

Original Articles.

WILLIAM HAMILTON AND THE EMBASSY
TO DELHI.*

By D. G. CRAWFORD,
LIEUT.-COLONEL, I.M.S.,
Civil Surgeon, Hughli.

OF all the medical officers who have served in India during the past three centuries, William Hamilton is probably the most famous, and is certainly the one who has been the greatest benefactor of his country. The story of Gabriel Boughton may be for the most part apocryphal, but there is no doubt of the reality of the services of William Hamilton to his country, and to his masters, the East India Company. Yet his name does not appear in the Dictionary of National Biography, though that work records the lives of at least sixty medical officers of the Indian services, few of whom have done their country service in any degree approaching to that accomplished by him.

William Hamilton was a cadet of the family of Hamilton of Dalzell, and originally came out to India as Surgeon of the frigate *Sherborne*. The whole ship's company appear to have been perpetually in a state of chronic mutiny. Hamilton was not on good terms with the Captain, Henry Cornwall, and, after standing by him in one mutiny, closed his naval career by deserting his ship at Fort St. David on 3rd May 1711. Several references to Hamilton occur in the Madras records of this period. On 22nd December 1710, Captain Cornwall laid before the Madras Council a complaint against his surgeon. (Madras Press Lists, No. 336 of 22nd December 1710; Public Consultations, Vol. XLI, pp. 207, 208). On 13th March 1711, Cornwall again writes that if his surgeon be removed, it will cause a disturbance among his men. (M. P. L., No. 450 of 13th March 1711; Letters to Fort St. George, Vol. XII, p. 47). On 4th May 1711, Cornwall writes from Fort St. David to the Governor and Council at Fort St. George, that Surgeon Alexander (sic) Hamilton had made his escape in a boat from Cuddalore under false pretences, the ships in the roads are to be searched for him, any other surgeon of those at Madras would be preferred. (M. P. L., No. 503 of 4th May 1711; Letters to Fort St. George, XII, 101, 102). Finally on 7th May the Council at Madras directed the surgeon of the *Sherborne* to return to his vessel. (M. P. L., No. 505 of 7th May 1705; Public Consultation XLII, 95-97.) With this entry Hamilton's name disappears from the Madras records of 1711, to appear again under more favourable circumstances in Surman's letters from Delhi.

* See "Notes on the History of the Bengal Medical Service," *I. M. G.*, January 1901, p. 2, and "Preservice Surgeons," *I. M. G.*, January 1902, p. 5.

The surgeon of the *Sherborne*, however, was not to be found. He made his way somehow or other to Calcutta, and was there formally appointed Second Surgeon to the settlement, on 27th December 1711. "We being in great want of another surgeon for to tend all the Honourable Company's servants and soldiers of this garrison, and William Hamilton being out of employ, agreed that he be entertained upon the same allowance and privileges as William James, our present surgeon" (Fort William Public Consultations, 27th December 1711). He appears to have been serving the Company in Bengal for some time prior to his formal appointment, for, in a list of Company's servants in the Bay, in November 1711, appear the following names:—

William James, going up with the King's present.

William Hamilton, at Calcutta (sic).

Incidentally it throws rather a curious light upon the relations existing between the Company's different settlements in India, two centuries ago, that an officer, who had deserted at Madras, could be, within a few months, deliberately placed upon the establishment at Calcutta.

In the list of salaries paid at Calcutta at Michaelmas, 1712, appear the names of the two Surgeons.

William James, Surgeon, half a year at £36—Rs. 144.

William Hamilton, Surgeon, half a year at £36—Rs. 144.

The famous Embassy to Delhi started from Calcutta in April 1714, after having been under consideration for at least three years. In the consultations of 5th January 1714, Mr. John Surman was appointed chief of the Embassy; Mr. John Pratt, second; Mr. Edward Stephenson, third; with Hamilton as medical officer. "It being necessary one of our surgeons go up with the gentlemen who go with the present, agreed therefore that Dr. Hamilton be sent." Again "Ordered that Rs. 350 be allowed Mr. Edward Stephenson and Rs. 300 to William Hamilton to provide themselves with clothes, &c. necessary for their proceeding to the Mogull's court with the present, and that the Buxey pay the same." (Consultations, 26th February 1714). Subsequently Pratt was excused, and "Coja Serhad," (Khwaja Sarhad), an Armenian merchant, was appointed second in the Embassy, and general adviser. The opportunity of going to Delhi does not seem to have been much sought after, for William James, the senior surgeon, who had originally been appointed to the Embassy, like Pratt, did not go. The list of the Company's servants in Bengal for 18th January 1715, gives the names of all who actually went as follows:—

Factor John Surman, arrived 19th August 1707, Chief in ye Negotiation.

Factor Edward Stephenson, arrived 2nd February 1709-10, gone with ye present.

