

A Speech

Kawkab al-Sharq, 6 May 1933

It belongs not to the Prime Minister — for illness has silenced the Prime Minister on the subject of oratory, driving him to excess in silence or to choosing deputies who speak on his behalf and talk in his name. There is no doubt that eloquence has lost, through this silence to which the Prime Minister has been compelled, innumerable signs and tokens — losing what distinguished it in this happy era in the way of elegance and brilliance, of magnificence and mastery; and becoming idle, one from which ears turn away and natures recoil. The pulpits of Cairo and the provinces felt that they had lost their brilliant orator and their elocutionist who brooks no rival and whose dust no one raises. Those who heard the Prime Minister's two deputies in oratory — once in the Chamber of Deputies, and once in Groppi's hall — observed that these two deputies did not sustain the Prime Minister's eloquence in its proper form, did not preserve for it its beauty and its magic, but rather tampered with it not a little, and inflicted upon it varieties of distortion that stirred sorrow in hearts and grief in souls.

But God Almighty is well able to compensate the Ministry for what it has lost in the way of its brilliant orator, and to provide it from among its brilliant orators with one more eloquent than he and a logician more accomplished than he. And this is what has occurred — for the Minister of Traditions has served the Ministry as its orator in place of the Prime Minister!!

And I bear witness that the Minister of Traditions excelled in oratory, and that he will not be surpassed in it day after day. And the Minister of Traditions was brilliant in eloquence — God willing, he will not reach the full extent of his eloquence day after day. And I fear that the brilliance of the Minister of Traditions in oratory and eloquence may efface the traces of the Prime Minister's eloquence, making what came first come last, and reducing to the second tier what had been in the first tier. Had the signs from which the Minister of Traditions' brilliance in oratory was revealed been published not in the Ministry's newspapers, but in all the newspapers that all Egyptians read, all Egyptians would have agreed that they had been stirred in this modern age with a claim to the leadership of oratory after having been stirred with a claim to the leadership of poetry, and that the whole matter of literature had become theirs — they say whatever they wish in it and no one denies them, and

they decide whatever they wish in it and no one contests them. And had these signs that revealed the Minister of Traditions' brilliance in oratory been published everywhere, Egyptians would have also agreed that these signs must be made a compulsory subject in schools, displayed to students and pupil-teachers together, and inscribed everywhere and suspended in every assembly, having covered with letters of gold the covers of the newspapers —

For Egypt could not aspire in any single day to the elevated eloquence and splendid literature to which it arrived yesterday by the grace of the Minister of Traditions as he stood in an election celebration!!

It is not surprising that the Minister of Traditions should excel in oratory to this degree and ascend from the magnificence of eloquence to this station — for he is the author of the book «Al-Bay'» and the author of those celebrated and brilliant chapters «Insight and Remembrance for Public Opinion on the Causes of My Dismissal Built on Vindictiveness and Revenge»! And he is the Minister of Education and the President of the Supreme University — so if the causes of literary brilliance and expressive skill have not gathered for him after all of this, for whom have they gathered? What is surprising is that this genius should remain a hidden secret, a concealed affair, despite the many times the Minister of Traditions has spoken in Parliament, and in other than Parliament, and despite the many things the Minister of Traditions has said in the lobby of the Continental, and in other than the Continental. But God appointed for each thing its term, and conditioned events on their time — and so decreed beforehand, from the realm of the unseen, that the brilliance of the Minister of Traditions in oratory and eloquence should not be revealed to public view except when destiny compelled the Prime Minister to silence and stillness — so that in the genius of the one there should be consolation for the silence of the other. And it may well be a pleasant and enjoyable matter for literary historians to analyse this extraordinary expressive personality that the Minister of Traditions revealed the day before yesterday — perhaps they might discern and make known to people the secret of the remarkable skill in addressing a crowd.

How we would have liked to dwell on this stance of the Minister of Traditions' speech — were it not that in this speech there are matters of politics that concern us more than what concerns men of letters.

Perhaps the most striking feature one might observe in this brilliant and remarkable speech is the soundness of logic, the excellence of argumentation, the precision of inference, and the brilliant skill in moving from one idea to the next! For the Minister of Traditions has proved that the efforts philosophers have exerted until now in training minds and accustoming them to correct thinking have borne no fruit and arrived at no result except in the case of a single person — namely his own noble self! And for this reason you may find it difficult to taste this speech and feel at ease with its logic when reading it for the first time — you must therefore read it several times, and do not shrink from reading it ten times. And it is certain that after these ten readings you will neither taste it nor feel at ease with its logic — so be confident then that you are an ordinary man, and that the Minister of Traditions is a rare man, and that it is difficult for ordinary men to taste or understand the speech of the singular and exceptional.

