Tharwat…

For two months now, the ties of life between us and Tharwat have been severed, and yet we have not grown accustomed to the certainty of his death, nor reconciled ourselves to God's decree that days will follow days without our ever meeting him again, hearing his voice, or speaking with him.

The source of this unease is not merely that he was one of Egypt's greatest men—distinguished by steadiness of judgment, clarity of vision, keen intelligence, wide resourcefulness, and political mastery. Such qualities, and others besides, are granted from time to time to men across different lands and ages. When they depart to meet their Lord, their countrymen feel the void they leave behind, but before long they adjust to the loss, whether with resignation or reluctance.

Since the beginning of this century, Egypt has lost a number of its exceptional sons. She was stricken by their loss and bent beneath the weight of her bereavement. Yet people eventually resigned themselves to the knowledge that these men had gone where there is no return. Only a few among them left behind in the hearts of their friends traces that do not fade, a grief that does not cool, and a fire that time only intensifies—because they filled the hearts of their companions, stamped them with their own imprint, and shaped them in their own image. However completely material ties may be cut between such men and their friends, their figures remain vivid in the heart, their presence fills the soul and the mind and life itself.

Among these were Qasim Amin and Abd al-Khaliq Tharwat.

Qasim Amin and Tharwat Pasha

To this day we still hear those who knew Qasim, loved him, and were close to him speak of him in voices brimming with living, vigorous affection—an affection the living reserve for the living, not the pale, faithful tenderness that forgetfulness cools and weakens, turning it into something closer to memory than to the bonds of active friendship known in working life.

Yes, we still hear Qasim's friends speak of him not as one speaks of a man who has died and passed away, but as one speaks of a friend who is absent and hoped to return. For Qasim filled the souls of his companions—and still fills them, and will fill them forever.

As for Tharwat, his friends and those who once had the honor of knowing him can speak of him now as one speaks of a friend who is merely away; yet they will speak of him always, for he filled their souls, and they will never be emptied of him.

Though I knew Qasim only through his works and through the words of his friends, I knew Tharwat personally and was close to him—and I could speak of him at length, were there room enough for such speech.

They say Tharwat was wronged in his lifetime and that history will do him justice. That he suffered ingratitude, neglect, and denial of merit admits of no doubt; and that history will

vindicate him admits of none either. But which history?

Recent history will not do him justice—or rather, it will not grant him his full due. How could it, when no Egyptian of the modern age has influenced his nation's internal and external life with such deep and far-reaching effect as Tharwat? Indeed, among modern Egyptians there is none who granted his nation a constitution, none who secured its independence, and none who raised the banners of an independent Egypt across the world—save Tharwat. He alone did all this. And in accomplishing it, he bore immense burdens, faced grave perils, and dealt with holders of power both at home and abroad. Between him and those wielders of authority stood trials that remain unknown—and will remain unknown—until the Egyptian question is finally resolved and becomes the sole province of history.

Tharwat's political life was an unbroken sacrifice. He did not seek the glory pursued by leaders and statesmen, and he barely tasted any of it. Nor did his sacrifice end with his death; it continues still. This great man will remain unknown for a long stretch of time, because the interest of his nation demands that his deeds not yet appear in their full light.

May God have mercy on Tharwat, and mercy on Qasim—two noble branches of that enduring, generous tree: the tree of productive action, carried out without ostentation or self-praise, without reminders of favor, without longing for fame or hunger for honor. Was it not Qasim who said, *true patriotism acts and does not speak*? And was it not Tharwat who spent his political life acting, speaking only when compelled, and then only sparingly?

He did not speak while living, and his friends cannot speak fully of him now that he is dead. In this, he is perhaps the truest and strongest embodiment of that patriotism which acts and does not speak.

Like Qasim, he acted while alive and was made to suffer.
Like Qasim, he continues to act in death without receiving justice from the living.

Yet Qasim labored—and still labors—for the liberation of women; Tharwat labored for the liberation of Egypt entire. Qasim freed the woman; Tharwat freed Egypt. And perhaps my friend Haykal did not err when he judged that Tharwat had, in truth, liberated the whole East.

Tharwat Pasha as a Friend

I did not write, however, to speak of Tharwat as a leader; I wrote to speak of him as a friend. And perhaps the finest way to speak of Tharwat the friend is to portray the conception of friendship and companionship—indeed, of social connection as a whole—that filled his soul and shaped his relations with others.

The truest expression of this conception, perhaps, is a sentence Tharwat himself uttered one day, after his first ministry had resigned. Only a few weeks had passed since that resignation—weeks sufficient to reveal, among those who had crowded about him when power was his, the loyalty of the faithful and the withdrawal of the self-interested.

