

Sacrifice...

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), September 8, 1934

The ones who sacrifice are the ministers — and what people could love sacrifice more, desire it more, or pursue it more eagerly than our ministers? They have furnished dazzling proof of this, brilliant demonstrations, irrefutable arguments: for they have lived a life of sacrifice ever since they first took up the burdens of government — no morning dawns on them that they do not go out to meet it, no evening falls on them that they are not driven onward into it. They sacrifice when they work, and sacrifice when they rest; they sacrifice when they are well, and sacrifice when they fall ill; and they sacrifice in a quite particular way by remaining in their posts, even as everything in the world urges them to be done with those posts, and by carrying on with the conduct of affairs, even as everything in the world repels them from that very conduct. And what do you make of men who desire nothing but good, only good, for their country, yet cannot achieve the smallest part of it — and who nonetheless remain in their posts, and continue to frequent their offices, not out of any love of remaining in office, nor any preference for frequenting those offices, but purely as a sacrifice for this country's sake, a country which, should they ever abandon its seats of power, would find itself searching for ministers and finding none, searching for capable men and securing none, and exposed to every calamity with not one son to stand between it and disaster. Do you imagine that our good Prime Minister remains in his post out of love for it, out of any desire for it, after all the failure that has befallen him, all the defeat that has overtaken him, after God has decreed for him such an incapacity to solve the country's problems — problems he strove with all his might to solve by practical means, and when those means wore him out, strove with all his might to solve by political means, and when those means, too, wore him out, strove with all his might simply to submit to God, to bow to the decree of fate, and to resolve them instead through patience, through endurance, and through waiting on whatever the days might yet reveal — in the hope that these problems might somehow solve themselves, or that an angel might descend from heaven to solve them, or a demon rise up from the earth to solve them, the one by God's leave, the other by the devil's?

Do you imagine that our own good Prime Minister remains in his post, weighed down by this heavy care, out of love for the post or desire

for it? Certainly not — it is sacrifice, and sacrifice alone: the sacrifice of his health and his peace of mind, of his contentment and the delight of his own eye, for the sake of the nation itself, a nation whose cause is neglected by none but the ungrateful and those blind to kindness. And say the same of every one of our ministers: they do not remain in their posts out of love for those posts, nor out of any preference for the rank and authority those posts confer upon them, nor out of any eagerness for the wealth and privilege those posts yield them — it is sacrifice, and sacrifice alone, that keeps them in office, they who despise office with their whole hearts.

I know a great many Egyptians who did not sleep last night, out of love for the ministers, out of tenderness for the ministers, out of compassion for the ministers, praying for the ministers, and giving thanks to them for the sacrifice they offer up to Egypt, and giving thanks to God for inspiring in them this love of sacrifice in Egypt's service. And I know a great many Egyptians who spent the black of the night imploring God Almighty, beseeching Him to grant our ministers the strength to bear these burdens which they have taken so firmly upon themselves, at a time when selfishness has become rampant among the people and idleness has spread among them, so that everyone else is busy shedding their burdens and fleeing their obligations. Was there not an Egyptian who recited the Ya-Sin litany the whole night through? And another who recited the Opening Sura, repeating it the whole night long? And another who recited the Sura of Sincerity, repeating it from the moment night fell until the moment dawn broke? And others who recited devotional litanies, others who recited incantations, others still who contrived talismans — all of them beseeching God to help the ministers bear what they bear, and to grant them patience in the hardship they have taken upon themselves. And this was because they had read the evening papers, and had seen in them that our ministers, having considered the condition of Egypt, and having felt how greatly she needs them to remain within her, and to watch over her, and to keep vigil for her interests, had reached a decision — and what a momentous decision it was! — had resolved — and what a weighty resolve it was! — had resolved to remain: not, of course, in their posts, for to those posts they are already bound fast by ropes — but in Egypt itself, throughout the summer. They resolved that not one of them would travel to Europe. They forbade themselves the crossing of the sea, the visit to Paris, the enjoyment of green mountain vistas, the healing waters of the springs, and all those beautiful indulgences to which they had grown accustomed every year, when summer came. They

resolved to remain in Alexandria, and to make do this year with her breeze — which people call refreshing, though it is nothing of the kind — and her sea — which people call beautiful, though it is nothing of the kind — and with whatever Alexandria offers her summer visitors, which people call pleasure, and rest, and delight, though it is nothing of the kind: nothing but pain, and exhaustion, and misery. And they resolved to make do with what it costs the state to send them to summer in Alexandria — this paltry, trifling sum spent on them and on the officials, senior and junior, who attend them — rather than burden the treasury with those other expenses that travel to Europe, and residence in its great cities, would inevitably impose.

And they resolved further that, should a change of air and a little recreation for the spirit and a change of scenery for the eye prove absolutely unavoidable, they would resort to one of the state's own ships, spending upon it a day, or part of a day, taking their pleasure at sea, or sailing to the border and back. All this the ministers resolved — not out of any distaste for travel, nor any aversion to rest, nor any dislike of crossing the sea, but purely as a sacrifice for Egypt's sake, because Egypt needs them, is enthralled by them, cannot bear their absence with any patience, and cannot help but feel their presence within her, whenever the sun blazes by day or the stars glitter by night. Have you ever seen a sacrifice to compare with this sacrifice? Have you ever seen a self-denial to approach this self-denial? Have you ever seen a patriotism to equal this patriotism? Have you ever seen ministers to be measured against these ministers? Certainly not.

And we do not believe these malicious detractors, who nurse their hearts on hatred and rancor, and twist their tongues into speech that shows neither insight nor understanding, when they claim that certain events are about to unfold, that certain grave matters are about to descend, that certain dangers are looming, and that it is necessity alone, and nothing else, that compels the ministers to remain through the summer. Certainly not. Nor do we believe these malicious detractors, who hold forth in their clubs and let their tongues run free, claiming that our ministers do not wish to leave the country before the High Commissioner leaves it himself — so that once the High Commissioner departs at the end of this month, and the season of leave is over, our ministers will find themselves with no choice but to remain. For our ministers are far too great, and far too jealous of their own dignity, ever to make their travel and their residence hostage to a foreign

representative — even if that representative happens to be the High Commissioner himself.

Nor should you believe these malicious detractors, who whisper among themselves, alone with their own private demons, that our ministers have caught the scent of resignation in the air, and wish to wait for it in Egypt, at their ease, until it reaches them — loath to travel abroad only to have resignation catch up with them while they are away, and scattered.

We believe none of this. Believe, instead, what I tell you: our ministers remain in their posts as an act of sacrifice, and remain in Egypt through the summer as an act of sacrifice, and should they travel and enjoy the pleasures and delights of Europe, they would travel as an act of sacrifice too — for they were simply made for sacrifice, know nothing else, love nothing besides it, and are drawn to nothing but it.

So join me in praying to God that they be granted long life on this earth — not long tenure in their posts, for that is quite another matter, and the easiest thing in the world for our ministers to give up.