

A Denial...

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), August 25, 1934

Half of it has come out, while the other half still holds back, still refuses, unwilling to show itself no matter how insistently people press it to do so — and I expect you have already guessed that I mean to speak of that curious, remarkable affair connected with Professor al-Sanhuri's dismissal from the Faculty of Law, an affair which played some part in that dismissal, if it did not, in our best estimation, play the whole of it.

It was claimed, as you know, and as everyone knows, that a professor from the Faculty of Law attended the opening of the Lawyers' Club, just as Professor al-Sanhuri attended it, and that no other professor from the Faculty attended it besides these two.

When this was reported in the newspapers, and the government learned that both had attended this gathering, it questioned one of them, and not the other. The one questioned was Professor al-Arabi; the one not questioned was Professor al-Sanhuri. Now, questioning one and not the other was strange enough in itself — but Professor al-Sanhuri's dismissal has since dispelled that strangeness, and cleared away the ambiguity from a situation that had not been entirely free of obscurity.

As for Professor al-Arabi, the Dean of the Faculty spoke to him about his attendance at this gathering, and then asked him to call upon the Minister of Traditions — as he calls the Minister of Education — and so he called upon him, and the Minister spoke to him on the matter. Then Professor al-Sanhuri was dismissed.

And we learned from sources we trust that, among the things said about Professor al-Sanhuri and used to justify his dismissal, was a claim by Professor al-Arabi, made to whoever questioned him, that he had not gone to the Lawyers' Club of his own accord, but had been lured there — deliberately lured there — by Professor al-Sanhuri! We denounced this in the strongest terms the moment we learned of it, and wrote in protest and in inquiry, finding it inconceivable that any university professor should consent to being lured by another into something he did not wish to do, and should then say something untrue to clear himself — for Professor al-Sanhuri had not, in fact, seen his colleague al-Arabi at all that day.

No sooner had Professor al-Arabi read what we had written than he grew deeply distressed by it, and hastened to see us, denying flatly that this story had ever happened to him, or ever come from him — and his denial was frank, categorical, emphatic. He then handed us a statement in which he had formulated this denial, and asked us to publish it, which we did with pleasure, giving thanks to God that university professors still hold themselves, and are still held by the public, above such pettiness, and beyond such squalid affairs.

But we insisted that this story had reached us from sources we trust, and that it had indeed been discussed among the ministers, and we called on the cabinet to issue a categorical denial. The next day, we saw Professor al-Arabi's statement republished in Al-Ahram, with the addition that the professor had sought the Minister's permission to publish it, and that the Minister had granted it. This meant, to us and to others, that Professor al-Arabi's honor had been cleared of this story, that he had freed himself of it, and had discharged, through this denial, what he owed both to his own dignity and to his loyalty toward his colleague. And the Minister's permission for him to publish this statement appeared, in effect, to be a testimony from the Minister himself that Professor al-Arabi was innocent of the scheme laid against him and his colleague, and of the plot woven against him and his colleague both.

But the professor's innocence of this scheme does not negate the fact that the scheme existed, that this plot was hatched, and that it was discussed by certain ministers themselves — and so it remains our right today, as it was our right yesterday, to learn the full truth of this affair. How did it reach the Minister of Traditions, or any of the other ministers? And how was it discussed within the Council of Ministers? We have a right to know this for several reasons: for this story, as we have said, and as we continue to say, was indeed discussed among the ministers, and it had some bearing on Professor al-Sanhuri's dismissal — it was, then, one lie among lies that has affected the life of the university, dismissed one of its professors, and driven the cabinet to a grave decision. It is not fitting for Egyptians, nor for any civilized community that loves truth and justice, and prizes nobility of character and purity of conscience, to remain silent when it sees lies and schemes affecting the lives of its people, and touching the workings of government, however nearly or remotely. Nor is it fitting for Egyptians, nor for any civilized community, to see a professor dismissed, to learn that a lie played some part in his dismissal, and then fall silent about demanding redress for the injustice

done to this professor, and the punishment of those who lied, for the sin in which they became entangled — a sin that touches not only their own character, conduct, and dignity, but the rights of others as well. Moreover, this story, discussed among the ministers, said to have played some part in depriving the university of one of its finest professors, did not confine its harm to the university and the professor alone, but extended its harm to the ministers as well. For there can be no doubt that when this story reached the ministers, reaching them from someone they trusted and relied upon, it left an impression on their minds — an impression that may have been unfavorable, even excessively unfavorable — and it had every right to leave them indignant, their judgment poisoned against a professor who would lure his own colleague into something the ministers themselves would disapprove of. This story, then, deceived the ministers, and prepared them for actions they might perhaps never have taken, had this story, with all its cunning and scheming, never reached them. And so it is the ministers' right to be angry, once it becomes clear to them that this story was a lie, that whoever brought it to them deceived them and schemed against the professor, that his deception achieved its purpose, and his scheme reached its mark — and it is the Egyptians' right to be angry, on seeing that there are those among them whose consciences permit them to lie to the ministers, and to scheme against the innocent. It is, then, we believe, the ministers' right — indeed, their duty, to themselves, to the Egyptians, to morality, to integrity of conduct and purity of conscience — to establish how this story reached them, who brought it to them, and what he wanted when he sought them out with it. And it is the ministers' right, indeed their duty, to punish this man who wronged them, who wronged Egypt by lying to them, and who wronged, at the very least, one man entirely innocent of this story. When the ministers investigate this matter, and strike down the hand of the one who brought it to them, they will be setting the very best example for the public, proving that they have no love for slander, informing, or scheming, and that they will not tolerate the workings of government, nor the conduct of individuals, being shaped by slander, informing, and scheming.

We do not believe we ask too much of the ministers, nor too much of anyone, in calling on the cabinet to establish the full truth of this story, to make it clear to the public, and to answer plainly these questions: was this false story indeed discussed among the ministers? And if it was discussed, who brought this account to them, and what has the cabinet prepared by way of punishment for the man who took it upon himself to

lie to the ministers, and to scheme in their presence against an innocent man?