I was with him then in a small gathering of friends. We were speaking of certain people whom the severity of the political crisis had not deterred from maintaining their ties with him, from visiting him openly, despite the anger of the resentful and the hostility of the malicious; and of others who had filled his house morning and evening so long as authority was in his

hands, only to disown him afterward and claim ignorance of the way to his door.

Some of those present began to ridicule these latter, to belittle them, and to press the matter upon Tharwat, as though wishing to force him into expressing his judgment of them. He smiled quietly and said: *"He who is sincere is sincere for himself."* Then he turned the conversation in another direction.

For Tharwat, the bond between people did not depend on how others valued it or judged it; it depended on how **you** valued it and judged it. In your affection for so-and-so, you did not trouble yourself with what so-and-so thought of that affection—or, to be more precise, you did not cherish your affection for him because it pleased him or profited him or brought him happiness. You cherished it because it accorded with **your own nature**, because **you** found in it satisfaction, serenity, and a kind of elevated pleasure that rises above everyday utility.

This was how Tharwat understood friendship and measured its worth. He loved and disliked others only as his own nature, temperament, character, and sincere feelings dictated. His soul—may God have mercy on him—was generous; his temperament was entirely clear; his disposition entirely pure; his emotions entirely gentle. It is no wonder, then, that his friendships were strong, enduring, pure, and sweet—untouched by time or by the tumult of events. For his friendships were not bound to advantage or to the accidents of life, but to character and moral temperament.

I bear witness that political hostility between him and others would at times reach its fiercest intensity—yet even then he preserved for these very opponents, in some corner of his heart, a sincere and noble affection. It suffices to return to his speeches, his conversations, and his letters in which he spoke of those adversaries: you will see that he always mentioned them—especially those who had once been dear to him before discord arose—with a gentleness and forbearance that leave a deep impression on the soul.

I remember one day being with him when he told me he had written to Saad—may God have mercy on them both—proposing that they submit their dispute to a group of Egypt's most distinguished men. He read to me that letter, well known to many, a document marked by calmness, loyalty, kindness, clarity of heart, purity of spirit, and genuine devotion to the homeland. When he finished reading, he gave me no time to praise him, but said simply: *"I am awaiting a reply to this letter at any moment."* Then he changed the subject.

Before long, the telephone rang. He hurried to it, returned smiling, and said: *"Wait ten or fifteen minutes,"* and stepped out. I waited. He soon returned, holding Saad's reply. He read it aloud to us—we were only a few—and every one of us was indignant, deeply offended. Some could not listen to more than a few lines before rising and pacing the room, speaking incessantly.

I bear witness that no anger, no bitterness, no resentment appeared in Tharwat—may God have mercy on him. What appeared was a painful sorrow: sorrow that he had failed to achieve what he sought, the unity of the nation; and another feeling as well, one that raised him immeasurably in my eyes—pain that such harsh and unjust words had come to him from a friend. And at that moment I understood that he still loved that friend and wished him well.

The days later proved that Saad's letter, and all that followed of harsh conflict between the two men, did nothing to diminish Tharwat's affection for Saad or his love for him. Nor did it

weaken his determination to unite the nation. He did achieve what he sought: reconciliation was accomplished, the adversaries met, and Saad himself presided over the National Congress, flanked by his two friends, Adli and Tharwat.

I also remember being with Tharwat on the day Saad visited him for the first time after reconciliation. Whatever I forget, I will never forget his soft, sorrowful voice as he spoke of Saad's frailty—may God have mercy on him—of the effort he had exerted in climbing the stairs to greet him.

Those who can see may speak of Tharwat's face, his expressions, his glances, and how they reflected the emotions stirring within him. I, for my part, can speak of Tharwat's *voice*—and I testify that his gentle voice was a mirror of his gentle soul.

Whatever I forget, I will never forget Tharwat's voice on the evening of **16 November 1922**. On that evening, a monstrous crime was committed at the threshold of politics, and I was the one who conveyed the news of it to Tharwat in Alexandria by telephone. When the names **Hassan Abdel-Raziq** and **Ismail Zuhdi** reached his ear, he asked me to repeat them. I did. And from him I heard a sigh that contained everything—profound grief, limitless anguish, indignation, and revolt. Then his voice returned to its usual calm, and he asked: *"Have the criminals been arrested?"* I answered: *"No."* He said: *"That is enough,"* and ended the call.

I recall this now, and my sorrow nearly overwhelms me; my soul is torn by pain; and before me rises a large portion of my life, with its good and its evil—many of whose moments of goodness are bound inseparably to **Hassan Abdel-Raziq** and **Abdel-Khaliq Tharwat**.