Surgeon William Hamilton, arrived 27th December 1711, gone with ye present.

Writer Hugh Barker, arrived 17th August 1711, gone with ye present.

Writer Thomas Phillips, arrived 19th November 1711, gone with ye present.

Out of six factors on the list, Surman stands first; Stephenson fifth; out of 23 writers, Barker stands eleventh; Phillips fourteenth.

Copies of the letters from Surman and Stephenson at Delhi to the Council at Calcutta have been preserved in the Madras records, where they may be found in Volumes 46 to 48 of the Public Consultations. Copies are also preserved in the records of the India Office in London. In Calcutta, where one would naturally expect to find the originals, or at least copies, almost all old records were destroyed at the capture of Fort William by Sirajaldaulat in 1756.

The Embassy started in April 1714, remained for a long time at Patna, left Patna on 19th April 1715, and on 4th September 1715 news was received at Calcutta that the mission had reached Delhi.

Extracts from some of the more interesting of the letters, taken from the copies preserved at Madras, are given by Mr. J. Talboys Wheeler, in his "Early Records of British India"* from which the following passages are quoted:—

Delhi, 6th October 1715.—"We designed to have presented our petition on the first good opportunity, but His Majesty's indisposition continuing, and Mr. Hamilton having undertaken to cure him, it has been thought advisable by our friends, as well as by ourselves, to defer delivering it till such time as it shall please God that His Majesty in some measure returns to his former state of health, which advice, we intend to follow, considering that, whilst he is in so much pain, it can be but a very indifferent opportunity to beg favors of him. The first distemper the doctor took him in hand for, was swellings in his groin, which, thanks be to God, he is in a fair way of curing; but within these few days last past he has been taken with a violent pain, which is likely to come to a fistula; it hinders His Majesty from coming out, so naturally puts a stop to all manner of business, wherefore we must have patience perforce."

Two months later came Surman's letter of 7th December 1715, reporting Hamilton's cure of the Emperor.

Delhi, 7th December 1715.—"We write your Honors the welcome news of the King's recovery. As a clear demonstration to the world, he washed himself the 23rd ultimo, and accordingly received the congratulations of the whole Court. As a

reward for Mr. Hamilton's care and success, the King was pleased on the 30th to give him in public, *viz.*, a vest, a culgee* set with precious stones, two diamond rings, an elephant, horse, and 5,000 rupees; besides ordering at the same time all his small instruments to be made in gold, with gold buttons for his coat and waistcoat, and brushes set with jewels. The same day Khoja Serhaud received an elephant and vest as a reward for his attendance on this occasion."

The welcome news reached Calcutta on 9th January 1716. It seems wonderfully quick work for a letter to have gone from Delhi to Calcutta in 33 days, 7th December to 9th January, in these days. The Embassy was, however, detained at Delhi for another year and a half. Its members were received by Farakh-Siyar in a farewell audience on 23rd May 1717, when the Emperor announced his intention of keeping Hamilton permanently attached to his person as surgeon, but was induced with difficulty to let him return to Calcutta, on his promising to come back to Delhi after a visit to his native land. This audience and subsequent events are described as follows: in a letter from Delhi, dated 7th June 1717, the receipt of which is mentioned in the Calcutta Consultations of 18th July 1717.

Delhi, 7th June 1717.—"The 23rd ultimo. John Surman received from His Majesty a horse and cunger† as was pre-appointed, and the 30th ultimo we were sent for by Khan Dauran to receive our despatches, which we had accordingly; a serpaw‡ and culgee being given to John Surman, and serpaws to Serhaud and Edward Stephenson, as likewise to the rest of our companions. We were ordered to pass, one by one, to our obeisance, then to move from the Dewan. We did so. But when it came to Mr. Hamilton's turn, he was told, the king had granted him a vest as a mark of his favour, but not for his despatch. So he was ordered up to his standing again. Whilst he was performing this, the King got up. We were highly surprised at this unexpected motion, not having the least notice of it till that minute, either from our patron or any of authority; it being near a twelvemonth since Mr. Hamilton had been in private with His Majesty, and in all this time not the least notice taken. We were very much concerned at his detainment, and the more because we were assured of his firm aversion to accepting the service, even with all its charms of vast pay, honour, &c.; that if the King did detain him by force, if he outlived the trouble of his esteeming imprisonment, he might be endeavouring at an escape, which every way had its ill consequences.

"To free our Honourable Masters from any damages that might accrue to them from the

* "Early Records of British India: a History of the English settlements in India, as told in the Government Records, the works of old travellers, and other contemporary documents, from the earliest period down to the rise of British power in India." By J. Talboys Wheeler, late Assistant Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, Calcutta. Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, 1875.

* *Culgee* (*Kalghi*), a turban ornament.

† *Cunger* (*Khanjar*), a dagger.

