

Power

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A power most extreme, representing the majesty of the state and its grandeur, the might of the state and its ascendancy, the glory of the state and its independence, in the city of Alexandria, when the head of the Wafd delegation and his companion arrived there yesterday; and a weakness most extreme, in Port Said, representing the forbearance of the state and its acquiescence and its submission, the patience of the state and its endurance, when the missionaries ran riot and the schemers schemed, and the transgressors transgressed against faith and morals, against dignity and honour.

In Alexandria, a cordon is thrown around the station, and troops and police are packed within it, and the people are permitted to welcome their leader only within measured bounds. And when the head of the Wafd and his companion emerged from the station — speak, then, of soldiers and police; speak of force and might; speak of numbers and equipment; speak of roads seized and positions occupied, of crowds turned back and well-wishers repelled; speak of truncheons and whips; speak of whatever you please that represents might, authority, and a power the like of which no power resembles — and do not reckon it in soldiers by the hundred, nor by hundreds, nor raise it even to the thousand, but raise it, rather, to the thousands. And yet there was in Alexandria, for all this, no transgression against faith, no wrongdoing, no misdeed committed, no outrage perpetrated, no breach of security, no corruption of order — there were merely two leaders among the leaders of Egypt, making their way to a city among the cities of Egypt, there to be welcomed by the people, the people of Egypt. There was nothing more to the matter than that.

But in Port Said, it is statecraft and tact that are on display, calm and forbearance that are on display, self-mastery on display, disciplined by patience and carried, in endurance, to the very furthest limit endurance can reach — all this before a company of foreigners who came to us as guests, whom we received handsomely, whose hospitality we honoured, upon whom we bestowed protection and bestowed assistance, for whom we smoothed every path and eased every way — and who repaid us with the finest repayment, and rewarded us with the loveliest

reward: setting upon our young women and our young men, our men and our women, seducing them, luring them, leading them into sedition in matters of their faith, and compelling them to abandon it and turn from it, resorting to coercion whenever coercion was needed.

And we feel this, and it pains us, and we complain of it, and it distresses us, and we turn, in this, to our powerful government — possessed of resolve and earnestness, of numbers and equipment, of might and authority, of a keen concern to preserve dignity and to protect lives and property and to safeguard belief, morals, and honour — we turn to this government of ours, calling upon it against these guests of ours; yet our voices do not reach it save after toil and hardship, nor does our complaint stir it save after much insistence and long affliction. And when at last the voices reach it, and the complaint stirs it, it displays such economy of effort, such composure and forbearance, as might well serve for a proverb, and stand as a model of conduct for these unruly nations that call themselves free and independent.

There, the government temporises and delays, the government is patient and forbears, the government reveals arts of cleverness and a whole range of resourcefulness — not to check these missionaries in their aggression, nor to turn them back from their excess, for that is a thing beyond the strength of the strongest, but rather to salvage of our faith, our dignity, our morals, our honour, and our freedom whatever can be salvaged, and to rescue of our sons and daughters whoever can be rescued — all in perfect calm, comprehensive peace, abundant courtesy, and a sweet, pleasant smile. Nor does the conduct of our government, in calmness and gentleness, in love of peace, in showing courtesy and tenderness to the missionaries, stop at this point, leaving their schools and their institutes standing with open doors, their halls thrown wide to whomever temptation and seduction may draw into them — no, it goes further, granting them time and extending to them the means of aggression and excess, so that they might manoeuvre and negotiate their way around it, so that they might resume the effort of recovering some of those who slipped from their grasp and escaped their dominion, so that they might attempt to obstruct the rulings of the courts, and obstruct them, whether for a long while or a short. The conduct of our government does not stop even there, but goes beyond it, to something yet more indicative of largeness of spirit, breadth of heart, and soundness of forbearance, and of eagerness to show courtesy to the foreigners and tenderness toward them, to placate the foreigners and to treat them

gently. For a correspondent has written to us from Port Said, informing us that the government watches over itself by itself, obstructs its own order by its own order, and binds its own hand with its own hand. Yes — a correspondent has written to us, informing us that the government does this in Port Said out of an excess of courtesy toward the foreigners, and an excess of caution lest any harm from the government should touch them, or any ill befall them at the government's hands.