I first heard Tharwat's voice on a day in 1908, during the first week after the opening of the Egyptian University. He had come to read aloud, before the assembled students, a resolution of the University's Board prohibiting students from speaking to the press about university affairs. His voice was firm; his voice was also gentle. I took to him at once and felt drawn toward him. Yet I did not then come to know him personally.

The years passed, and I knew of him only what everyone knew, until the year 1914, toward its end. I had returned from Europe and was preparing to travel again. I had written an article in one of the newspapers which angered the late Shaykh Muhammad al-Mahdi. He lodged a complaint against me with the Board, supported by several of its members, and demanded that I be dismissed from the University mission. The Board met; my article was read aloud; then the meeting broke up.

As its members dispersed, I arrived at the University. There I was seen by Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid Bey, who called me to him and introduced me to His Excellency Tharwat Pasha, Minister of Justice. He took my hand in his and spoke to me briefly, urging me to show restraint in my writing, while encouraging me to persevere in study and criticism. From this I understood that I had not been removed from the mission. And from the sweetness of that voice I felt a tenderness that increased my affection for the man. A few hours later I learned that I owed my return to Europe to him and to Lutfi Bey.

Throughout my years abroad I did not meet Tharwat, nor did I hear anything of him. Then I returned to Egypt, met him, and left him with a deeper love for him, greater admiration, and

sincere gratitude for the warmth of his reception.

It was he who presented me to the public when I began teaching at the University. Never did any words affect me as deeply as that introductory address—after Tharwat seated me in the professor's chair and stood to present me to the audience, using a gentle, encouraging language wholly devoted to urging work and seriousness.

May God have mercy on him—he attended my lectures for several days, sitting among the audience like any other. When the final lecture ended, he approached me, shook my hand with elegance and calm, and introduced himself.

Later arose a conflict between myself and the University. Tharwat—may God have mercy on him—was the most compassionate toward me, the gentlest, and the most insistent that I should not confuse knowledge with material interest, nor let material hardship, however severe, distract me from study and intellectual labor.

Tharwat possessed—may God have mercy on him—a power of persuasion that was truly formidable. When he argued with you, he would soon prevail—especially if the matter touched you personally—because in argument he was sincere and devoted. You felt without doubt that he effaced himself completely, recognizing only you and your own interest. You could not resist him; nor could you refuse him. I knew this well. I loved him—and I feared him. Whenever I was resolved upon a course of action, I made every effort not to let Tharwat debate me on it, lest he divert me from it.

I remember once resigning from the University Council during a session, over a disagreement between him and me concerning a clause in the university bylaws. I submitted my resignation immediately. He sent someone to ask me to withdraw it; I refused. Then he rose from his seat, came to me, and whispered in my ear:
"I am not asking you to withdraw your resignation; I am asking you to postpone it until we speak."
I said, "I fear that we *will* speak."
He replied, "And I refuse that you resign."
I said, "If that is so, then I submit to your will."
He answered, "I dislike submission—and it is not in your character to submit."

Is it easy, do you think, to resist a man like Tharwat, speaking to you in such a manner?

Tharwat and *Pre-Islamic Poetry*

May God have mercy on Tharwat. Our dispute in the University Council concerned a clause that granted professors immunity from dismissal. He accepted the principle, but wished to preserve a measure of authority for the government—though he was not part of it—and to exercise caution in implementation. The Council accepted his view, and the execution of the clause was postponed.

Only weeks later, the book *Pre-Islamic Poetry* appeared. Rumors spread; people talked; the noise grew. Some friends came to me reporting that Tharwat deeply regretted his position, knowing now that I would be the first victim of it.

I visited him afterward. He received me with laughter, then laid his hand on my shoulder and said:
“Freedom of thought is too noble to be toyed with by anyone, whoever they may be. Be certain that the first consequence of anything that might befall you will be my resignation from the University Council—my severing ties with it, and with all who would harm you, whoever they may be. I ask only that you stand firm before the storm and refrain from replying to your opponents in the press. You are a professor, and the dignity of professors rises above such disputes.”

Had it not been for this counsel of Tharwat’s, my response to the agitators over *Pre-Islamic Poetry* would have been very different.

May God have mercy on him. His efforts regarding that affair are things I shall never forget, and which I cannot speak of now. I recall, though, the day the prosecutor’s report on the book appeared. I resigned. Tharwat asked the Minister of Education not to accept my resignation; I refused. He then asked the University Director to request that I visit him. I went the next day. He greeted me smiling, and within minutes convinced me that my resignation was mistaken. Yet he was too gracious and dignified to ask me formally to withdraw it; instead, he ordered that it be disregarded.

