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THE TOMB OF AVICENNA.

SIR WILLIAM OSLER has recently suggested that the tomb of Avicenna should be restored. An account of a pilgrimage to the last resting place of that famous philosopher and physician at Hamadan is therefore especially opportune. It is contained in the July number of the *St. Bartholomew's Hospital Journal*. The pilgrim was Dr. A. R. Neligan, physician to H.B.M.'s Legation, Teheran. Abu Ali al Hussein ibn Abdullah abn Sina, to give the old Arab physician his full name, was born near Bokhara in 980 A.D. At 16, after studying mathematics, philosophy, metaphysics, and medicine, he was already practising as a doctor. At 17 he was appointed physician to the Amir of Bokhara. This post gave him access to the celebrated library of Bokhara, and thus enabled him to pursue his studies. After travelling in north-eastern Persia he settled at Hamadan, where he spent the rest of his life. He became physician to the ruling prince, Shams-ed-Dowleh. But, says Dr. Neligan, like many a Persian doctor of the present day, Avicenna took to politics and became a Minister. The sea of Persian politics has always been particularly stormy, and therefore it is not surprising that Avicenna was often in peril of his life, and was at one time thrown into prison. After a time he made his escape from Hamadan and took refuge in Isfahan, where the governor welcomed him and made him his physician. In that capacity he made several campaigns, and in the course of one of these, which was directed against Hamadan, he was attacked by colic, and thus it came to pass that he died in the town from which

he had fled, and was buried there. Wherever Avicenna was and in whatever circumstances he found himself he was an indefatigable writer. His varied adventures did not prevent his going on with his great treatise, the *Kanun*, or Canon of Medicine. In that work, which was divided into five books, Avicenna collected all that was best in the medical knowledge of his time. It was the textbook at the universities of Louvain and Montpellier up to the middle of the seventeenth century, and it is read in Persia, Arabia, and India at the present day. It was taught in the royal university at Teheran as recently as twenty years ago. It was translated into Hebrew and Latin, and the Latin version went through thirty editions. Avicenna is said to have written in all more than 100 books, most of them dealing with medicine, but others with logic, philosophy, music, natural history, astronomy, and physics. His grave, says Dr. Neligan, is in a simple brick building near the steep banks of the river which flows through Hamadan. A little mausoleum of fire-burnt bricks with a mud dome stands at one end of a small compound, surrounded by a low stone and mud wall. The building is square, but inside there are small arches at each corner, which give it the appearance of being eight-sided. The internal measurements are as follows: Floor, 15 ft. by 15 ft.; apex of dome from floor, 16 ft. The floor is paved with large square bricks. Immediately opposite the doorway is the tombstone, 49 in. long, 21 in. wide, and 24 in. high. The inscription is carved in large bold characters. It begins with the usual invocation "To Him who is and does not die"; this is followed by a verse from the Koran reciting the virtues of the Almighty. Then come lines of verse, in the translation of which, as well as of the verses that follow, Dr. Neligan acknowledges the help of his friend Moin-ul-Vazareh: "Worthy testimony upon earth of the omnipotence and wisdom of God, Abu Ali Sina sprang from non-existence into being in the year 373. He had mastered the sum total of knowledge in 391; in 427 he bade farewell to this transitory world." Then comes the usual conclusion to epitaphs on the graves of Mohammedan sages or celebrated men: "The death of Sheikh Abu Ali Sina, may his tomb be surrounded by light! 427."