

Justice...

Let the Prime Minister Read This

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), November 19, 1934

A sweet word, which all people have echoed at every age, and will go on echoing at every age still, for through it they give voice to their highest ideal in life, however its particulars may differ. But between this word and what people understand by it, and the realities that actually obtain, there lies a vast gulf and an immense discrepancy. And one feels how fiercely people cling to justice, and how they burn with thirst for it, precisely when its opposite grows fierce, and when people are made to endure what the Egyptians have endured these past years of hideous oppression and ugly injustice: for the Egyptians spent four whole years with torment poured upon them from every quarter and evil seizing them from every side — equality among them utterly abolished, their dignities utterly trampled, their sanctities utterly violated; their taxes collected from them by whip and cudgel, and once collected, spent not on their own welfare but on every variety of luxury and idle indulgence, on gratifying whims and appetites, and on flattering foreign companies. Then they were not permitted even to complain — and if driven to complaint, they were cruelly tortured for it, and sometimes their blood was shed outright. Then they were not permitted to assemble — and if they set about assembling, they were scattered with spears and bullets. Then they were not permitted to speak — and if they spoke, they were hauled before the courts and cast into the depths of prison. Then they were not permitted to write — and if they wrote, their pens were utterly broken and their newspapers utterly silenced. Then they were not permitted even to feel at ease — and if they found, in courage and self-command, in patience and the endurance of harm, enough to grant them some ease despite this surrounding evil, disasters were made to rain down upon them, misfortunes were set loose upon them, and repose and quiet were forbidden them. If the Egyptians bore all this, and worse than all this, for four years — nay, for more than four years — injured in every particular, while their tyrants claimed all the while to be angels of mercy and apostles of fairness; then, once it seemed to them that the age of oppression was drawing to its close, and that the dominion of injustice was passing away, their burning thirst for justice showed itself, and they pictured it in its loftiest ideal and its most splendid form, and it seemed to

them that the doors of justice would be flung wide open for them, and that behind those doors they would find, at the very least, a security to match the fear they had known, a calm to match the turmoil they had known, and a fairness to match the injustice they had known. And it is a painful thing for the soul that these hopes should be disappointed, and that people should say to one another: we had hoped, and hope proved false; we had trusted, and behold, our trust was but a mirage. Yet are we wrong to suspect that Qaisi Pasha will be no different, and that the administration will merely play a part, apologise, and protest that it can change nothing until the central authority commands the change? What does the Prime Minister think of the fact that this official suppression must be lifted, that this hidden injustice must be erased, and that this new era ought not to permit people's money to be taken wrongfully, nor these monies to be taken by violence either? We believe the Prime Minister will not finish reading this piece before he issues his order that the oppressors restrain themselves, that the people, in Bani Mazar and beyond Bani Mazar alike, be restored to security, justice, and peace of mind, and that the people, in Bani Mazar and beyond Bani Mazar alike, be given to know that if, for a time now, their affairs have been governed by ministers who permitted themselves to speak other than the truth, to take money without right, to punish people for their opinions, and to punish people for the affection they showed some of their opponents — should those now charged with the people's affairs in this new era imagine that they might countenance any part of this, they will never approve any part of it. Indeed, I am certain, with a certainty admitting no doubt, that the Prime Minister's order lifting this injustice will be issued today or tomorrow, and that those who spoke to us this morning complaining of Qaisi Pasha's injustice will speak to us tomorrow morning thanking Tawfiq Nessim for his justice. And I am waiting, and these people are waiting.