

Courage

Kawkab al-Sharq, 18 May 1933

Courage — brilliant, wondrous. Courage — surpassing, exquisite. Courage — crushing, devastating: this is the courage that certain deputies display, from time to time.

Courage such that I cannot fathom how its own possessors bear it, how they withstand its crushing weight and its tremendous terrors — for it is truly frightening, truly appalling, truly disturbing, to the fearless and the fearful alike.

A rare, dazzling courage, this, which certain deputies assume whenever they speak of their adversaries, singly or in groups, beneath the dome of Parliament: they loose their tongues against these adversaries with truth and falsehood alike, with error and correctness alike, with earnestness and jest alike, weighing nothing, reckoning nothing, but simply pouring forth, as though the field had been left entirely open to them, with no way left to calm them or still them.

One of them stood up the day before yesterday and loosed his tongue against the press and the writers of the press, and set the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Justice, and the Public Prosecution upon the press and the writers of the press — and had his human capacity allowed for more than human capacity can bear, he would have demanded that every paper be suspended save the Ministry's own, that every writer be imprisoned save the Ministry's own, that the Ministry redouble its severity in suspensions and confiscations, that the Ministry spare no exhaustion of its imprisoned writers and journalists, of criticism and critics — leaving to itself, meanwhile, an open field in which to speak without ever being questioned for what it said, to act without ever being questioned for what it did, to do whatever it pleased without a single voice of protest rising, without a single tongue loosed in objection.

And the source of this raging storm, into which this deputy flung himself, was that a man, it is said, had attempted to assault the Prime Minister — and so, it seems, all the Prime Minister's adversaries must be questioned over this man's attempt!! And every opposition paper must be made to answer for this man's attempt!! And the Ministry must bear down upon these papers until it reaches the utmost severity and arrives at the furthest limit of punishment!!

But this deputy, and those like him, would do well to learn that excess in warning may well overreach its own aim, and end in the very opposite of what was intended — provoking laughter instead of grief, easing men's minds instead of instilling fear and dread in them. For excess is by its very nature laughable: it springs from nothing but a failure of thought, a lapse in the very substance of reason and logic.

We would have liked this deputy, and those like him, to be models of moderation and restraint, not models of excess and transgression. We would have liked, too, for these deputies to master themselves, and to hold themselves to some small measure of justice — neither playing the lion against the nation alone, nor going weak before the Ministry alone.

We would have liked them to display this same brilliant, wondrous courage in the face of these shameful, disgraceful incidents — incidents that do not merely wound men's souls, but disgrace every ministry beneath whose shadow they occur, and touch the very honor of the State beneath whose wings they take place.

Yes — we would have liked this deputy, and those like him, to charge forth and range about, to make speeches and hold forth, to hurl the thunderbolts of their warning upon those officials who commit sins and perpetrate crimes, and do wrong openly, under the light of the blazing, burning sun, feeling neither pity nor fear — indeed, never even exposing themselves to whatever might call them to fear or pity in the first place.

Yes — we would have liked this deputy, and those like him, to question the Minister of the Interior, and press their questioning; indeed, to interpellate the Minister of the Interior, and press their interpellation, over these incidents which a court judgment established against an officer who tyrannized his charges, and those among the police who assisted him — men set in place to prevent crime, who instead drowned in crime up to their very ears! Men set in place to protect order, who instead became the enemies of order; men set in place to shield people's bodies from torment, who instead poured torment upon them; men set in place to preserve people's dignity, who instead trampled people's dignity beneath their feet. Men set in place to prove to the foreigner that Egypt possesses an organized, civilized government which people may trust, and under whose shadow they may enjoy security without need of the capitulations system — who instead prove to the foreigner that they themselves cannot be trusted with anything! Cannot be trusted with order, nor with honor, nor with dignity!!

Yes — we would have liked this brilliant, wondrous courage to show itself, and for the Minister of the Interior to be questioned — indeed, interpellated — so that the Chamber of Deputies might learn how the Ministry of the Interior came to permit itself to keep an officer at his post after he had committed the crimes he committed, and perpetrated the sins he perpetrated, until he had filled people's hearts with terror and dread, until he had driven them to despair of mercy, and tied their tongues from voicing complaint aloud, and bound their hands from writing so much as a plea for clemency!!

