

Prohibition ...

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Prohibition issues only from the strong; for the weak are too small a matter, too slight an affair, and too little a danger to be worth prohibiting. So when you see a ministry announce that it wills or does not will something, and when you see a ministry announce that it permits this and forbids that, and when you see a ministry announce that it allows this gathering and bars that one, know that it is indeed a strong ministry — the ministry weakness cannot contrive to touch at any point, nor reach from any quarter, and finds no way to do so. Our ministry has announced that it forbids a group of the notables of Qalyubia to receive the leader of the Wafd and his companions in their homes; and it has thereby proven, beyond doubt or question, that it is indeed strong, stronger than every ministry on earth, greater in dominion, and fiercer in might. A day or two before that, our ministry had let the leader of the Wafd go to his home town of Samannoud, move on from there to Mansoura, visit a member of the Wafd there, and return from it to Cairo; and it thereby proved that it is among the mightiest ministries on earth, and the most far-reaching in power and breadth. Nor was it content to prove its strength and might and establish evidence of its power and breadth; it proved besides that it has an astute heart, a well-weighed forbearance, a spacious mind, and a penetrating insight, never advancing except with full knowledge of what it is advancing upon, and never holding back except with full knowledge of what it is holding back from. People have claimed that the wise man of far-reaching vision is the one who neither contradicts himself nor grows confused, and who does nothing except for some cause and some reason; but this manner of thinking is folly, for the wise man of these days, and in the ministry's own usage above all, is the one who contradicts himself until his contradiction reaches wondrous heights, who permits for no cause and forbids for no cause, and who does whatever he does for no reason at all — except that he wills it or does not will it. And the ministry has set forth the clearest proof that it has outstripped every other ministry in the magnitude of its strength and the breadth of its mind: it stood between the Wafd leader and Mansoura, and stood between the Wafd leader and Qalyubia, unconcerned with the contradiction into which this drove it, and unmoved by the confusion into which it fell thereby. It is enough for it that it willed something yesterday and wills otherwise

today, that people may know it is indeed a sound ministry, which has reached the utmost limit of soundness.

Our minister of the interior is a resolute man among men, a curious minister among ministers; he heard the prime minister deliver his speech on the feast day, or read the speech he delivered on the feast day, and saw the prime minister assure people that his ministry is strong; and so he wished to furnish proof that the prime minister had spoken nothing but the truth, and that the good man's ministry is, truly and in earnest, strong — and what finer manifestation of strength is there than to hold power over people and toy with them, and to dispose of their rights through permission and prohibition, allowance and ban, for no reason but that you will it or you do not will it?! As for me, I call upon all Egyptians, and I call upon the whole earth to witness, that I am a believer in the minister of the interior's possessing a strength to which no strength compares, a resolve to which no resolve compares, and an intelligence to which no intelligence comes near.

And the Wafd men will claim that the constitution guarantees them their liberties, and permits them to travel within their own country, to visit one another, and to invite one another to meals, and that whoever forbids them what the constitution guarantees them — be it yesterday's constitution or today's — sins, violates what is sacred, and assaults their rights. Let the Wafd men claim of this what they will and what they will not; no one will heed them, and no one will give them a second thought, for such talk is reserved for weak ministries, which respect the constitution, honor what is sacred, and safeguard rights. Strong ministries, however, know only that they will or do not will something, and know only that people are bound to listen to them and obey. And the good man has said — truly and in earnest — that his ministry is strong; and whenever the good man says something, he has spoken the truth, and uttered what is right and beyond reproach.

And the Wafd men will claim that it is their right to hold private gatherings for food and conversation, that no one has authority over them in this, that they are not bound to notify any ministry or administration of it, and that no ministry or administration has authority or any way to reach them in this. But the Wafd men are free to claim what they will and what they will not, so long as they submit to the minister of the interior's command; for inward matters belong to God alone, while outward ones belong to the government, to trifle with as far as it pleases, and to mock as far as it pleases — and woe to whoever disobeys the government's

