

Distraction

Kawkab al-Sharq, 20 June 1933

This morning our esteemed colleague al-Siyāsa addressed its readers with a report that, if true, would constitute a scandal unlike any other scandal, and an outrage unlike the outrages to which people have grown accustomed in these times.

Al-Siyāsa reported that the Minister of the Interior, al-Qayyisī Pasha, had trifled with the Chamber of Deputies and with the entire Egyptian nation when he claimed to the deputy who questioned him on Wednesday evening about the missionaries that the government intended to allocate seventy thousand pounds for the establishment of shelters and schools to receive the poor and destitute among Muslim sons and daughters, so as to shield them from the missionaries' assault upon their religion, morals, and honour.

Al-Siyāsa reported that the Minister of the Interior, al-Qayyisī Pasha, had trifled with the Chamber of Deputies and with all the Muslims of Egypt when he told them this tale, for the government had not contemplated allocating this sum to address the missionary question or to protect Muslim sons and daughters from the missionaries. Rather, it had set the money aside to implement another law approved by Parliament — a law with no connection whatsoever to missionary activity — namely the law providing for the prohibition of begging. Thus the Minister of the Interior, al-Qayyisī Pasha — if what al-Siyāsa reported is true — had told the deputies and the Muslims something other than the truth. And so the Minister of the Interior, al-Qayyisī Pasha, had won the praise of the deputies and the gratitude of grateful Muslims, because he had told them something other than the truth, had led them to imagine what had not occurred, had presented to them what had not existed, and had informed them that the government was contemplating what it had never contemplated.

Thus the Minister of the Interior, al-Qayyisī Pasha — if what al-Siyāsa reported is true — had set out deliberately to distract the people from the missionaries. He attempted this and pursued a path towards it whose place among the virtues of Islam and the noble qualities of character —

particularly those befitting the dignity of ministers and the great offices of state — we cannot determine. And so the whole affair was nothing but a distraction, and a distraction without justification.

Nor did the matter end there. All the ministers gave their approval to their colleague by maintaining silence over what he had said, and by endorsing what he had claimed, thereby sharing in the moral and religious responsibility for his words. They all, therefore — if al-Siyāsa's claim is true — said to the Chamber of Deputies and to the Muslims something other than the truth. They all attempted to divert the people's attention from the missionaries and their activities by means of this report, which bore no resemblance to the truth. Nor did the matter end there, for the Cabinet has newspapers that support it, advocate for it, and sing its praises. These papers seized upon the Interior Minister's stance, broadcast it, and heralded it, and have persisted — and continue to persist — in extolling and praising it. These newspapers thus participate with the ministers in spreading something other than the truth, in distracting without justification, and in diverting the people's attention from the missionaries by means of reports that bear no resemblance to the truth.

Nor did the matter end there. Al-Sha'b newspaper claimed that this sum had initially been smaller, but that His Majesty the King had refused to accept it and had ordered it raised to seventy thousand pounds. Al-Sha'b newspaper therefore arrogated to itself — if what al-Siyāsa reported is true — the right to speak of His Majesty the King in a manner contrary to the truth. Al-Sha'b newspaper arrogated to itself — if what al-Siyāsa reported is true — the right to deceive the people and to campaign on behalf of the Cabinet in the name of His Majesty the King. Yet the station of His Majesty the King stands too exalted, too lofty, and too honoured in the eyes of all Egyptians to be made an instrument of propaganda — particularly when that propaganda does not rest upon the truth. For it is a trivial matter that ministers should make promises and break them, and a trivial matter that ministers should speak carelessly without scrutinising their words. But the thing that is not and should not be tolerated or persisted in is that promises should be broadcast in the name of His Majesty the King, only for the people then to discover that

these promises had not been true, that they had not issued from His Majesty, that they had been invented from nothing, and that they had been made a tool of political propaganda on one hand, and of diverting the people's attention from the missionaries on the other.