

# Heroism...

*Kawkab al-Sharq, 19 February 1934*

Yes — a genuine heroism, of the very noblest kind people have ever known, throughout their own history, ancient and modern alike, one resting upon exactly that same greatness all people genuinely love, all people genuinely find comfort in — a greatness that stirs admiration, in the souls of the great, and stirs love, and genuine affection, in the souls of the humble, surrounding its own possessor with a genuinely pure, unclouded atmosphere of people's own reverence for him, their own sincere love for him, their own adoption of him, as the very highest model, for everything through which a great man's own manhood is genuinely completed — a heroism of the very noblest kind people have ever known.

This is exactly the heroism King Albert, martyr of the Belgians, was distinguished by, the day before yesterday — he lived a hero's own life, and died a hero's own death, and people will speak, to the very end of time, of his own great life, exactly as they will speak, to the very end of time, of his own great death.

Every man remains genuinely exposed, to meeting exactly what King Albert himself met — his own foot slipping, plunging from the very summit to the depths below, death overtaking him, in the midst of it. Yet kings themselves rarely find themselves exposed, to anything genuinely resembling what befell this same king — search as you might, among kings, and presidents, indeed among leaders, and lords, among the noblest, and the wealthiest of men, for those who venture out, to exercise, entirely alone, unsurrounded by any retinue, unaccompanied by any followers, preceded by no vanguard, trailed by no reinforcements.

Search as you might, for this same man of genuine standing, who ventures out, to exercise, accompanied by nothing but a single servant, who ventures out, to exercise, driving his own carriage himself, who reaches his own exercise ground, and leaves his own servant, in the carriage, ascending the mountain, entirely alone, unaccompanied, exactly as the least significant of men might ascend it, the humblest, and most inconsequential — continuing to climb, entirely alone, unaccompanied, until he stands upon the very summit — his own foot then slipping, death overtaking him, entirely alone, unaccompanied, once more — his own servant then growing genuinely concerned, at his own delay, and

enlisting the police, and others besides, to search for him.

And people continue searching, and combing the area, until they finally find his own small, yet great, body, lying, in some ravine, below — carrying it, exactly as one carries any humble body, and returning with it, to the royal palace, exactly as the most modest of men return, with the most modest of men, to the most modest of houses, and huts.

A genuinely great death, for a genuinely great man — a death depicting exactly how far certain souls, among certain men, genuinely rise, above life's own ornamentation, and its own false displays of majesty, until they genuinely disdain life's own ornamentation, and its own false displays of majesty, and arrive, at last, at the very life genuinely deserving of that same name, attaining the very majesty genuinely deserving of that same name.

A genuinely great death, for a genuinely great man — a death depicting exactly how far a genuinely simple, unassuming philosophy of life can elevate certain men's own souls, until it strips them of everything men ordinarily cling to, raising them to heights men are ordinarily unaccustomed to reaching — arriving, in the end, at genuine equality in life, in the very finest sense of that same word, and then, too, at that other same equality, every man genuinely believes in, admitting of no real discussion, or debate, whatsoever — being far too self-evident, far too clear, to ever bear discussion, and debate — indeed, one men do not even genuinely like to mention, or speak of, at all: equality, before death itself.

A genuinely great death, for a genuinely great man — a death depicting this same hero as one who had already made himself equal, in life itself, to other men, since he already genuinely knew, and genuinely reckoned, that nature herself had already made him equal to them, in death — never deceived, by these same transient conditions, and appearances, that had granted him, among men, in his own lifetime, a genuinely distinguished position, a genuinely exalted place — believing, rather, only in these same lofty, eternal truths, distinguishing him, from other men, through his own intelligent heart, his own contented character, his own sound judgment, his own patience unlike any other patience, his own steadfastness matched by no other steadfastness.

This same man ascended, to the Belgian throne — and had scarcely settled upon it, before dedicating the whole of his own life, to his own people, his own soul genuinely content, to forgo whatever other men's own souls could never genuinely bring themselves to forgo, for this same

people's sake. He worked for nothing but them, thought of nothing but them, found happiness only in seeing them happy, found contentment only in seeing them at ease. Life, in his own time, remained a life of peace, and so he pursued, in his own people's service, the very paths of peace — until, sensing war's own approach, he prepared himself, for war, genuinely striving to strengthen his own people, and prepare them, for whatever catastrophe might come. And when war did indeed come, it found in him no negligent man, no frivolous man, no man falling short of his own duty — finding, in particular, no selfish man, no hesitant man, no weak man, no man belittling his own dignity, no man taking lightly whatever virtue itself demands, of free, independent nations: valour, and sacrifice, in noble defence of freedom, and independence.

Those who recall the Great War's own opening days recall, at the very same time, exactly what filled their own souls, with genuine admiration, for this same man — a man never ignorant, never arrogant, one who genuinely reckoned his own people's own strength, measuring it against Germany's own, and genuinely knew, with perfect knowledge, that he was far too weak, to withstand this same enemy, whose own forces knew no genuine limit — yet never weakened, for all of this, nor surrendered, thinking of nothing but honour, and dignity, never weighing dignity against mere advantage, never doubting the strength of right, however weak it might appear, nor the weakness of falsehood, however strong it might appear.

