

ART. XXII.—*Some Remarks on the Life and Labours of Alexander Csoma de Körös, delivered on the occasion when his Tibetan Books and MSS. were exhibited before the Royal Asiatic Society on the 16th June, 1884.* By Surgeon-Major THEODORE DUKA, M.D., F.R.C.S., late of the Bengal Army.

“THE dry old stick,” as we heard at our last meeting, here affectionately designated that great Orientalist, Horace Hayman Wilson, knew Alexander Csoma de Körös well, and was in frequent correspondence with this Tibetan scholar, when the latter was pursuing his studies at the Buddhist monasteries in Zanskar, particularly at Pukhtar, and afterwards at Kanum in Upper Besarh.

After Dr. Wilson’s return to England in 1833, and when he had become Secretary to the Royal Asiatic Society, there appeared in the first volume of the Society’s Journal, edited under his care, a biographical sketch of the early life and labours of Csoma, which account, even at the present day, is read with much interest by those who devote their attention to Oriental literature.

This sketch, however, is manifestly incomplete, because Dr. Archibald Campbell, referring to it in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for 1843, at page 823, part ii., made the following remark :

“The number of the Royal Asiatic Society’s Journal containing the sketch, with the author’s manuscript *corrections*, is now in my possession, the corrections having been made by the subject of it before his death.”

This corrected copy of the Royal Asiatic Society’s Journal, alluded to by Dr. Campbell, is, I regret to say, not available; but I have a copy of the original document written by Csoma, from which that sketch was compiled,

and this will be found, with many other as yet unpublished papers, in the Biography, which the late Mr. Trübner decided to publish in his Oriental Series.

I have neither time at my command, nor is it my intention to trespass now upon your indulgence, which I should be compelled to do, were I to bring forward all the necessary details, which would throw a sufficient light upon the works of that indefatigable student and successful labourer in the field of a real "terra incognita," as he used to call it. I wish merely to state at present, that the following words, written by Archibald Campbell, in December, 1843, hold good still:

"Since the death of de Körös, I have not ceased to hope that some member of the Society (of Bengal) would furnish a connected account of his career in the East. It is now more than a year and a half since we lost him, yet we are without any such record to show, that his labours were valuable to the literary association he so earnestly studied to assist, in its most important objects, as well as to show that his labours have been duly appreciated."

No surprise will therefore be felt that in the absence of a biography based upon trustworthy records, little is known of Csoma to this day. Extraordinary theories have been propounded regarding the real intentions and objects he had in view; his own countrymen especially, I might say, knew least of him, and were led to conceive opinions which, I believe, can be traced originally to some mistaken or misunderstood data of Baron Charles Hügel. This Austrian nobleman visited Cashmir in 1835. Among other things it was said, that after studying Tibetan "for nine years," Csoma "at last" discovered, to his "great vexation," that the language of Tibet was only an inferior dialect of the Sanskrit, or as Hügel puts it: "nur eine untergeordnete Sprache." These and similar opinions have repeatedly been propounded, and the strange conclusion come to, that Csoma was the victim of philological speculations, and spent his life-long labours in vain.

This is very plainly expressed in an interesting work recently published by Messrs. Trübner, I mean Ralston's Tibetan Tales.

But surmises, as I venture to call them, like the above, can hardly be allowed to stand in connection with Csoma's fame as a traveller and a man of scientific philology. In the preface to Ralston's book we meet with certain statements, philological, historical, and geographical, which on close examination will, without doubt, be pronounced mistakes; and although these cannot be detailed here now, yet it seems quite appropriate that, as the Royal Asiatic Society was the first scientific body in Europe which did the honour to Csoma of noticing his early career, any further remarks on the same subject, though almost half a century later, should, with your permission, be made before this Society.

When, a good many years ago, I landed in Calcutta, with an appointment from the East India Company, as Assistant-Surgeon in the Bengal Medical Service, I endeavoured to collect all the details I could regarding my learned countryman's career in the East; Mr. Arthur Grote, then President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal; Babu Rajendralála Mitra; the late Dr. Roër and others kindly rendered every assistance in my pursuit. So much was positively known, that Csoma started from Nagy-Enyed, in Transylvania, towards the end of 1819, travelled overland, often on foot, through Wallachia, Bulgaria, afterwards visited the island of Cyprus, and then Egypt. From the shores of Syria, his journey led through Bághdád, from Latakia to Aleppo, Mosul, Persia, Bokhara, Kulm, across the Bamian pass into Afghanistan. He arrived at Cabul on the 6th of January, 1822. And it was said that Csoma toiled through all this distance, through the parching plains of Central Asia and the snowy mountains of the Hindu Kush and the Himalas, simply in the endeavour of realizing a fanciful idea, namely, that of finding in Asia a nation speaking a dialect akin to his own Magyar tongue.