Observe how the Minister of Traditions wished to be original, not imitative. He did not say: O Gentlemen — nor: O Friends — nor: O Brothers — as the generality of people say — and he did not say: Your Excellencies the Ministers — as the Prime Minister says. Instead he said: Sons of Menufiyya. He dispensed with the vocative particle, either because it is tiring — and the minister is in need of rest — or because it indicates addressing a large number of people when the minister was not speaking to more than a few, or — and this is correct — because the vocative particle indicates that those addressed are at some distance, whereas they were closer to the minister than his own shadow and nearer to him than himself. And observe how he justified his originality with the best justification, and how abundantly he interpreted it with the best interpretation — he calls them sons of his province because he is proud of them and appreciates their feeling and patriotism. What did the Minister of Traditions thereby accomplish? This is the speech of ordinary men. As for the singular and exceptional, their pride in the people of their provinces is singular, and their appreciation of their feeling and patriotism is exceptional — so it belongs to them alone to call them sons of Menufiyya in a manner that distinguishes their feeling and patriotism as superb, and they teach them this excellence so that the sons of Menufiyya know, as the Minister of Traditions has called them, that they are proud of their feeling and patriotism, appreciative of it.

Then observe this creativity that has no equal, reached only by the gifted and brilliant, to the point where the Minister of Traditions forgot or

feigned to forget, or was ignorant or feigned to be ignorant, of the rivalry between the People's Party and the Union that led to crises in Parliament and to resignations outside Parliament. And he declared that there is no disagreement between the two parties, and that there cannot be any disagreement between them — even though he himself is the agent of the Union Party — because a disagreement had occurred between the two parties that led the Union's agent to dismiss himself and the Minister of Traditions to take his place after the Unionists had grown angry at the People's Party's leader.

But acknowledging the right and looking at reality is the way of ordinary men. As for the singular and gifted like the Minister of Traditions, they create right as a creation, impose reality as an imposition, and decide things from within themselves — that is all!!

Then observe how the Minister of Traditions stood up with that sweeping and flagrant argument to the effect that what is wrong is not the Ministry's fault — for he said that the Prime Minister's affair had been referred to His Majesty the King. And so the Minister of Traditions took pledges on the days, vows on the fates, undertakings on the events and vicissitudes, and pledges with His Majesty the King that the Ministry would not resign and Parliament would not be dissolved until the constitutional term was complete before the 1936 elections!!

To ordinary men this speech depicts no wisdom, no intelligence, no understanding, no humility, no acknowledgement of the authority of days and events, no appreciation of what His Majesty the King is owed in the way of honour and elevation of his sublime wisdom above the whims of ministers and the inclinations of politics. But to the singular and gifted like the Minister of Traditions, this speech is all wisdom, all intelligence, all honour — honouring His Majesty the King's right to change ministries whenever his sublime wisdom and the country's interests demand this change, even if Parliament has not reached its term, even if the year 1936 has not come, even if the parliamentary session has not dissolved, even if this very month in which we find ourselves has not ended.

Then observe the next sign amid signs of sound logic, and the miraculous miracles in the correct and continuous reasoning, and the argument that admits no doubt or dispute or search or debate — about our affairs that have made our best and most of us simply in knowledge of body and mind, and straightened our logic, and made us believe one

another. The Minister of Traditions wished to point to the government's care for people's interests, and toward the results of this care he mentioned the reduction of farmers' burdens on produce and the government's care with customs protection. The results of this care and this reduction are, to ordinary men, the improvement in the condition of farmers and merchants. But to the Minister of Traditions the gifted genius they are something else — he can spend months searching for them, and spend a lifetime seeking them, and never arrive at them — for ordinary men's logic cannot grasp what results from the relief given to farmers who borrowed against their produce, and from the decision of customs protection; the result is that the students have turned to their studies and not occupied themselves with them.

Yes — this is the conclusion reached by the logic and genius of the Minister of Traditions in soundness of understanding and straightness of reasoning.

Did I not tell you that our affairs have made us sharper in intelligence, more acute in mind, firmer in logic, and made us believe one another? Then after that the Minister of Traditions claims that Egypt still falls behind Europe in understanding and knowledge, and that Egypt's ministers still fall behind Europe's ministers in talent and genius.

As for me, I wish for the French Minister of Education, who fed our Minister of Education at his table last summer, to visit Egypt and keep the company of the Minister of Traditions for a week or two in order to straighten his mind and correct his logic — so that teaching in France might be set right, and the French schools and universities might attain the elevated level of the Egyptian schools and the Egyptian University in the shadow of this fertile, wide, and upright mind, the mind of the Minister of Traditions.