



## CORMICK, WILLIAM

---

**CORMICK, WILLIAM** (b. Tabrīz 1822, d. Tabrīz 25 Du'l-ḥejja 1294/30 December 1877), a British physician in Tabrīz. Cormick was the son of the Irish physician [John Cormick](#) and an Armenian woman of Tabrīz. When he was ten years old his father sent him to England to be educated. He studied medicine at University College, London, qualifying as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons on 17 July 1840 and as licenciante of the Society of Apothecaries in 1841; in 1841 he also received the degree of doctor of medicine from St. Andrew's. He practiced medicine in London and Paris until 1844 or 1845, when he returned to Persia as second physician to the British mission. There in 1262/1846 he was seconded as physician to the family of ['Abbās Mīrzā](#) and later to the crown prince, the future Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah, when the latter was appointed governor of Azarbaijan.

When the [Bāb](#) was tried before a tribunal of religious and civil authorities in Tabrīz in July 1848 Cormick and two Persian physicians were assigned to certify his insanity, apparently because the authorities were reluctant to carry out the death sentence. The Bāb was bastinadoed instead; afterward he asked to be treated by Cormick, who thus saw him several times before he was returned to prison. Cormick, the only Westerner known to have met the Bāb, wrote an interesting account of these meetings in a letter to an American missionary friend, J. H. Shedd (Browne, pp. 260-62; Momen, pp. 74-75).

When Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah came to the throne, in the fall of 1264/1848, Cormick returned with him to Tehran. At the instigation of the vizier Mīrzā Taqī Khan Amīr-e Kabīr (q.v.), however, he was replaced by the French doctor [Ernest](#)



**Cloquet**, as part of a policy of avoiding dependence on either Great Britain or Russia. Cormick returned to Tabrīz, where he practiced medicine for the rest of his life and became wealthy. He served as physician to members of ‘Abbās Mīrzā’s family and ran a successful apothecary shop. In 1292/1875 he received the Order of the Lion and Sun (Second Class; *British Medical Journal*, 16 October 1875, p. 496), as his father had done before him. He became a fellow of the British Royal College of Surgeons on 19 October 1876. He was married to Tamar, the younger sister of the trader Edward Burgess’s Armenian wife (Burgess, pp. 117-23). Like his father, he played a significant role in the diffusion of Western medicine in Persian society. He was buried at Tabrīz in the same cemetery as his father, brother, and nine other Cormicks.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- E. G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*, Cambridge, 1918.
- C. Burgess, *Letters from Persia*, ed. B. Schwartz, New York, 1942.
- Foreign Office (FO) 60/474. C. Elgood, *A Medical History of Persia*, Amsterdam, 1979, pp. 497, 500.
- Medical News*, 5 January 1878, p. 26.
- M. Momen, ed., *The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford, 1981, pp. 497-98.
- Plarr’s Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, London, 1938, p. 278.
- D. Wright, *The English amongst the Persians during the Qajar Period*, London, 1977, p. 124.
- (Moojan Momen)