That day I asked him to permit me to leave the University and move to another position if remaining in government service was unavoidable. He replied:
“That may serve your interest, and it may be your right that I grant it. But the University has a claim upon me as well.”

How could one resist a man who spoke with such calm, in such conditions?

Months later, another difficulty arose. I again asked to leave the University. The Minister of Education refused; so did I. I was instructed to visit the Prime Minister. I knew that if I did, I would yield; so I declined. Everyone reproached me for this refusal. Yet I asked certain friends to inform the Prime Minister that I would not see him so long as he held office—but that once he left it, I would.

Silence followed. Events unfolded. His ministry resigned. I went to visit him. I expected reproach or rebuke. I received nothing but graciousness and kindness—nothing but that warmth familiar to his friends, his rivals, and even those who neither loved him nor bore him hatred. I stayed long with him that day. We spoke of everything except the University.

I left believing I would see him again shortly.

But I never saw him after that day.
Nor shall I ever see him again.

I have spoken to you only briefly—and sparingly—of what Tharwat meant to me personally. I had already said that to speak of Tharwat is no easy matter—indeed, in many cases it seems scarcely possible at all. Yet even this small portion of what I have recounted conveys one aspect of this great man that people often circle around without knowing how to portray: his capacity for affection, and his fidelity to it. Not out of self-interest, nor in pursuit of

advantage, but because fidelity was part of his nature, and because his temperament was fashioned for affection and loyalty.

What, after all, did Tharwat hope to gain by showing me kindness or compassion? And where was I in relation to him, when all authority had gathered in his hands and the finest men of Egypt had gathered around him? What was I to Tharwat—no more than an ordinary man among others?

Yet Tharwat himself had said: *He who is sincere, is sincere for his own sake.* He sensed in me a sincerity of affection toward him. And I can only think that he awakened this sincerity by his kindness, his gentleness, and his own devotion—so completely that he took possession of my heart and compelled me to love him. I loved him, and I shall never cease loving him.

His Excellency ʻAbd al-Hamid Pasha Badawi once recalled reminding me that when I returned from Europe I greatly admired Tharwat, ʻAdli, and Rushdi—but that my admiration had not yet become love. I remember once discussing them with him in the presence of Hasan Pasha ʻAbd al-Raziq—may God have mercy on him—when he said: "Had you known them personally, you would have loved them no less than you admired them." And so I did know them, and so I loved them. But I knew Tharwat in a way I knew no other among these leaders; therefore I loved him with a boundless love, as I have said.

May God have mercy on Tharwat. How could I forget him? How could I imagine that his memory might ever fade within me, when I can scarcely recall a single event of my life since returning from Europe without recalling Tharwat and the mark he left upon it? I relied on him, took refuge in him, and consulted him in all matters. And in all this I found from him a compassion unlike any other, and an affection without equal. What deepened its effect upon me was my certainty that it was a pure compassion and an affection untainted by any motive.

Nor am I alone in speaking of Tharwat in this way. Many of us remember in him this pure affection and this unclouded fidelity. His equals remember it; his peers remember it; those he helped remember it; and those who were bound to him by personal association remember it.

In Egypt there are leaders whose hold upon people's hearts varies in strength and weakness. But I believe that Tharwat was the richest among them in such hearts—he possessed the greatest share of hearts that loved him with sincerity, loved him for his person rather than his leadership or office. And it was when he stepped away from leadership and authority that this love revealed itself most clearly.

Yes—such hearts do not fill the streets, nor do they erupt in applause or shouts. But though few, they were rich in a love unhesitating in sacrifice. I swear that among Tharwat's friends were those who, had they been given the choice between living themselves or giving their lives for him, would not have hesitated—not because they loved Egypt and preferred it to Tharwat, but because they loved Tharwat and preferred him to themselves.

May God have mercy on Tharwat. The bonds of life between us and him were severed two months ago, yet we have not grown accustomed to the certainty of his death. Nor do I believe that we ever shall. I do not believe that our anguish for him will fade or grow faint. Life itself is enough to sharpen this anguish—just as the weakness, indifference, self-interest, and change we see in people are enough to remind us always of the strength, firmness, sincerity, and fidelity that were Tharwat's.

May God have mercy on Tharwat. If his body lies confined in a grave in the desert, his person is confined in other graves: the hearts he filled, and knew how to fill—hearts that will never be emptied of him.

Heliopolis
Ṭāhā Ḥusayn
Al-Muqtataf, 1 December 1928