

# The Club

*Kawkab al-Sharq (Hadith al-Masa'), 29 April 1933*

His Excellency Hamad Pasha al-Basel and his companions, after their break from the Egyptian Wafd, wished to carve out for themselves a club to repair to and gather round, and in which they might meet those among the people who shared their views and walked their path. This is a right of theirs; no one contests it and no one deprives them of it. They have exercised this right: they founded their club, opened it yesterday, and were accommodated—by the good fortune both of themselves and of political freedom—by the breadth of mind of the existing Ministry, despite its intense irritation at political clubs in general and at the gatherings and discourse that take place in them. His Excellency Hamad Pasha al-Basel delivered a political speech at his new club, one we would not have wished to address, and would not have wished to speak of at length, were it not for some observations we are eager to set down quickly. These observations will likely converge, in the end, on a single one, which is that the Orator and his companions deliberately turn away from the factual realities and draw back from them, and conjure for themselves a strange imaginary atmosphere in which they live, imagining that they live among the people. This private imaginary atmosphere, which rests on factual reality not at all, is not of a nature to bestow upon those who live in it the triumph of success and the realisation of political hopes. The politics of peoples is not fantasy and not illusion, but action that may make use of imagination to realise national demands. And the clearest evidence that the Orator and his companions have conjured for themselves an imaginary atmosphere and live in it is this very name they have given themselves and bestowed upon their club. They call themselves the “Sa’dist Delegation”, and they attach their club to this Sa’dist Delegation of theirs; and they know full well that this name signifies nothing when they apply it to themselves and when they install it upon their club. The Wafd is not a name or a word; the Wafd is an existing and concrete force that any person can look at, examine, scrutinise carefully, and subject to rigorous testing. This force does not rest on imagination, and does not depend on illusion; it rests, rather, on the people who constitute it and make it a tangible, factual reality, seen by every eye, felt by every hand, and choking every Ministry that does not wish to work for Egypt and for Egypt alone.

This force is composed of the members who make up the Wafd, of the Deputies and Senators who make up the Wafdist body, and of the committees spread throughout the provinces of Egypt and dispersed through its regions. And of those millions who form the vast majority of this noble people.

This is the force that makes the Wafd a Wafd; the force that permits the Wafd to call itself a Wafd; the force that enables the Wafd to adopt for itself a political line and pursue it, and to see another line that does not accord with its view and principle and turn away from it in aversion, because it knows full well that it is backed by these millions when it does in politics what it does, and that it is backed by these millions when it refrains from doing in politics what it refrains from doing, and that it speaks for the highest hopes and ideals of these millions when it strives for independence and labours for its realisation, and that it is the mouthpiece of these millions when it says yes in politics, and when it says no in politics.

His Excellency the Orator of yesterday and his companions believe with the fullest belief that we do not exaggerate in this nor overstate it; and they believe with the fullest belief that they may tomorrow proceed to some matter and find no one proceeding with them, and that they may draw back from some matter and find no one drawing back with them, and that they may say yes while the nation says no, and may say no while the nation says yes. So why then cleave to hopes, and cling to imagination? And why give names that serve no purpose? And why be content with words, when they know full well that words are so often a mirage that the thirsty man mistakes for water, until he reaches it and finds nothing, and finds God there, who renders him his reckoning... !!

This is one manifestation of the imaginary atmosphere that His Excellency Hamad Pasha al-Basel and his companions have conjured for themselves and committed themselves to living within. And another manifestation, no better than this one but like it a mirage with nothing behind it, is this continued attachment to the idea of the National Ministry, this clinging to names and holding fast to hems, after the formation of such a ministry in the proper and productive manner in these circumstances encircling Egypt has become something that admits of no hope and no path.

Those who speak of the National Ministry in earnest and not in jest, counselling the nation and not leading it astray toward what it does not

want, know full well that this ministry will not be truly national unless the Wafd and the millions who support it with all their support, trust it with all their trust, and are reassured by it with all their reassurance, accept it. If the present political circumstances prevent the Wafd from participating in this ministry, then it is absurd to call it a national ministry, for it will be—as some former ministers have said—national without a nation, and popular without a people. And its share of this name will be like the share of the Orator and his companions in the name of the Wafd, and like the share of their club in being attached to the Wafd... !!