‡ *Serpaw* (*Sar-o-pa*), a vest, given as a mark of honour, or *khi'at*.

passionate temper of the King, our patron Khan Dauran was applied to for leave, twice or thrice; but he positively denied to speak, or even have a hand in this business, till our friend Sayyid Sallabut Khan had an opportunity to lay the case open to him, when he ordered us to speak to the Vizier, and, if by any means we could gain him to intercede, that he would back it.

"We made a visit to the Vizier the 6th instant, and laid the case open to him in a petition from Mr. Hamilton, of how little service he could be without any physic, language, or experience in the country medicines, or their names; besides which the heart-breaking distractions of being parted for ever from his wife* and children would be insupportable, and entirely take away his qualifications for the King's service; that under the favour of His Majesty's clemency, with the utmost submission, he desired that he might have leave to depart with us. From ourselves we informed the Vizier that we should have esteemed this a very great honour, but finding the doctor under these troubles not to be persuaded, we were obliged to lay the case before His Majesty, and we humbly desired he would use his intercessions to the King, that His Majesty might be prevailed upon to despatch him. The good Vizier readily offered to use his utmost endeavours; and since the case was so, the business was to gain the doctor's despatch without displeasing the King; and he ordered a petition to be drawn up to His Majesty in the same form as that given to himself. It was sent him, and the Vizier was as good as his word; writing a very pathetic address to His Majesty, enforcing Mr. Hamilton's reasons and backing them with his own opinion, that it was better to let him go. The King returned an answer, which came out the 6th, as follows: 'Since he is privy to my disease, and perfectly understands his business, I would very fain have kept him, and given him whatsoever he should have asked. But seeing he cannot be brought on any terms to be content, I agree to it; and on condition that after he has gone to Europe and procured such medicines as are not to be got here, and seen his wife and children, he returns to visit the Court once more, let him go.' We hope in God the troublesome business is now blown over."

It was five months later, however, before the Embassy reached Calcutta on its return journey. It was received at Tribeni, with great pomp, by the President, Robert Hedges, and four of his Council, about 20th November 1717.

Surman's embassy is not mentioned at all in the "Seir-i-Mutaqherin." Orme in his "Military Transactions," while he refers its success to Hamilton's skilful treatment of the Emperor Farakh Siyar, makes no mention of any special reward to Hamilton, or of any intention to detain him at Delhi.

Stewart, in his "History of Bengal" (pp. 397, 398), gives the requests made by, and granted to, Surman's embassy, as follows. He says that the petition "besides various subjects of complaint from Bombay and Madras, stated the numerous impositions practised by the Nawab of Bengal and his inferior officers. It therefore prayed—

"That a *dustuck*, or passport, signed by the President of Calcutta, should exempt the goods it specified from being stopped or examined by the officers of the Bengal Government under any pretence.

"That the officers of the mint, at Moorshedabad, should at all times, when required, allow three days in the week for the coinage of the English Company's money.

"That all persons, whether Europeans or Natives, who might be indebted or accountable to the Company, should be delivered up to the Presidency at Calcutta, on the first demand.

"That the English might purchase the lordship of 38 towns with the same immunities as the Prince Azeem Ooshan had permitted them to buy Calcutta, Chuttanulty and Govindpore."

A translation of Farakh Siyar's farman is given in Hill's "Bengal in 1756-57," Vol. III, p. 375; another translation, fuller, but practically much the same, in Broome's "History of the Bengal Army," Vol. I, appendix, p. vi.

Sir William Hunter* writes thus—"As a matter of fact, while he was curing the Delhi Emperor at the risk of his own life, if the operation went wrong, and exhausting his credit with his august patient to obtain indulgences for the English Company, his Honourable Masters had, in a fit of parsimony on the other side of the globe, done away with his appointment, and ordered "the discharge of Dr. Hamilton on his return from Court." From this ingratitude the Directors were spared partly by the fear of losing Hamilton's influence with the Emperor, and partly by Hamilton's death. They wrote grudgingly in their Bengal despatch of January 1717, "Finding by the letters before us how successfull he has been in curing the Great Mogul, which very probably will help forward our negotiations and get an easier grant of some of our requests, we now say that, if Dr. Hamilton shall desire a continuance in our service, you readily consent to it, and let him see you are sensible of the benefit accruing to us, if you find he any hath, by his undertaking and accomplishing that cure."

It is probable that Hamilton was suffering from sickness, on the return journey, and knew that his end was not far off, for on the 27th October 1717 he made his will at Surajgarh, a small town on the south bank of the Ganges,

* Hamilton never married; he died a bachelor.

