

Contentment . . .

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), 6 June 1934

As for the Chamber of Deputies, it approved yesterday the Ministry's policy on the crisis of the Mixed Courts, after that long and sweeping interpellation — which means, if we had minds capable of understanding, that it does not consider itself entitled to address this crisis except when the Ministry itself asks it to do so. Its authority, then, is confined to the executive power; the Chamber ought not to propose anything toward its resolution. And do not tell the Deputies that the question of the Mixed Courts is a purely Egyptian question, given that they themselves have said that Egypt has the right to abolish these courts by a law it issues — a law not open to negotiation, either in its drafting or in its repeal. And given that the matter hinges on the issuance of a right belonging to every Egyptian, it is the right of the Chamber of Deputies, or of Parliament generally, to propose the issuance of this law — indeed, to draft this law itself and pursue whatever course is needed for its issuance. Do not say this to the Deputies. It has already been said to them, and they turned away from it and paid it no heed; nor should you make yourself more of a Deputy than the Deputies themselves, nor more jealous of Parliament's rights than the members of Parliament, even though Parliament possesses its rights only because they are the rights of the people, who deputized it on their behalf to protect and safeguard them — indeed, to expand and increase them, so far as that lies within the bounds of the Constitution.

But this was talk fit to be said yesterday; as for saying it today, it is neither fitting nor possible, for it would now be branded excess and extravagance, and an inclination toward defiance and overstepping bounds. And so long as the Deputies are content and reassured, everything is well, and everything proceeds as smoothly as things can proceed. As for the Senate, it has been so content that it has grown weary of contentment, so reassured that it has grown tired of reassurance, and has lost all appetite for meeting — proof of which is that the majority of its members failed to attend yesterday's session, and only a small number turned up, who waited with the Speaker and the Bureau for more than half an hour, until the wait grew too long, and they dispersed after the Speaker announced that the Chamber could not convene because the legal quorum had not been met, and after he announced that the next meeting would be held on Monday.

God alone knows whether that meeting will indeed be held on Monday, or whether the same majority that stayed away yesterday will stay away again. The Senate has had its fill of meeting, grown sated with it, and turned away from it; and summer has arrived, which loves rest, outings, travel, and the enjoyment of open air and gentle breeze. And were the Senate not so confident that the nation's interests face no danger, and need fear no harm, then neither a majority nor a minority of its members would have stayed away, nor would it have hesitated to meet every single day, at every hour of night and at the edges of day, to look after rights, safeguard interests, and preserve the public good from being lost. But since Egypt's affairs rest with a ministry of resolve and determination, there is no harm in the Chamber meeting or dispersing, no fault in its growing weary or resting.

The Deputies, then, are content and reassured, and the Senators likewise reassured and content. As for the foreigners, they were once discontented, and now they are content; they were once angry, and now their anger has fallen silent; they were once fearful, and now they feel secure; they were once despairing, and now hope smiles upon them, and expectation fills them. They are content in Egypt, and they are content in Europe, after the Prime Minister delivered his response to the interpellation the day before yesterday, making clear to the Deputies that they ought not to address the crisis of the Mixed Courts except when the government wishes them to. And he presented the foreigners with a bouquet of lovely flowers, most beautifully arranged. And why should they not be content, when the President of the Mixed Court of Appeals had objected to the Chamber of Deputies taking up these courts at all, while the Minister of Justice had opposed the President on this view, allowing the Deputies to concern themselves with whatever Egyptian affairs they pleased — and the foreigners had feared that all the ministers stood united with the Minister of Justice on this view. But it emerged, the day before yesterday, that the ministers hold a view different from the Minister of Justice's, and side instead with the President of the Court of Appeals: that Parliament ought not to wade into the matter of the Mixed Courts except when the government itself asks it to, since it is an international matter that concerns the executive power alone.

Man errs and man gets things right, and it seems most likely that the Minister of Justice came to see that he had been mistaken, so he turned from his error and came back to what was correct, and stood in solidarity with the ministers, after the ministers had refused to stand in

solidarity with him. And the Deputies accepted the view of the ministers, the view of the President of the Mixed Court of Appeals, and the view of the foreigners. It is the foreigners' right, then, to be content — and content they are. They have declared their contentment in Egypt: their newspapers have published a great deal of language paying tribute to the Prime Minister, thanking him, admiring him, and praising him — you may read as much in the Bourse bulletin published yesterday evening. And they have declared it in Europe too, so that their homelands felt content and delighted, and offered praise and thanks — you may read as much in this morning's Al-Ahram cables.

Everything, then, is well. The Deputies are content, the Senators are content, the foreigners are content, and the English are content. Are the ministers not about to take lunch at the High Commissioner's table this very noon? Is this not proof enough of contentment and concord? We must, then, give thanks to God, since everything is well, and since our masters and patrons, both Egyptian and foreign, are content and delighted.

You will say: but the Egyptian people are not content, nor delighted, neither secure nor reassured — rather, they are utterly discontented, utterly despondent, utterly afraid, more anxious than anxious can be. This may well be true. But the Egyptian people are free: if they wish, they may submit and resign themselves, and thereby find rest and repose; and if they wish, they may grow angry and discontented. In that case, let the Egyptian people look about them, for the water of the Nile is abundant, and the sea holds water more abundant still than the Nile's. Let them drink of one or the other, for they may find in one or the other something to ease their discontent and their anger, and bring them back to security and peace!

No harm will come to Egypt, so long as the ministers, the Senators, the Deputies, the foreigners, and the English are content.

Taha Hussein

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