They allege that the Ministry of Religious Endowments — which is, so far as we know, one of the ministries of the government — prepared a sermon on the matter of the missionaries, and circulated it to the imams of the mosques to be delivered to the Muslims on Friday. And in this sermon there was a moderate summons to God, an extravagant summons to the government, and a softening of the matter of the missionaries. They say: the sermon reached Port Said and fell to an imam among the imams of the mosques; the man made ready to deliver it, and the Muslims made ready to hear it — but a governmental hand snatched back, violently, what another governmental hand had sent; the hand of the Ministry of the Interior reached out and took back what the hand of the Ministry of Religious Endowments had given. And the official imam could not deliver the official sermon by official order, and so he delivered such a sermon as the people could make of what they would, and they questioned, and multiplied their questioning, and pressed it insistently. And when the prayer was concluded, and a long while had passed since its conclusion, the sermon was returned to the imam, that he might deliver it if he wished, after the time appointed for its delivery had already passed.

They say: the one who represented the Ministry of the Interior in placing this restraint upon the Ministry of Religious Endowments was the English Commissioner of Police, not the Egyptian Governor. They say: it is most probable that this English Commissioner is connected to the Ministry of the Interior and to the European Department of Public Security, and that his connection to it may well be stronger and firmer than his connection to the Egyptian Department of Public Security. They say: and the meaning of this is that it was the European Department of Public Security that kept watch over a mosque among the mosques of the Muslims, that restrained an imam among the imams of the Muslims, that intervened in a matter among the affairs of the Muslims, and bound the hand of the very ministry most closely connected to the life of Muslims and the rites of Islam.

All this they said, and all this they wrote to us, and we referred to all of it on Saturday, and asked the government to deny it or disavow it. Saturday evening passed, and its night; Sunday's day passed, and its night; Monday reached its middle — and the government said not one word on the matter, and denied nothing of it. Either because the ministry was preoccupied with the head of the Wafd and his companion, and their journey to Alexandria, and the gathering of the people to welcome them there, and the diverting of the people from this gathering, and the watching of them once it proved powerless to divert them, and the watching of the head of the Wafd and his companion in whatever movements they made and whatever speeches they delivered; or else because the ministry itself was in the process of moving to Alexandria, beginning its work in the second capital, so that the ministers were occupied — away from proselytising and the missionaries, away from the imams and the worshippers, away from the preachers and the Commissioner — with looking over their offices, and putting their affairs in order, and arranging their furniture, and placing their seats where the breeze might enter or be kept out, and with all that follows from this in the way of looking over their houses and their residences among the hotels, and suiting all of this to their needs and their comfort. And what strangeness is there in this? For the needs of the ministers are the needs of the state, and the comfort of the ministers is the comfort of the state. And it is only reasonable that the ministers should be occupied with some affairs of state to the neglect of others. Or else because the government can find nothing to say.

And the reports that have reached us from Port Said are true; there is no way to deny or disavow them. And this is the very thing we fear, the thing we pray to God may not be so — for it would be far too much to ask of the Ministry of the Interior that it should bind the hand of the Ministry of Religious Endowments to this degree; and it would have been easy, indeed it would have been necessary, for the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Religious Endowments to agree upon the text of this sermon before it was circulated. And it would be worse still if the English Commissioner had done this thing of his own accord — restraining the Ministry of Religious Endowments and binding one of the hands of the state, and interfering in a matter of religion, with the government knowing nothing of it and hearing nothing of it. And worse than either would be that these reports should prove true, and the government pass over them in silence as though they had never been, or as though this did not conflict with what is owed to the state in dignity, what is owed to

religion in safeguarding, and what is owed to the rites of faith in respect. It is one of two things: either this report is true, in which case the government must take some measure befitting national dignity and pride, or must at least explain to us its position on the matter; or else this report is false, in which case the government must deny it with a flat denial, and disavow it with a disavowal that leaves no room for doubt or suspicion.

We do not think the government would be content that people should know of it such submission and such compliance; we do not think the Minister of the Interior would be content that people should know of him that an official among his officials did such a thing as this without referring it back to the minister; we do not think the Minister of the Interior would be content that people should suppose of him that he authorised the Commissioner of Port Said to do such a thing as this; nor do we think the Minister of Religious Endowments would be content that the sermons of the mosques should become subject, they too, to English oversight — least of all when these sermons issue from the government, not from the people, nor from the leaders of the people. Be that as it may, we are able to assure the government that the story of this sermon, and other stories of the missionaries, are more deserving of its attention, more worthy of its care, more fitting to occupy it by day and keep it wakeful by night, and more fitting an occasion to display its power and its authority, than the journey of the head of the Wafd and his companion to Alexandria, and the people's meeting them with the welcome that is their due — a welcome expressing the people's true love and their profound reverence.