

Innovation

Have you seen this abominable innovation to which the reformers have begun calling since yesterday in certain morning and evening newspapers? Have you not recoiled from it? Have you not denounced it? Have you not urged the authorities to rise against those who invent it and zealously propagate it? These innovators want Egypt to abandon its traditions, renounce its nature, imitate the countries of the West, and follow this miserable path that forces nations toward modesty and economy, obliging them to measure their ambitions and projects according to their needs and capacities rather than according to what imagination paints or dreams dictate. Such innovators deserve the harshest reckoning and the heaviest punishment, because they refuse to let modern Egypt continue along the path of ancient Egypt. Instead they want Eastern Egypt to imitate the nations of the West—and what greater crime or transgression could there be? They object to modern Egypt constructing a lecture hall for the university that surpasses every other building on earth in length, width, and height, in decoration and ornament, in magnificence and splendor. They claim this is a waste of public money, an injustice toward the sons of the nation, an extravagance beyond our means and an unbearable burden upon our resources. And yet these same people know perfectly well that our ancient ancestors, who built the pyramids and the other towering structures and majestic monuments, never asked themselves what such eternal works might cost in money and labor. They never wondered whether the expense was little or great, light or burdensome. They never consulted the peasants about the wealth and effort required to build those immortal monuments, nor whether the people approved or resented the sacrifice demanded of them. They thought of one thing only and worked for one purpose only: the glory of Egypt, its greatness, and its superiority over all the nations of the earth. And indeed they succeeded magnificently. Tell me of any country in the world that can rival Egypt in pyramids, temples, and monuments. Tell me: is it not true that those who lived during the building of the pyramids and temples suffered greatly in order to construct them, enduring misery, hardship, and deprivation? Yet we today boast of them, admire them, and take pride in them. They suffered so that we might rejoice. They humbled themselves so that we might be exalted. Why then should our love for our children not resemble the love our ancestors bore for us? Why should we not suffer today so that our descendants may one day rejoice? Why should we not endure sorrow now so that our children may one day glory in what we have built? We ourselves shall gain little from this lecture hall, but our children will boast of it proudly and say of us in voices filled with admiration and gratitude: “God have mercy upon that generation which built for us this eternal monument.” They will remember constantly the words of the ancient poet: “We build as our forefathers built before us, And we do as they once did.” Those were the builders of the pyramids; these are the builders of the lecture hall. And our descendants will say of us with voices mingling love, pity, compassion, and sorrow: “God have mercy upon that generation. Its sons tasted every form of misery,

endured every kind of hardship, and suffered deeply in order to build for us this lecture hall, just as the ancient Egyptians endured misery, hardship, hunger, and lives sustained by bread and onions in order to build the pyramids for us.” Thus has God decreed for Egypt that its present generations must suffer so that future generations may rejoice. And there is no doubt that those future generations who will one day delight in this lecture hall will themselves be granted by God a ministry like our present one—a government that will call upon them for sacrifice and compel them to construct buildings no less magnificent than the lecture hall or even the pyramids themselves. Egypt is afflicted with the passion for construction because Egypt is afflicted with the desire to resist time and its signs of decay, as the author of *The People of the Cave* has said. So let Egypt build, and build still more. Let Egypt suffer, and suffer still more. God created Egypt for suffering and for building alike. And let the Ministry extend its hand against these innovators who seek to divert Egypt from the suffering and construction God has decreed for it. For every innovation is error, and every error leads to the fire.