command, or hesitates to submit to it! For the good man has said — truly and in earnest — that his ministry is strong, and whenever the good man says something, he has spoken the truth, and uttered what is right and beyond reproach. And the Wafd men will claim that modern democracy has held, for a century and a half, that no ruler is to be obeyed in violating the law, and that it is their right, under the Egyptian constitution itself, to disobey the ministers' command should the ministers overstep the provisions of the law. But the Wafd men are free to claim what they will and what they will not; for modern and ancient democracy alike, human rights, the constitution, and the law — all this is talk fit to be spoken to the weak, not to the strong, and the good man has said — truly and in earnest — that his ministry is strong, so such talk ought not to be spoken to it. And the Wafd men will claim that Egypt has its own traditions, and that honoring hospitality is among these traditions, and that whoever has invited others to a feast has no right to go back upon that invitation, and that whoever has accepted an invitation has no right to withdraw his acceptance; and that they will therefore hold their feasts, and the invited guests will make their way to them, for they do no more than enjoy the rights the constitution guarantees them, rights which the ministry stands to protect and tend, enabling them to enjoy them most fully; and that they will lay upon the government alone the responsibility for whatever assault befalls them, for whatever harm comes of it, and for whatever violation of the constitution, breach of the law, and trifling with rights may occur. And the Wafd men are free to claim what they will and what they will not; for the ministry has willed, and the ministry has warned, and woe to those who do not carry out the ministry's will! And woe to those who do not fear its warning! And the ministry does not shrink from bearing the consequences; and what has the ministry to fear from bearing the consequences?! And who will hold the ministry to account for whatever consequences it bears?! Sidqi Pasha bore the consequences of Badari, al-Muti'a, Bani Husayn, and Tatum, and what did these consequences bring upon him?! What reckoning did he render for them? Was he questioned? Was he summoned to an inquiry? Did he stand before a judge? Did the chambers of prisons pass before his eyes? Was any of his wealth, little or much, confiscated? Not at all; so what is there to keep this strong ministry from bearing whatever consequences the Wafd wishes, or does not wish, upon it?! The ministry fears nothing, and therefore it holds everything permissible to itself; so let the Wafd dare, then, to disobey the ministry's command, and even if this command be unjust, oppressive, contrary to law and constitution, and a violation of the sanctity of tradition, the Wafd will have no one to blame

but itself.

And the Wafd men will claim that the ministry itself claims to be the ministry of a Muslim country, whose official religion is Islam by the text of the constitution, and that it is among the precepts of Islam that no creature is to be obeyed in disobedience to the Creator, that assaulting rights is a sin and violating what is sacred is an injustice, that preventing people from enjoying their freedom is a transgression, and that Egyptians are free to disobey the ministry's command when it violates religion, just as they are free to disobey it when it violates the law. But the Wafd men are free to claim what they will and what they will not; the ministry will pay them no heed and give them no attention, will not permit them their visit to Qalyubia, and will not leave them free to enjoy their rights and their liberty; for it is strong, as the good man has said, and it is enough for it to be strong, that it may compel people to what it does not wish for them.

After all this, was the minister of the interior in earnest in the order he issued, and was the governor of Qalyubia in earnest in carrying out the minister's order? Have Egyptians fallen so low in the minister's and the governor's eyes that their rights have become liable to such trifling? Have Egyptians fallen so low in their own eyes that the minister and the governor have taken it upon themselves to subject them to this trifling, to drive them into this predicament, and to put them under this tyranny? Have the constitution and the law fallen so low in the minister's and the governor's eyes that they have taken it upon themselves to carry their interpretation and construction of them to this strange extreme? Where are we? And toward what are we being driven? And what is wanted of us? And what does the ministry want for itself, and for the people? The good man would do well to reflect on all of this, if he is able to reflect on all of this. Sidqi Pasha ventured upon every bit as much as this, and the law did not punish him, nor did he reap the fruit of the injustice and oppression he had sown; but where is Sidqi Pasha now? And who is Sidqi Pasha today? And what did Sidqi Pasha reap from his injustice and oppression of more than three years? Does the good man wish to be overtaken by what overtook Sidqi Pasha? Then let him venture upon what Sidqi Pasha ventured upon; then let him be unjust as he was unjust, and oppress as he oppressed, and hold power over people as he held it; for should he do so, he will, without doubt, arrive at the very end Sidqi Pasha arrived at, without enjoying his power for long, for he is weaker, and more sound of heart, and better natured, than to withstand the people as Sidqi Pasha

withstood them, or to stand firm against the people as Sidqi Pasha stood firm against them. And it is beyond all doubt that the Wafd and its men will not submit to the ministry's injustice, nor obey whatever order it issues outside the bounds of the law; so let the ministry do with its strength whatever it pleases — the people of Qalyubia will hold their feasts, and the leader of the Wafd and his companions will go to attend these feasts, and the ministry alone will reap the fruit of holding power over people and departing from the simplest principles of the constitution and the law.