This was attributed to him particularly by some of his countrymen, and we find that the same happened recently in the case of Count Béla Széchényi when travelling in China; but I need hardly say that Csoma nowhere gave utterance to this chimera. What we find, however, as being the object of his researches, is comprised in these few words of his, taken

from the Preface to the Tibetan Dictionary, where he says that "he had not been sent by any government to gather political information, neither can he be accounted of the number of those wealthy European gentlemen who travel at their own expense for pleasure or curiosity; but rather that he was only a *poor student*, very desirous to see the different countries of Asia, the scene of so many memorable transactions of former ages, to observe the manners of several nations and to learn their languages. And such a man was he who, during his peregrinations, depended for his subsistence on the benevolence of others." Csoma gratefully acknowledges in that Preface his deep obligations to the British Indian Government, and he mentions by name all those English gentlemen who showed him any kindness on his arduous journey, and publicly expresses respectful thanks to all, for favours conferred upon him.

From Cabul, Csoma travelled through Peshawar, Lahore, Umritsir and Jamú to Kashmir, thence to Leh, towards Yarkand, intending to penetrate into Mongolia by way of North China; but in this endeavour he was prevented.

On his return journey from Leh towards Srinaggur, he met, accidentally, with William Moorcroft, in the valley of Dras. The two travellers spent five months and six days together, during which, Moorcroft put into Csoma's hands the Alphabetum Tibetanum of Giorgii, and the Hungarian, having found by this means, a vast, yet uncultivated field of Oriental learning, was induced to devote himself to the study of the Tibetan language, and signed an agreement with Moorcroft, by the terms of which, Csoma bound himself to prepare a Dictionary and a Grammar for the Government, and to this task he devoted the best years of his life.

The details of Csoma's prolonged studies at the various Buddhist monasteries, we shall pass over at present; it will be sufficient to mention here that when, in April, 1831, Csoma arrived in Calcutta, to arrange the result of his labours, much valuable assistance was rendered to him by Horace Hayman Wilson, and after Wilson's departure for Europe by James Prinsep, who, as numerous as yet un-

published documents testify, was a most appreciative and sympathizing friend of Csoma.

After Prinsep's death Dr. Malan, Professor in Bishop's College, Calcutta, and afterwards Mr. Henry Torrens, succeeded to the office of Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Both these names are intimately connected with Csoma's life history.

On his way to Lassa, for the purpose of obtaining access to the Libraries of the Dalai Lama; he died at Darjiling of Terai fever, on the 11th day of April, 1842; having just completed the 58th year of his age. He bequeathed his all to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and the substantial tombstone in the Darjiling Cemetery bears an epitaph breathing the spirit of so much affectionate appreciation of Csoma's labours, an appreciation which Englishmen never grudge to bestow on real merit, be the subject of it a countryman or a foreigner.

This is the text of the epitaph, which can be so well read on the photograph of the tomb :

II. I.

Alexander Csoma de Körösi ¹
 a native of Hungary
 who to follow out philological researches
 resorted to the East
 and after years passed under
 privations such as have been seldom endured
 and patient labour in the cause of Science
 compiled a Dictionary and Grammar
 of the Tibetan Language
 His best and real Monuments
 On his way to H'Lassa
 to resume his labours
 he died at this place
 on the 11th April 1842
 aged 44 years ²

His fellow labourers the Asiatic Society of Bengal
 inscribe this Tablet to his Memory

Requiescat in Pace.

¹ This should be de Körös, without terminal *i*.

² Csoma was 58 years old at the time of his death.

Nine years after I had left Darjiling, where at one time I was stationed as Civil Surgeon in medical charge of the Sanatorium, I visited Csoma's tomb in February of last year, and to my great surprise found the old structure gone, an entirely new one having been put in its place.

The cemetery of Darjiling occupies part of the eastern slope of the ridge on the way to Takvár, looking towards Nepál. The Buddhist monastery, with its large prayer wheel, mentioned by Prof. Monier Williams at our last meeting, is in the Bhotia-busti on the western side of the slope leading towards the Lebong spur.

During the heavy rains, two years previous, a landslip occurred, in consequence of which several tombstones suffered damage. The late Lieut.-Governor of Bengal, Sir Ashley Eden, ordered the necessary repairs to be done; and I likewise learnt at Darjiling, from the officers of the Public Works Department, that Csoma's grave had been placed by the authorities on the list of *those public monuments*, which are for ever to remain under the care of the officers of Government.

Another act of English generosity towards the Hungarian, more than forty years after his death!

In Calcutta, through the courtesy of the Council of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and of the Government Secretary, especially of Mr. Durand, assisted by my friend Dr. George King, I was able to secure very valuable data, which at last rendered the completion of Csoma's biography possible. The Royal Academy of Sciences of Hungary testified an especial interest in the work. Apart from Csoma's own original letters, there are those of Mr. Moorcroft, Capt. Kennedy, Dr. Wilson, Mr. McNaughten, Mr. James Prinsep, Dr. Gerard, Dr. Malan, a correspondence with Mr. Brian H. Hodgson, Prince Essterházy, and others. All of which will be found in detail, in the Biography.