Yes: if the Wafd refuses to participate in this ministry except after the nation has been consulted for its opinion and pronounces its verdict upon it, and after the nation conveys through free and absolute elections its desire for it and its zeal for it, then the ministry formed today or formed tomorrow without relying on the will of the nation will not be a national ministry; it will be a partisan ministry, formed by one body, or by two bodies, or by several bodies which, however numerous in themselves, can claim no more than to represent their own members and those among individuals connected to them, being far removed from representing the majority of the nation, or from representing even a minority of the nation that carries real weight in sound democratic constitutional life. So why then cleave to hopes and cling to imagination? And why give names that serve no purpose?

His Excellency Hamad Pasha al-Basel and his companions are free to take comfort in hope, to cling to imagination, and to name themselves as they please; but they will see, we think, that they overstep the truth when they attribute their views to others, and when they claim on behalf of others what those others have not done, and say things about them that they have not said. For the Orator claimed yesterday that the Wafd had unanimously approved, a year ago, the acceptance of a ministry whose task would be the return to the constitution of 1923, the holding of free elections, and the resumption of negotiations toward a fair and honourable agreement acceptable to the country as represented in its freely elected parliament.

The Orator and his companions know full well that the Wafd's consensus was never reached, on any day, on all of this; the Wafd agreed on part of it, and disagreed on another part. And had it not been for this disagreement, this sentence would never have been inserted, which is: "provided that, in the matter of the ministry after the elections, the

provisions of the constitution shall apply.”

For how can the provisions of the constitution apply, after the elections, to a ministry that committed itself on the day of its formation to resuming the negotiations? When the provisions of the constitution apply to a ministry after the elections, they may oblige it to resign before parliament convenes, and may oblige it to resign after parliament convenes, and before it begins the negotiations. Had the Wafd’s consensus been reached on all that the Orator said, this condition would never have been inserted; it was inserted only to make this ministry a transitional ministry and nothing more, that restores the constitution, reforms what it can of affairs, and holds free elections—until, when the elections are completed and their results appear, the provisions of the constitution apply, and the affairs of the nation return to the Senators and Deputies who represent the nation.

This is the truth which admits of no doubt; it is what the Orator and his companions know; and it is what the minutes of the Wafd in its sessions, in which it addressed this subject, plainly state. How then does the Orator obscure the matter to the people, attributing to others views they have not held and positions in which they have not become embroiled?

He and his companions are free to hold whatever views they wish, to strive for the realisation of their opinions, to test their political fortune alone, and to put to the test the nation’s confidence in them and its support of them; but it is not for them to claim that others share with them in this trial, or rally behind them in it. And if things were as they claim, there would have been no schism, and there would have been no disagreement, and the Orator would not have stood yesterday to open his new club.

All this demonstrates what we said above: that the Orator and his companions turn away from the factual realities and conjure for themselves an imaginary atmosphere in which they live.

And the Orator says: “If the Wafd accepts power when circumstances call it to do so, then it was not formed for power. It was formed for struggle; and therefore good struggle requires that the Wafd not seek power, and not press in its seeking of it. And that it not show, in its seeking and pressing in its seeking, what might tempt the English with it, entice them toward it, and enable them to dictate conditions to it. The true struggle is that the Wafd preserve national dignity and national

honour, protect the national soul from weakness and the flame of resistance from extinction, and make plain to the English and to the world at large, with clarity and lucidity, that it is above fear, that it is above enticement, that it is too honourable and too strong to be weakened by trials and to have its affairs ruined by tribulations. That it is more firmly set on the struggle than for the English to reach it by allurements or by intimidation, and that it has drawn for itself a course and is proceeding toward its realisation, from which no force, however great, can turn it back, and no stratagem, however clever, can distract it, until the trials have failed and the attempts have come to nothing, and the English have recognised that Egypt's affairs must be for Egypt; then they will descend to Egypt's terms, and will not bring Egypt down to their terms and their rulings."

Such is the struggle. We know it is long, we know it is arduous, we know it is beset with injury, we know it is filled with danger; but for all that, and for all of that, we know it is the struggle that befits men, and that enables the nation to be truly a nation, and compels the English to honour its dignity, respect its sanctity, and guarantee it its right in full and without diminution.

Let those who cannot endure abstaining from power hasten to seize it; and let those who prefer honour and dignity to fear of injury endure the injury. And let both remember that whoever does right does so for himself, and whoever does wrong does so against himself; and God does not allow the reward of those who work to be lost.