exorcisms of devils, etc., by Mulud Mohammad, dedicated to Tippoo Sultan (1794 A.D.).

No. 43 is a general treatise on Medicine, alphabetically arranged, composed by Mohammad Nasir Afshrar Turk and dedicated to Tippoo Sultan.

Other volumes illustrate the new trends and influences. Besides, they clearly establish the fact that contrary to the prejudiced reports of European historians, Tippoo was very progressive in his outlook and views, and encouraged the study of the European literature on Medicine, trickling in slowly through the trader, the diplomat and the doctor. Knowledge and particularly Medical Science, was liberally patronised and actively encouraged by him, irrespective of its source or country; the knowledge itself was freely incorporated and utilised for the benefit of the people. This laudable spirit of Tippoo Sultan is amply borne out by the following works:

No. 44. *Kanun Der Ilmi Tibb*. A translation of the complete London Dispensatory: The date and the name of the translator are not given. The translator says in his preface that this work is the result of the united efforts of all the learned (physicians) of Europe and translated by the Order of Tippoo Sultan;

No. 45. *Terjumeah Ketabi Angriz*. (Translation of the English treatise on Electrical and Medical Experiments);

No. 46. *Turjumah Ketabi Freng*. (Translation of Dr. Cochrane's treatise on "Twist of the Intestines".)

In addition to these books in the section on Physic, there is, in the section on Arts and Sciences, a book, No. 9 (page 97 of the Cat.) called "A Treatise on Botany and Natural History" translated by the Order of Tippoo Sultan from French and English books. It has good etchings of plants.

The Unknown Authors.—In a footnote (p. 97) Professor Stewart says, "It appears that Tippoo Sultan was an encourager and patron of the Arts and it is stated that 45 books on different sciences were either compiled or translated from different languages under his immediate inspection or auspices. It is probable that some of our unfortunate countrymen, who were so long detained in captivity and had thereby acquired a knowledge of the Dekkani languages assisted him in these pursuits". It is also possible that there were some Europeans in his employ as personal physicians and surgeons, who were encouraged to do literary work under the patronage of the Sultan.

A SOUTH SEAS OBSERVATORY

THE Bosscha Sterrewacht Observatory at Lembang in Indonesia, which was seriously damaged during the war, is to receive material assistance organized by UNESCO.

American and Dutch astronomers are collaborating to ensure the construction of a new type of astronomical telescope, consisting of two minors, one of them 3 ft. in diameter.

The Bosscha Observatory is situated in what the famous astronomer Dr. Gerard P. Kuiper of the University of Chicago Yerkey's Observatory describes as "one of the most beautiful spots on earth".

The opportunities for good research work

at this observatory are great, because of its favourable location 7° south of the Equator, which makes the southern stars visible; and its adequate elevation, 4,200 ft., which ensures a good climate.

The observatory was heavily damaged during the war and the young Director and his two assistants died at the hands of the Japanese. Chicago University and Yerkey Observatory, the University of Leiden, Holland, the University of Louvain, Belgium, and Unesco are shortly to sign an agreement whereby this Far East observatory will receive help, and thus be able to play an important part in advancing astronomical knowledge. (Courtesy of *Courier*, UNESCO, 1-11-1949.)