

The Speech of Dr. Taha Hussein Bey

Al-Hadith, February 1943

My Lord, Your Majesty:

You have already exalted the University's own standing — may God, then, exalt your own standing further still. You have already raised the two universities' own renown — may God, then, raise your own renown further still. You have already upheld knowledge's own authority — may God, then, grant your own kingdom further honour, and support. Success itself remains bound, my Lord, to your own great person. You turned your own attention to Egypt, and the whole world turned its own attention to her; you shouldered her own kingdom, and her own honour was thereby fulfilled; you directed her own affairs, and her own troubles cleared away, her own calamities dispersed. Blessing itself remains bound, my Lord, to your own noble name — the mere mention of it sharpens resolve, clarifies insight, and raises ambition; the very stubborn, among affairs, grows yielding; the very distant, among hopes, draws near; the very difficult, among aspirations, grows easy.

This same university of yours had long remained a wish folded away, in Alexandria's own innermost conscience, throughout many a long century, and distant age — she reached toward it, yet never attained it, drew near it, only to find herself once more distant from it, felt the very heat of longing for it, yet never found the coolness of actually securing it — until she very nearly despaired, of this same wish entirely, coming to regard it, exactly as a man who has just awoken regards a sweet dream, most of it already forgotten, retaining nothing of it but its own fading edges. Then thought of it became bound, to your own noble name — and there it stood, a fully realized, complete, and comprehensive reality, already brought into being, already come into its own full strength, already gathered its own readiness, for study, research, and production.

She did not rise, for Alexandria, institute by institute, nor come to her, faculty by faculty — her own seven faculties, rather, were established all at once, their own doors thrown open, to receive students, fully equipped, abundantly active, and genuinely capable, of spreading knowledge's own light, across every branch of human learning alike.

The academic year had scarcely begun, before her own students already numbered close to fifteen hundred, her own teachers close to two

hundred, and her own professors, and students, were already furnished with laboratories, and libraries — modest, for now, yet genuinely capable of growth, and genuinely open to it. People, throughout the Arab East, already heard of her, hastening toward her, seeking knowledge within her, and seeking learning, from her own professors.

This, my Lord, because you loathe nothing so much, as seeing your own people denied, of either knowledge, or wealth, and love nothing so much, as seeing your own people granted abundance, in every single form of genuine good.

You already sensed, my Lord, that your own people genuinely longed, for knowledge, genuinely yearned, for learning, genuinely aspired, to glory, genuinely reached, toward advancement — and your own love for them, your own compassion toward them, refused anything less, than granting them exactly what they had wished for, bringing them exactly what they desired. It took nothing more, than a single resolute act of your own will, and a single sincere response, from your own government, for this same extraordinary marvel to come about — for East and West alike to look on, and find the city of Alexandria recovering, in the shortest, and most decisive, span of time, her own ancient scholarly glory, her own magnificent, age-old standing, in spreading culture, and narrowing the distance between the nations of the earth, in all their own diversity — exactly as was once her own habit, when she stood as the greatest of all the earth's own cities, in strength, and might, and the most refined, in knowledge, and letters, in philosophy, and art.

By God, what a house you are, the noble House of Muhammad Ali! How immense your own favour, upon Egypt's own intellectual life! You have already revived it, strong, and vigorous, and have continued, ever since, tending it, with support, and encouragement, until its own sacred spark became a radiant light, flooding the whole of the East.

Your own great forefather kindled it, breathing into it the modern spirit, and connecting it, to Western civilization — his own sons, after him, following his own path, proceeding along his own road, hastening Egypt, toward fulfilling whatever genuine destiny fate had reserved for her, and making her a genuine point of connection, between both worlds.

Then, too, this same great Isma'il, spreading public education, aimed, in its own turn, at pure knowledge, and genuine culture.

And this same great Fuad, founding a university, in Cairo, in addition to every institute of knowledge, and culture, he himself established.