Yes — those who recall the war's own opening days recall, too, that same firm, blazing language, this same king once addressed, to his own insolent enemy, as he himself once called him, and to his own noble nation, as he himself once called her. And those who recall the war recall, alongside it, exactly how patiently this same man bore its own catastrophes, how steadfastly he withstood its own calamities, how the enemy's own victory never drove him to despair, how his own ally's own defeat never drove him to hopelessness, how his own heart filled, with genuine faith, in right, his own soul rushing, toward sacrifice, in right's own cause — how he offered up himself, indeed, offered himself up, every single hour, of the war's own duration, as a ransom for his own people, and how he remained, upon whatever remained to him, of his own homeland's own soil, weak, on the surface, yet genuinely strong, in reality; defeated, on the surface, yet genuinely victorious, in reality — victorious, not merely over Germany alone, victorious not merely over Germany, and her own allies, victorious not merely over these same

catastrophes, and calamities, besieging him, ambushing him, time and again — but victorious, rather, over the entire world, over the whole of humanity itself; for he had triumphed, first, over himself, teaching himself how to rise above events, how to rise above calamity, how never to grant despair, nor doubt, any real path toward himself.

The war then ended, and victory came, to this same king, and his own allies, and he returned, to his own capital, genuinely victorious, and noble — never made arrogant, by triumph, never made reckless, by victory, never coveting, from his own people, nor from any other, honour, reverence, or reward — nothing whatsoever resembling any real reward, however much he had already endured, however much he had already sacrificed, however excellent his own service, to his own homeland — since he never believed himself to have done anything more, than fulfil his own national duty, exactly as any other member of his own people would have fulfilled it. He had simply shouldered the war's own burdens, so long as the war itself lasted — and once its own flame had finally died out, he shouldered peace's own labours instead, exactly as kings ought genuinely to shoulder peace's own burdens. He had been genuinely exhausted, genuinely worn out, throughout the war — yet never rested, never found repose, in peacetime either, merely exchanging one exhaustion for another, one toil for another, one hardship for another — never toiling for himself, never labouring for himself, never even thinking of himself — his own toil, his own labour, his own every thought, in war and peace alike, remaining entirely for his own people, and for his own people alone.

Those who recall the Great War will never forget King Albert's own valour, and those who recall the peace that followed will never forget King Albert's own devotion, to his own people, and his own assistance to them, in every branch of life. He proved a genuinely excellent arbiter, among political parties, at his own very best, embodying justice, fairness, disinterested impartiality, and genuine elevation, above mere rivalry. He proved a genuinely excellent patron, of scholarship, and literature, at his own very best, encouraging scholars, and writers, to research, and produce, tempting them toward research, tempting them toward production, creating, for them, means of assistance they themselves never imagined they could ever obtain — granting them, from his own wealth, granting them, too, from others' own wealth, through his own solicitation, calling upon others, to give as well, never hesitating, to take up the very role of advocate, for subscriptions supporting scholarship,

and literature, not merely within his own homeland, but throughout every civilized, cultured country besides.

It hardly proves strange, then, that a king like this same king should have secured exactly the kind of love his own people held for him, their own genuine devotion to him. I visited Belgium myself, more than ten years ago now, arriving, there, on the very day the Belgians themselves were celebrating the King's own birthday — and I have already described, elsewhere, exactly what filled my own soul, with genuine admiration, at the Belgian people's own love, for their own king, and the Belgian people's own genuine joy, at their own king's own feast day.

This same feast day was never merely the King's own feast, nor the people's own feast, taken collectively — it was, rather, a genuine feast day for every single member of the people, a feast day within every family, a feast day everywhere, a genuinely sincere, unadulterated feast day. I saw him myself, once he had invited the historical congress's own members, to his own palace: once he had received them all, exactly as kings are ordinarily received, shaking each of their hands, offering each of them some ordinary word of courtesy — I looked, and found all the congress's own delegates, together, in a single room, gathered around tea, the King, and his own family, among them, exactly as you yourself might be, exactly as I myself might be, among the guests, moving from place to place: speaking to this one, then speaking to that one, lingering, in conversation, with whichever scholars he already knew — and how very many of them he already knew — keeping his own conversation brief, yet genuinely gracious, with those he had never known before, finding, in every single case, something genuinely worth saying, receiving, in every single case, with genuine wit, kindness, and warmth, whatever he happened to hear, whoever happened to say it. There, I came to know that monarchy could genuinely accommodate democracy itself. There, I came to know that monarchy need not be exactly what certain Europeans themselves portray it as.

That same thing, which refuses to evolve, which resists life's own progress — no, rather, it can be something genuinely accommodating men's own advancement, their own minds' own advancement, their own hearts', their own feelings', and their own genuine need, for liberty, and equality. There, I came to know that monarchy, understood along exactly these same lines, is not, as her own rivals claim, some mere relic of ages past — she remains, rather, a genuinely viable system, genuinely capable of enduring, genuinely productive, fruitful, and useful.

There, too, I came to know exactly what genuine love, free European peoples, hold for their own kings, and exactly what genuine love kings themselves hold, for their own peoples — and exactly how a European throne can genuinely endure, while other European thrones, all around it, were already collapsing, in the Great War's own aftermath.

King Albert remained a genuinely fine example, and a genuinely good model, too, not merely for his own people, but for his entire own family as well: people recall exactly how his own granddaughter-in-law, the Crown Prince's own wife — Belgium's own future queen — used to go out, to take her own son for a walk, pushing his own small carriage, exactly as any woman, among the common people, might push her own small son's own carriage.

This same disaster, that has befallen the great Belgian people, in their own great king, is no small matter — it is hardly confined to Belgium alone, being, rather, a genuine calamity for the whole of humanity itself, in the loss of one true model, among humanity's own highest ideals, of the truly complete man. May God grant the Belgian royal family genuine solace, for their own leader; may God grant Belgium genuine solace, for her own great man; and may God grant humanity itself genuine solace, for this same eternal, highest ideal.