

Hajji Abdul Majid Belshah

It is with profound regret that we have to report the untimely death of Hajji Abdul Majid Belshah, who died in hospital on 23rd June, 1923.

The Hajji, as he was universally known, was essentially a lovable man, and there are Englishmen all over the East who will feel they have lost a dear friend in him. The Hajji belonged to a respectable family of Kazimain, who for two or three generations had borne the curious surname of Belshah. He first came to England as a dealer in carpets and MSS., and with his business he combined the teaching of Arabic, preparing many young officers for their interpretership examinations. The Hajji, though not a profound scholar, had a good knowledge of Arabic and Persian, and a decided gift for imparting the spoken language. His notions of grammar were practical rather than theoretical; and though he was not versed in Moslem literature, he had a rare *flair* for picking up valuable manuscripts, and many a precious treasure of Arabic and Persian literature or calligraphy owe their inclusion in English public or private libraries to the Hajji's skill as a collector. Perhaps the most notable event in his life was his journey to Mekka in company with Major Wavell—in whose charming book, *A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca*, many references are made to the Hajji under the pseudonym of Abdul Wahid.

When in August, 1914, war was declared, the Hajji came to me in the War Office and offered his services in the Intelligence Department. He also got himself naturalized as a British subject. Down to the end of 1916 he worked in my office, and was very useful in the censoring of Arabic and Persian letters. It is in my view a matter of regret that his familiarity with the Near and Middle East was not made use of. As events have since shown, he had very valuable suggestions to offer. But it was in connexion with the illustrated paper called *al-Haqiqat*, which appeared twice a month, that the Hajji was most useful. The captions beneath the pictures in the earliest numbers were reproduced in photo-lithography, and as the topical illustrations were often slow in coming in, the captions had to be translated into Arabic, Persian, and Turkish at very short notice, and then to be written out in a clear hand. The Hajji was untiring in his execution of this arduous task.

When the School of Oriental Studies was opened in February, 1917, the Hajji joined the staff and worked regularly till within two days of his death.

He had a great fund of anecdote, and enjoyed nothing so much as a joke at his own expense.

He married in 1920 and leaves a widow and two children. He was buried in Brookwood Moslem Cemetery and his wreath-covered coffin was followed by Moslems, Christians, and Hindus.

EDITOR.