And this same great Farouk, founding his own university, in Alexandria, in addition to every institute of knowledge, letters, and art, he himself has already established, and shall yet establish — as though Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi had genuinely been looking upon you all, when he said:

*Resolve arrives, in measure with the resolute themselves,
and generosity arrives, in measure with the truly noble.*

Permit me, my Lord, to depict, for this present generation, and for your own people's own future generations, your own compassion toward this same university, your own patronage of her, without exaggeration, or excess. She remains your own daughter, my Lord: you granted her life, breathed into her, of your own great spirit, and graciously bestowed upon her your own noble name. No sooner had she genuinely sensed this same existence you had granted her, than mention of you became the very first thing she uttered, gratitude toward you the very first thing she hastened to express — her own Council recording, on the very first page, of her own immortal record, this same simple resolution, one indicating nothing, if it indicates anything at all, but a genuine wish to give thanks, though genuinely incapable of adequately doing so, contenting herself, then, merely with recording this same incapacity, and requesting Your Majesty's own permission, to bestow upon you the university's own honorary doctorate.

You remain, my Lord, genuinely compassionate toward your own university, genuinely gentle with her, genuinely encouraging of her — her own voice scarcely reaches you, before you already lend it your own ear; her own plea scarcely reaches you, before you already answer it.

Nor do you content yourself, my Lord, with whatever blessing you have already bestowed, before adding, to it, yet another blessing still.

And here you are, graciously accepting the university's own gift, and graciously proceeding, too, to receive her own gift in person — honouring her own standing, exalting her own worth, and granting her, thereby, genuine license, to bestow whatever degrees of learning, and honour, she pleases, upon whomever she pleases. Nothing whatsoever prevents her, from doing exactly this, having already offered you her own honorary

degree, which you graciously accepted. And the university had no sooner learned that you had already granted her this same honour, graciously bestowed upon her this same favour, and permitted her your own joyous visit, than she began awaiting you, utterly enraptured, utterly longing for you — exactly like a garden, awaiting the very drop of dew that brings it back to life, the very sunlight that lends the breeze the fragrance it carries forth from her, scenting the very air, in every direction.

And here you are, my Lord, having already arrived, breathing into her, of your own strength, genuine strength, of your own majesty, genuine majesty, raising her own renown, across the horizons of East and West alike. What genuine path remains, then, for her, to ever adequately fulfil her own gratitude to you? Where does she find any genuine means, of repaying even some part of what she owes you?! It remains, rather, nothing but favour upon favour, from you, kindness upon kindness, from you.

Even so, my Lord, University members genuinely know the very path toward your own satisfaction, know exactly how to walk this same path, and seek your own permission, to solemnly pledge themselves, before you, to expend, in pursuit of it, the very utmost effort they are genuinely capable of. They know your own highest ideals — and know that whoever genuinely wishes to attain your own satisfaction need only love, of the good, exactly what you yourself love, and strive, for glory, toward exactly what you yourself strive toward.

The thing most beloved to you, my Lord, the thing you hold most dear, is that every single Egyptian should genuinely fulfil his own share, of the duty Egyptian life itself imposes upon him, in the most complete, and perfect manner, without any genuine flagging, or shortcoming. And the duty Egyptian life imposes, upon University members, is exactly this: that their own minds, hearts, and consciences remain devoted entirely to knowledge — loving it, exactly as you yourself love it, championing it, exactly as you yourself champion it, adopting it, exactly as you yourself wish it adopted, as a genuine means, toward knowing whatever truth may genuinely be reached, and a genuine instrument, for reforming character, purifying conscience, refining taste, educating the people, across all their own various classes, and forming generations genuinely devoted to truth, genuinely favouring justice, genuinely capable of bearing responsibility, and fulfilling national duties, whatever they may be, and confronting life's own difficulties, growing more genuinely complex, by the day.

University members hold themselves to devoting, entirely to all of this, their own efforts, and their own time, and to expending, in its own service, the very finest measure, of whatever strength, and support, they themselves possess.

You remain, after all, and before all, the very image of the homeland, the very symbol of her own honour, the very manifestation of her own majesty — and University members hold themselves, then, to devoting the whole of their own efforts, entirely, to the glory, of our own beloved homeland, and our own cherished throne.

Through exactly this, my Lord, and through genuinely striving toward it, shall Egyptians attain your own satisfaction, provided they genuinely apply themselves, exert themselves, and remain sincere. It remains our own solemn pledge, my Lord, to remain always, in the very forefront, of those who genuinely apply themselves, exert themselves, and remain sincere.

May God prolong your own life, my Lord, and perpetuate His own grace upon you, and perpetuate His own grace, through you, upon your own loyal, faithful people.