

A Revolution

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But it has turned into a tranquil calm — for it was a raging fire, its sparks flying, its flames blazing, so that one feared its conflagration might consume everything; yet by God's will it turned to a coolness and a peace, harboring no danger, no evil, and no cause for fear in anyone, or anything.

This raging revolution appeared on Thursday, when the Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies wished to speak on the Debt — should it be repaid in gold, or in paper? The Chamber was thrown into the utmost turmoil, and blazed into the utmost uproar; throats burst into shouting, tongues into rebuke, hands stretched out into the air; the Deputy Speaker fell silent, then resumed speaking, then fell silent again, then was forced to abandon the podium and return to his seat, grieved and downcast!

The Chamber then refused to record any of its Deputy Speaker's words in the minutes, and refused to record anything of its own uproar against its Deputy Speaker in the minutes; nor was the Chamber able to ask the newspapers attending its sessions to omit this incident, and whatever fire it had kindled in the hearts, the mouths, and the hands of the deputies — and so the newspapers published of this incident whatever they published. It has thus become incumbent upon historians not to content themselves with these minutes of the Chamber of Deputies, now that it stands proven that they do not record everything that occurs in the Chamber, but only what the deputies wish to have recorded.

It has likewise become incumbent upon historians to complete their research by reading the newspapers. And who knows — perhaps, were everything revealed to historians, they would learn that they ought not to trust the minutes alone, nor the newspapers alone, nor the newspapers and the minutes together, but ought to seek out, among the individuals who took part in the sessions or witnessed them, or heard from someone who took part in them or witnessed them, whatever might complete the inquiry they undertake and the verification they seek.

And yet, how often has it been said to people — and how often will it still be said — that official sources are among the most reliable sources historians must rely upon; while it has now become clear that it suffices to say a thing is an official source for the historian to regard it with an attitude of doubt and caution.

Here is an uproar that took place in the Chamber of Deputies, which the newspapers discussed and the reports spread widely, and which very nearly produced consequences of real danger within the Chamber — and yet there is no mention of it in the Chamber's minutes, nor any way to learn of it, or speak of it, except from outside the Chamber!

And before that came the affair of the Public Works budget in the Chamber of Deputies. The minutes claimed the Chamber had approved it; the minutes claimed that some members doubted the validity of that approval, since the number of deputies present did not meet the legal quorum; the newspapers claimed the number fell far, far short of the legal quorum. And that the Public Works budget was not approved in accordance with the constitution and procedure, but was rather snatched away to the Senate — just as the President of the Wafd was snatched from Qena to Cairo.

The Chamber of Deputies never denied this, neither privately nor publicly. And so it became the people's right to believe whomever they wished, and disbelieve whomever they wished, for the whole affair was subject to a doubt unlike any other! And the story of this same budget in the Senate was just as it had been in the Chamber of Deputies: the minutes claimed it was approved; the newspapers claimed it was not. The people asked, and pressed their questions, but the newspapers fell silent, and the Senate fell silent.

And the affair of this budget circulated between truth and falsehood, until it became your own right to believe the minutes and disbelieve the newspapers, or to disbelieve the minutes and believe the newspapers. Whatever the case, the press holds a merit over the deputies and the senators that even those who resent the press, and wish to press down upon it ever more harshly, ought to acknowledge: for were it not for the press, people would never have known that the deputies rose up against their own Deputy Speaker on Thursday, to the point of nearly ejecting him; and were it not for the press, future generations could never have learned that the deputies were so fierce on the question of the Debt, so relentless in defending paper currency, that they nearly laid hands upon

their own Deputy Speaker the moment he showed any inclination toward payment in gold!!

Were it not for the press, none of this would ever have been known, nor would these splendid glories have been recorded for the deputies, nor these achievements, which shall be broadcast and proclaimed, filling every ear and spreading to every corner of the land.

After all this, will the deputies go on thinking so ill of the press, holding it in such low regard — the very press that makes them heroes, and forges for them crowns of glory that shall never fade? And yet this uproar, whose fire flared up and whose blaze raged on Thursday, proved no easy thing to extinguish; it was indeed confined within narrow bounds once the Deputy Speaker had been silenced! But it remained ablaze, its flame still sharp, and it became clear to those attempting to put it out that there was no way to extinguish it except to remove entirely the fuel feeding it heat and strength, and enabling it to blaze and rage on. And this fuel was none other than the Deputy Speaker of the deputies himself. And so the firemen of the Chamber of Deputies concluded that the Deputy Speaker simply had to be dismissed and expelled from the Chamber, so that the fire might be quenched and the uproar calmed! It is said that certain deputies approached the Speaker of the Chamber on this very matter, and the Deputy Speaker sensed that he was surrounded; he defended himself in the newspapers, retracted the view attributed to him by some, and revealed his own actual view — but the firemen of the Chamber of Deputies insisted on nothing less than his dismissal and expulsion, so as to secure the Chamber against the blaze, and let the deputies breathe air that was free, pure, and innocent of sin, of any breach of consensus, or defiance of the nation's will!!

And so, when yesterday morning came, the Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies awoke gloomy and grieved, and as the day advanced toward the hour of his dismissal, his anguish only intensified, and the earth shook beneath him with its full tremor. And the people awaited this curious trial with great anticipation — the trial of a man either because he had erred, or because he had deliberately defied the consensus of the deputies, or because he wished to stand alone on the question of the Debt just as he had once stood alone on the question of cotton years before! Or because he wished to play the shrewd politician, the cunning ally, paving the way to support the ministry and to plead its excuses should its position grow difficult, and it be forced to submit to the French and the Italians!

The people awaited this curious trial to see how far conviction might rise to the level of a revolution that admits no discussion, no argument, and no difference of opinion whatsoever — a revolution not content merely to silence the dissenter, nor to send him back to his seat humiliated and stunned, but bent instead on cutting off every avenue of disagreement, whether over this matter or any other, and consigning him to an isolation that was sinful, or very nearly so!

The people awaited this trial, asking one another: if the deputies were to rise up in just such a revolution against the ministers themselves, whenever the ministers defied the will of the nation in some matter they undertook, what then would become of things, and where would it all end?!

But the wait was not long, nor was the answer difficult to find. For the fire was put out before ever two goats had so much as butted heads over it, and its quenching required nothing more than the gentlest of puffs — the sort that snuffs out a candle once its wax is nearly spent, with only the faintest ember left glowing! And do you know who blew that puff, sending forth that calm, lukewarm breath that extinguished so sharp and so unruly a revolution? None other than the Deputy Speaker himself. He rose, and spoke words milder than what Al-Ahram had published of him; he wished to speak at length, but the Chamber contented itself with little, and the Deputy Speaker remained both deputy and Deputy Speaker, enjoying the confidence of the deputies — and enjoying, too, the confidence of the Prime Minister, which he had been boasting of only weeks before.

And so the revolution blazed, and so it was quenched. Words kindled it, and words put it out. The whole affair was nothing but words about words! Nor should it ever have been anything else but words about words — for that is all the circumstances allow. How dearly would those who love humanity, and feel for people's span of days and their hopes, their interests and their aims, wish that every revolution in the world might be like this calm revolution, which flared up in our own Chamber of Deputies on a Thursday and was quenched by the following Monday — destroying nothing, shattering nothing, wasting nothing, and touching not a single soul with harm.

How badly the revolutionaries of Europe and America, individuals and movements alike, need to look toward Egypt! There they will find the noble model, the excellent example, the fire that does not burn, the

revolution that does no harm, and words that never become anything more than words.