

BRITISH MUSLIM SOCIETY, LONDON

(BY HABIBULLAH LOVEGROVE)

THE Society have had a most successful month, both as regards attendance and lectures, during November 1928, the Rt. Hon. Lord Headley, the President, being able to preside at all the meetings. One of the outstanding lectures to which members and non-members alike had the pleasure of listening was that of Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah, the well-known journalist and authority on Eastern affairs. His lecture entitled "The Truth about the Moslem Modernization" (which was delivered on November 18, 1928) proved a great draw. The London Muslim Prayer House, which is entirely supported by the Woking Muslim Mission and is the scene of the Society's weekly lectures, was packed with an audience representing practically every nationality. The lecturer began by pointing out that his subject was in the nature of glad tidings to those who had drunk deep at the fountain of Press misrepresentation in the West as to Eastern affairs, and an antidote to the poison of disappointment which had been caused in the minds of such Muslims as had not had the opportunity of seeing for themselves the state of affairs in the present-day Muslim world. For the cleavage and disruption of which the English Press in particular has of late seemed to make so much, existed not at all in the Muslim world. The Sirdar Sahib incidentally referred to one of the heartrending defects of Eastern journalism, namely, the fact that Eastern newspapers copied *in toto* all that was reported in the Western journals, even as to matters solely concerning the East, without even troubling to sift the evidence for themselves. The Easterners—and he emphasized this point very strongly—should not rely on Western news-agencies whose sole aim it would appear to be to broadcast malicious gossip for the purpose of sowing discord among Muslim countries. This he illustrated by quoting a few instances showing how certain events had been manipulated and garbled and fictitious stories and pictures invented.

If modernization meant Europeanization, and if Europeanization brought in its train industrialization, then he was of opinion that Muslims could be modernized without ceasing to be Muslims. But if, on the other hand, poverty was synonymous with savagery, and a poor man was not to be regarded as civilized, then he wondered if such modernization was worth having at all. The Sirdar Sahib, in the course of his extensive travels which covered upwards of 40,000 miles, found that Muslims understood their religion better than ever before.

After the lecture a heated discussion ensued in which a number of friends took part; Mr. Omar Rankin, son of Sir Reginald Rankin, Bart., who accepted Islam in 1927, Mr. Aftab Ikbal, M.A., and Professor H. M. Leon, expressing their views on the subject.

The lecture was followed by the annual meeting of the Society, when the Secretary, Mr. H. Lovegrove, submitted the balance-sheet for the year 1927-28, and pointed out that there was a slight deficit, which was, however, counterbalanced by a large membership. The Society had made good headway, and new members were enrolling daily. The Society had its members all the world over and was very anxious to increase their number.

The following office-bearers were elected for the year 1928-29; Lord Headley, President; Professor Haroun M. Leon and Al-Hajj Khwaja Kamal 'ad-Din, Vice-Presidents; Mr. H. Lovegrove, Secretary; Mr. M. Yosri (of Cairo), Joint Secretary; and five members of the working committee, to wit: Mr. 'Abdu 'l-Majid, M.A., Imam of the Mosque, Woking; Mr. Togo Tzushima (who would act as Treasurer), Mr. T. Ahmad, Mr. Zaman Shah and Madmoiselle Fakhri Soutfi.

The Society is, it is gratifying to note, becoming more and more popular, and at the celebration of the Birthday of the Prophet there was a record attendance, many of the visitors being Englishmen of note who have become interested in Islam through the efforts of the Society.

The members attend all functions where Islam is discussed. Very recently, at a lecture by Professor Margoliouth on "The Koran" before the Near and Middle East Society of London, four members of the British Muslim Society were present. Thus they avail themselves of every opportunity for dispelling the wrong notions on Islam which are rampant in the British Isles. The Secretary, who is the author of a book entitled *What is Islam?* (Published by the Trust for the Encouragement of Muslim Religious Literature, the Mosque, Woking), has distributed a few dozen copies of his book gratis, and the result is that he is constantly receiving inquiries and requests for more literature. This involves expense, which, as can well be imagined, is becoming very heavy. But if friends abroad and at home give the Society a helping hand in this labour of love, much can be achieved.

The greatest need of the Society is to raise sufficient funds to enable it to advertise its lectures in the various English weekly and monthly periodicals.

Finally, mention must also be made of the valuable help, financial and otherwise, which the Society has always received from the Afghan Legation in London.

Lord Headley is working hard to obtain a site for the London Nizamiyyah Mosque. Land in London is very expensive, and we should all like to see his ideals realized. He has laboured abundantly and has given an enormous amount of time and care to this work. May he live long, and may peace and blessings be with him and his efforts.