* "The Thackerays in India, and some Calcutta Graves." By Sir W. W. Hunter, Henry Froude, London, 1897 (p. 33).

twenty miles west of Monghyr. In this will he appoints John Surman his trustee or executor. The provisions of the will are as follows:—It will be noticed that all the European members of the Embassy are remembered in it. To his friend James Williamson, five hundred pounds; to Edward Stephenson, five hundred rupees and a diamond ring; to Hugh Barker and Thomas Phillips, diamond rings; to John Surman, the large diamond ring given him by "King Furruckseer," and his *culgie*; to the Church of Bengal, one thousand rupees; to his cousin, Mrs. Anna Hamilton, five hundred pounds; and the residue of his estate to his father, "John Hamilton of Boogs, living in the parish of Bothwell," or in case of his father being dead to be equally divided among his brothers and sisters. The will is given in full by Wilson, in his "Early Annals," Vol II, Part I, pp. 293, 294.

Hamilton's will was witnessed by John Cockburne and John Sturt. These names are not among those of the members of the Embassy. They may have accompanied the Embassy, on its return, from Patna to Calcutta. A Dr. John Sturt, possibly the same man, died in Calcutta on 1st December 1726. The witnesses proved the will before the Bengal President and Council at Calcutta, on 9th December 1717.

Hamilton died in Calcutta on 4th December 1717, within a fortnight of the arrival of the Embassy, and was buried in the old churchyard in that city, in the ground where St. John's Church now stands. When the ground was cleared to build that church in 1787, his tombstone, which had fallen down, and had been covered with earth and forgotten, in the seventy years which had elapsed since his death, came to light. Warren Hastings, then Governor-General, suggested that the lettering should be gilded, and the stone set up in the entrance hall of the church. This suggestion was not carried out. The stone was set up in Job Charnock's tomb, at the north-west corner of the ground of St. John's, where it may yet be seen. The tombstone is a granite slab, six feet high and three feet wide, on which the epitaph is carved in relief, in English above, and in Persian below.

*It runs as follows:—

"Under this Stone Lyes interred the body of WILLIAM HAMILTON, Surgeon, who departed this life the 4th Decembr. 1717, his Memory ought to be dear to this Nation, for the Credit he gained ye English in curing FERRUCKSEER, the present KING of INDOSTAN, of a malignant distemper, by which he made his own Name famous at the Court of that Great Monarch; and without doubt, will perpetuate his Memory, as well in Great Britain as all other Nations in Europe."

* A facsimile of the tombstone, with the two epitaphs, is given in "Physician and Friend, Alexander Grant, F.R.C.S., his autobiography and his letters from the Marquis of Dalhousie." Edited by George Smith, C.I.E., London, John Murray, 1902 (p. 6).

وليم هاملتن حكيم نوكر كوميدي انگريز كه همراه ايلچي انگريز حضور پرنور رفته بود و اسم خود در چهار داگ بسبب علاج شاهنشاه عالم پناه محمد فرخ سير غزي بلند کرده بهزار تصديعه از درگاه جهان پناه رخصت و عن حامل نموده بقضای الهي چهارم دسمبر يك هزار و مئقصد و هفتده در كلكته فوت شد در پنجا مدفون است

The Persian epitaph may be literally translated as follows:—"William Hamilton, Physician, servant of the English Company, who had gone along with the English Ambassador to the illustrious presence and had raised his name high in the four quarters of the world by reason of the cure of the King of Kings, the Asylum of the World, Muhammad Farakh Siyar the Victorious, with a thousand difficulties having obtained, from the Court of the Asylum of the World, leave of absence to his native land, by the decree of God on the 4th December 1717, died in Calcutta, and in this place was buried."

When the news of Hamilton's death in Calcutta was reported to the Emperor, it is said that he sent a special messenger to Calcutta to ascertain whether the report was true, or had been published simply with a view to enable Hamilton to escape fulfilment of his promise to return to Delhi. Farakh Siyar himself, however, was not to enjoy the imperial dignity much longer; he was deposed and assassinated in 1719.

AN EPIDEMIC OF MALIGNANT JAUNDICE IN BOMBAY.

BY E. F. GORDON TUCKER,
CAPTAIN, I.M.S.,

Late Acting Professor of Pathology, Grant Medical College,
Acting Civil Surgeon, Dharwar.

THERE is at present (November 1906) occurring in Bombay an interesting epidemic of malignant jaundice. The cases have been met with here and there for the last three months, and appear to be becoming more frequent, at least as far as experience at the Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Hospital is concerned. They seem to be scattered about the Byculla District of Bombay, a poor and crowded quarter, inasmuch as these cases, so far, have not been met with in the Goculdas Tejpal and other hospitals.

It has been known for some time that cases of jaundice have become common in Bombay, and some months ago attention was drawn to the fact in the lay press. Owing to the fact that the medical wards of the J. J. Hospital are always so full, only the worst cases can be admitted; and, consequently, we may exaggerate the mortality of the disease from a review of the hospital cases alone. Of the ten cases on which I append some notes, nine ended in death with acute symptoms.