I feel that I owe apologies to the Society, after the long communication they have listened to already, for detaining you so long. But I venture to ask for a few moments more of your indulgence, to enable me to exhibit the valuable gift,

which, in the eyes of Csoma's countrymen, is priceless. This gift, which you see before you, was made by the Reverend Solomon Cæsar Malan, D.D., Oxford, Rector of Broadwindsor, Dorset, who, as we read in the papers, made the munificent donation to Oxford of his entire Oriental Library, consisting of 2000 volumes. Dr. Malan's gift of Csoma's Tibetan Books and Manuscripts, collected by him in the Buddhist Monasteries of Tibet, will, in the future, be treasured up in the Library of the Royal Hungarian Academy of Sciences at Budapest. These books are the original foundations on which the Tibetan Dictionary and Grammar were based. They consist of

24 Prints

13 MSS. in capital (*d'vuchan*)

3 MSS. in small (*d'vumed*) characters

—

altogether 40 Pieces.

In conclusion, I shall add a few lines by way of extracts from Dr. Malan's letters, with which I was favoured on this subject; they throw a most pleasing light on the character of the Tibetan scholar, and on the feelings, full of sympathy, with which he was regarded by the writer of them.

Dr. Malan writes :

"April 5, 1884.—I am about disposing of my library, and I feel sorry to scatter about Csoma's Tibetan Books and Manuscripts, which he gave me in 1839, and which I have used and kept ever since for his sake. But it strikes me that Budapest would be the proper home for these treasures. There are some thirty volumes, and if you think they would be acceptable, and you would undertake to forward them, I will send them to you."

"In looking over them, they remind me of him. There was something so kind, so simple, and winning about his manner. But my impression was that he was not duly appreciated."

"April 17.—I shall be delighted to receive a copy of Csoma's life.

"If by Philology they mean the system now in vogue of

making languages, *one* language out of two or three, or *two* or three languages out of one; then Csoma was no 'philologist,' neither am I, assuredly. But he was far better than that. He was devoted to his one object, was master of several languages, and, over and above all, he has and shall have to the end the honour and credit of being the founder of Tibetan studies in Europe. He did not scrutinize the intricacies of hypotheses; he had too much sense for that. But he laid the foundation, and others only built upon it.

"The books leave this to-morrow. It has cost me 'a little' to say good-bye to them. But I feel that they ought to rest in your University, where I trust they will be taken care of and valued for dear Csoma's sake."

The catalogue is appended :—

TIBETAN BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS

of the late ALEXANDER CSOMA DE KÖRÖS.

Presented to the Royal Hungarian Academy of Sciences at Budapest by the
Rev. S. C. MALAN, D.D., Vicar of Broadwindsor, Dorset.

Current No.	Designation.	Title.	Remarks.
I.	Print	Esoteric Buddhism	354 leaves.
II.	Print	Catechism of Buddhism	57 „
III.	Print	Introduction to Religion	81 „
IV.	Print	Elements of Religion	61 „
V.	Print	Exoteric Philosophy	181 „
VI.	Print	Ditto	50 „
VII.	Print	Epochs of Buddhism	31 „
VIII.	Print	Ditto larger	59 „
IX.	MS. small	Cycles	48 „
X.	MS. capital	Mode of Reckoning Years	18 „
XI.	Print	Cycles	42 „
XII.	Print	Lamp of Buddha's Way	6 „
XIII.	MS. capital	On Emancipation	11 „
XIV.	Print	Devotional..... ..	23 „
XV.	Print	How to Read Sanskrit in Tibetan	15 „
XVI.	MS. capital	Byakarana..... ..	5 „
XVII.	Print	Tibetan Grammar	27 „
XVIII.	Print	Commentary on Byakarana	65 „
XIX.	Print	Ditto	30 „
XX.	Print	Mirror of Piety..... ..	122 „
XXI.	MS. capital	Explanation of Tibetan Words	12 „
XXII.	MS. small	A Fragment	3 „
XXIII.	Print	On Penitence of Nuns	8 „
XXIV.	Print	Questions and Answers on Various Subjects	13 „
XXV.	Print	Religious Treatise	10 „
XXVI.	Print	Ditto	20 „
XXVII.	MS. capital	Philosophical. Dialectic..... ..	42 „
XXVIII.	MS. capital	Philosophical	44 „
XXIX.	MS. capital	Ditto, a Fragment	13 „
XXX.	Print	Introduction to Buddhism	190 „
XXXI.	Print	Technical Terms of Religion	10 „
XXXII.	Print	Names of Siva, Gotama, etc.	29 „
XXXIII.	Print	Names and Praises of Manjusri	10 „
XXXIV.	MS. small	Hundred Actions of Sakyu	197 „
XXXV.	MS. capital	On Emancipation, on After State	28 „
XXXVI.	MS. capital	Arithmetic	17 „
XXXVII.	MS. capital	Medical Treatise	28 „
XXXVIII.	MS. capital	Theological Treatise, No. 1	29 „
XXXIX.	MS. capital	Ditto No. 2	30 „
XI.	MS. capital	Ditto No. 3	29 „

Prints..... .. 24
 Manuscripts (capital letters) 14 d'vuchan.
 „ (small ditto)..... 3 d'vumed.

Altogether 40 pieces.