Yes — we would have liked this brilliant, wondrous courage to show itself, and for the Minister of the Interior to be questioned — indeed, interpellated: what was done with the district chief who protected this officer and confirmed him in his post, and let him strip people of their clothes, and order the soldiers to abuse them, then order the soldiers to throw them into a pool of urine, then order them to wash their faces and necks with this urine, then order them to rinse their mouths with this urine and inhale it!!

We would have liked this brilliant, wondrous courage to show itself, so that this deputy, and those like him, might ask the Minister of the Interior — indeed, the Prime Minister — about these incidents which the courts have placed on record: where did they happen? Did they happen in an Egypt that is part of Europe? Did they happen in an Egypt said to have laws? Did they happen in an Egypt whose Constitution states that its official religion is Islam?

And if these incidents truly did occur in an Egypt that is part of Europe, then in what part of Europe are people plunged into urine and ordered to wash their faces and necks with it, and to fill their mouths and noses with it??

And if these incidents truly did occur in an Egypt said to have laws, then under what article of the law is it permitted for officers and soldiers to plunge people into urine, and order them to wash their faces and necks with it, and fill their mouths and noses with it?!

And if these incidents truly did occur in an Egypt whose official religion is Islam, then under what text of the Noble Qur'an, under what text of the Noble Hadith, under what text of jurisprudence is it permitted for officers and soldiers to plunge God's servants into urine, and order them to wash their faces and necks with it, and fill their mouths and noses with it??

What manner of washing is this, that Muslims were commanded to perform? What manner of ablution is this, that Muslims were commanded to perform? What outrage is this, committed under the light of the blazing, burning sun, while Islam has its shaykhs and its scholars, Islam has its ministry and its ministers, Islam has its soldiers and its guardians, Islam has its protector and its custodian — this same man who visits shrines, and seeks blessing at the tombs of the saints?!

We would have liked this brilliant, wondrous courage to show itself in the Chamber of Deputies, and for the deputies to grow angry for the truth, not for falsehood, and to defend the dignity of the people, their honor, and their religion. All this would have been far better than for the deputies to trump up charges against the press, and lay upon it the sin of this man who attempted to assault the Prime Minister.

Chambers of deputies were not established to accuse the innocent, nor were they established to take people on mere suspicion, nor were they established to hurl false charges at people; rather, they were established to defend the rights of nations, to guard the sanctities of the people, to preserve the dignities of individuals and groups, and to hold the Ministry to the protection of right, justice, and law.

Indeed, chambers of deputies were not established to play the lion against adversaries, while favoring one's own friends and supporters with affection, tenderness, and indulgence. We would have liked this deputy, and those like him, to turn this same brilliant, wondrous courage upon themselves, and ask themselves: what is God's judgment, what is the law's judgment, what is the Constitution's judgment, upon deputies who grant their confidence to a ministry beneath whose shadow such sins occur, beneath whose shadow such crimes are committed — and yet do not grow angry, do not rise up, do not stir, until they are forced to it by sheer compulsion, and even then stir only sluggishly, wishing, if they could, to remain still?

What is God's judgment, what is the law's judgment, what is the Constitution's judgment, upon deputies who confirm Sidqi Pasha in power, while knowing that the al-Badari incidents did occur, and that he refused to let the investigation proceed as his partner in government wished it to — and so drove that very partner from power! — and while knowing that other crimes occurred in Asyut, for which Sidqi Pasha never punished the governor of Asyut, but rather protected him and promoted him!! And while knowing that yet other crimes were committed in

Fayoum, for which Sidqi Pasha never punished the governor of Fayoum.

Yes — what is God's judgment upon these deputies who see all this, and yet neither denounce it to the Ministry, nor dare to bring the Ministry down, let alone hold any group of its members to the judgment of the law!

It is toward matters such as these that the deputies' courage ought to be directed — not toward the press and the writers of the press; for whatever may be said of the press, it will never do such injury to justice in Egypt as the Ministry has done, will never disgrace Egypt's honor as the Ministry has disgraced it, will never stir the people's indignation as the Ministry's own conduct has stirred it.

But the deputies will always play the lion against the press, and will always go gently with the Ministry; they will always set the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Justice, and the Public Prosecution upon the press, and will always refrain from setting themselves against the Ministry — for God's decree has ordained that Egypt be tried, that her patience and her endurance be tested; and God's decree will prove that Egypt bears her injuries patiently, endures her afflictions, and preserves through it all her pride and her devotion to freedom.

Yes — God's decree will prove that the trial was hard and long, and that Egypt has passed it.