

18 111 1012

AVICENNA'S TOMB.

THE GREAT NATIONAL SAGE OF PERSIA.

LONDON, FRIDAY.

Professor Margoliouth and Sir William Osler (a correspondent of the "Manchester Guardian" writes) were up from Oxford this afternoon at the Persian Society to tell us something about the great Persian philosopher, poet, and medical man Avicenna. Professor Edward Browne was in the chair, and both before and after the lectures told us many interesting things about Avicenna's place in Persian literature, especially insisting on his true Persian origin and quality, though most of his writings were in Arabic.

Professor Margoliouth dwelt chiefly upon Avicenna's exposition of Aristotle, though he seems to have been ignorant of the "Politics" and "Ethics," or perhaps indifferent to them as peculiarly Greek books. A good deal of Plato was mingled with his teaching, his conception of mankind as birds in cages being quoted as a Platonic allegory, for only by death does man escape from the cage of material things into freedom and perfect knowledge. Similarly his discourse on love was based on Plato's "Symposium," early love being the discipline preparatory to the love of God. Avicenna must be partially a mystic, and was much occupied with semi-theological problems of predestination and free will.

Even Avicenna's medicine, as Sir William Osler went on to point out, was largely theoretic rather than experimental or strictly scientific. Yet his "Canon of Medicine" might be called the most famous medical text-book ever written, and it was retranslated and reprinted in Europe down to the middle of the seventeenth century. Avicenna died in 1037, and part of Sir William Osler's object in coming was to further his plan of restoring the philosopher's tomb at Hamadan. Unhappily, Hamadan lies within the Russian sphere, and one of the audience suggested that the Tsar might be asked to head the subscription list (about £600 is required). To this Professor Browne indignantly objected as one of the worst possible insults to the great national sage of Persia.
