

Health

Kawkab al-Sharq, 10 August 1933

The Prime Minister's health is good, and Almighty God is surely to be thanked for that. And Almighty God is surely disposed to grant the Prime Minister ever more of this good health — yet the Prime Minister remains far from Egypt, withdrawn from his work, moving about in search of rest between the towns and villages of France and Switzerland, despite his good health; for his share of this good health has not yet reached the point of allowing him to return to Egypt, to take up his work with vigor, and to attend to the conduct of affairs.

And the health of the Minister of Traditions is good, but he is presently residing in Vittel, bathing in the morning and bathing in the evening, in search of rest and recuperation.

And the health of the Minister of Agriculture is good, but he is touring the lands of the earth on a journey that is partly for recuperation and partly for exploration. The news has told us that in Budapest he is receiving the esteem and honor he deserves, before setting out for whatever city or village he may find what he needs of rest and recuperation.

And the health of the Minister of the Interior is good, but he is confined to his house, having kept to it these several days, conducting his orders from within it, and managing the affairs of his ministry from within it, to whatever extent his good health permits.

So four of our ministers, His Excellency the Prime Minister among them, enjoy — thank God — good health; yet three of them do no work, being in need of complete rest for some time, whether long or short. The fourth does half his work, or a little more than half, or a little less than half. And the affairs of the State stand in clear and urgent need that our ten ministers devote to them the whiteness of the day and half the blackness of the night, or a little more than half, or a little less than half.

Security, alas, is in the utmost disorder: people are killed and struck down, houses are broken into and stripped of their contents, in broad daylight, while the ranks of soldiers are few. The foreigner extends his hand as far as it can possibly be extended, encroaching upon Egyptians in their religion, their morals, their honor, and their nationhood. The people cry out, and no one hears them; they call for help, and no helper answers

them. France refuses — joined by Italy in this refusal — to accept anything but that Egypt pay her debt in gold; neither will accept mere words on paper, nor show any inclination even to discuss the matter. You may count as many of these dangers and dilemmas as you please, any one of which alone would be enough to occupy the Ministry's every waking hour, day and night. How much more so, then, when they gather together, and combine, one compounding the complexity of another?

And if you add to these dilemmas the gravest and most odious of them all — this economic crisis, which refuses to resolve itself until it has consumed everything in Egypt — you will know that the ministers' efforts, whatever they may be, are far too slight and far too feeble to remedy the evil in which we find ourselves; how much more so, then, when this very Ministry is incapable even of making the effort, prevented, by illness, travel, and the desire for rest and touring, from discharging even its ordinary duties in the simple, customary manner in which duties are discharged in ordinary days — days when the country faces no calamity, and danger does not close in upon it from every side.

But the Ministry — thank God — is well pleased with itself, confident in this success it has achieved in warding off these dangers and resolving these problems. And what clearer proof, what more manifest evidence, that it has succeeded most completely, than the fact that it still stands, enjoying the seats of power, ruling over the affairs and concerns of the State in every particular as well as any ministry could ever rule over them? For it seems that what matters is not that people be secure in their persons and their property, nor that Egypt be secure in her budget, nor that Egypt be secure in her honor and her sanctities, nor that the crisis ease for Egyptians, whether a little or a great deal. This, it seems, is not what matters, nor is this the measure by which the success and achievement of ministries are judged. What matters — beyond which nothing else matters — the measure to which no other measure compares, for the soundness and success of ministries, is simply their remaining in power. So long as our Ministry remains, it has succeeded completely, triumphed completely — so says the Ministry's own newspaper this very morning.

And the Ministry's newspaper is right in what it says — truly right, beyond all doubt or question. And if proof must be furnished that it is right, indeed most emphatically right, then let us cite this theory — which, however much the men of religion may deny it, remains in any case a scientific theory — Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest: for

had the Ministry not been fit, it would not have survived; and had the Ministry not reached the utmost limits of fitness, its survival would not have lasted so long. And so the opposition ought to be ashamed, and the opposition members ought to be ashamed, and ought to believe that the present Ministry is simply an inescapable fate laid upon Egypt, from which there is no refuge, and no way of escaping its persistence — since it is but the natural result of the struggle for survival, and the survival of the fittest. Indeed, the Ministry's newspaper would have it that the opposition and its members ought also to appreciate, on behalf of the Prime Minister and his colleagues, their struggle in Egypt's cause, and the sacrifices they have made and will go on making in this struggle. For had Egypt's affairs been entrusted to any man other than Sidqi Pasha, he would surely have preferred rest to work, health to illness, resignation to shouldering the burdens of government, after this heavy affliction had befallen him — the affliction that confined him to his house for a month, and now compels him to seek treatment overseas.

But the Prime Minister prefers the People to himself, prefers Egypt's happiness to his own, and Egypt's rest to his own rest; and so he bears this long illness and does not resign, even though he has done nothing throughout this long illness. And he draws his salary for resting throughout this long illness, even though it has cost the State considerable sums for his treatment throughout this long illness; for it is enough that he has combined illness with the retention of office to count as one who prefers Egypt to himself, sacrificing for Egypt's sake the dearest and most cherished thing he possesses.

And more eloquent still than all this: the Prime Minister will return, God willing, in perfect health at the end of next month, and resume his work in Alexandria. The papers have told us that he has proposed, or will propose, to his colleagues that the government remain in Alexandria for as long as His Majesty the King remains there, so that the Prime Minister need not trouble himself with an untimely move to Cairo, nor endure travel before its proper season. Which means that the State will bear whatever expense it must bear, spending on him and on his colleagues these additional costs entailed by keeping the government in Alexandria — all out of concern for his health, and to enable him and his colleagues to go on sacrificing themselves for Egypt's sake, continuing to prefer Egypt to themselves and their own comfort.

And if these successful efforts, if these exhausting sacrifices, fail to satisfy Egypt or content her, then woe to Egypt for her ingratitude, woe

to Egypt for her disloyalty, woe to Egypt for her denial of kindness!

As for myself, I bear witness that the Ministry struggles, that the Ministry sacrifices, and that Egypt ought rightly to acknowledge this struggle and be grateful for this sacrifice, and to prolong for it the means of this comfortable, lengthy survival, so that it may add struggle to struggle, and sacrifice to sacrifice.

And should the Prime Minister return safe and sound, God willing, then Egypt ought rightly to shelter him and care for him, and watch over his comfort in Alexandria — until, once there is no longer any avoiding the government's return to Cairo, Egypt ought rightly to plead with the Prime Minister to return to Europe, that he might rest in winter as he rested in summer. And how beautiful winter is in Nice! And how great would be Egypt's disloyalty, were she not to repay kindness with kindness, and good with good, and were she not to spend all she has and all she does not have, to enable her Prime Minister to struggle unceasingly in her cause, and to sacrifice endlessly in her cause.

The Ministry's supporters may rest assured: Egypt holds herself too noble to wrong those who struggle for her, and too proud to deny the merit of those who sacrifice for her. Egypt knows how to reward those who have been loyal to her, repaying loyalty with loyalty, and sacrifice with sacrifice — so that the Prime Minister may go on holding his office for years and years to come. However much the Prime Minister may try to resign, Egypt will never accept his resignation. And how could Egypt accept his resignation? When has Egypt ever sunk so low in naivety and heedlessness as to let slip a man who has struggled in her cause and sacrificed himself as the Prime Minister struggles and sacrifices, ever since this hateful, heavy illness befell him?