

Storm ...

Kawkab al-Sharq (Hadith al-Massa), 4 April 1934.

This is not the storm that rose up fiercely on Sunday, corrupting the air and making breathing within it difficult and laborious; for however violent the uprising of the wind, it ends in calm, just as the air, however corrupted it may become, ends in soundness, and people are then able to resume their movement and activity, and to breathe deep into their lungs, constrained by nothing, apprehensive of nothing, deprived of no pleasure of clean, open air.

Nor is it this storm that the Ministry suddenly stirred up around the commutation of pensions, adding thereby corruption upon corruption to the political air, and doubt upon doubt in people's hearts, and corrupting people's opinion of government and of a sizeable faction among those who govern; for there is nothing new in this storm, and people already knew more of its affairs than the Ministry supposes, and more than the investigating committee revealed.

Nor is this storm the only one of its kind; for there are other storms, violent and wild, no less evil or vile, that have been stirred up, and may be stirred up again, and Egyptians have grown accustomed to these storms, bearing their evil whether it pleases them or not; for they know it is suited to the nature of things in this black life they live, and under the shadow of this happy era in which they endure the trifling of Egyptians and the domination of the English!

Rather, it is this storm that was stirred up some time ago around the position of Egyptian judges in the Mixed Courts toward their foreign colleagues, and the position of these colleagues toward them; for this storm is wholly evil, raising neither dust nor haze in the air, but rather a dangerous poison, corrupting in the ugliest way these relations existing between foreigners and Egyptians generally — relations which foreigners, by their own account, are eager to keep entirely untroubled, and which we, without doubt, are eager to keep free of all corruption.

This storm is truly dangerous. We should have wished the foreigners to reflect upon it, and to assess it at its true weight, and to take care to discern the evil consequences to which it might lead — and we still wish they would do so, and do so with deliberation, patience, and sincerity; for the accidents of life that arise, and the incidents of life that occur, ought

not to distract them from life itself, and from the very substance of the relations that ought to exist between them and the Egyptians.

It is a grave error for foreigners to rely on the good official relations between the Egyptian government and other governments, or to rely on whatever bias some Egyptian ministries may show toward them from time to time, or their partiality for them, their preference for showing them affection and kindness, their placing them ahead of Egyptians; or to rely on this outward life that the law organizes, protecting some people from others within it, repelling the evil of some against others, and guaranteeing official redress to whoever is wronged or befallen by evil — for all these things depict only the surface of life, and do nothing at all to meet the reality of the matter.

And the reality of the matter is that the life of foreigners in any country does not benefit or profit them, nor does it secure for them true peace of mind and the capacity to realize their ongoing interests, unless it rests on clean, pure relations, founded on love and respect between foreigners and the people of the country in which they settle and reside.

And foreigners will agree with us, without doubt, that this latest storm raised around the judges, around Egyptians and foreigners in the Mixed Courts, is apt to create between them and us an atmosphere thoroughly bad, with no good in it, and no hope of its ending in good; for Egyptians aspire to the very least that every free, civilized people aspires to, and they believe themselves fit for civilization and freedom, and they wish to be masters in their own country, harming no one, and harmed by no one, honoring their guests on condition that these guests honor them.

And Egyptians believe, with a conviction a thousand and one times stronger than foreigners suppose, that those eras have passed in which the Egyptian would accept being wronged in his own country, or would bear humiliation from those who descended upon him. It would have been reasonable for foreigners to notice this development that has come over the life of Egyptians — indeed, to notice this revolution that has utterly transformed the Egyptians' very souls, and convinced them that they are people like other people, who will not accept from anyone what people would not accept from them.

And had foreigners done this, they would have given themselves ease, and given the Egyptians ease from this heavy toil they bear in these days, and from this great evil to which their relations are exposed in these dark eras. And had the foreigners been left alone with themselves,

descended a little from their pride, and come to believe in Egypt what they believe in their own countries about the principles of right, justice, and equality, they would recognize that this storm now shaking the Mixed Courts rests on none of their preference for justice, their regard for right, their belief in equality, or their regard for Egyptians' dignity.

For the foreign judges in the Mixed Courts acknowledge the merit and competence of their Egyptian colleagues, and record this in the minutes of the General Assembly, and their president writes it to the Egyptian Ministry; and there is nothing in the system or laws of the Mixed Courts that bars these Egyptian judges — whose merit and competence no one doubts — from presiding over chambers. Yet these Egyptian judges, for all this, are not left free to exercise this right, but are turned away from it, and driven from it with violence; and if they protest this and claim their right, and the Minister of Justice upholds their claim, they meet with nothing but violent rebuff, and a dismissal devoid of any gentleness or courtesy, and a warning of disciplinary councils if they do not withdraw their claim — if what the newspapers have published is true.

Nor does the matter stop there; for the Minister writes to the General Assembly supporting the view of these judges, basing his support on right, justice, and the law, and announces this in Parliament, to calm the public, and to impress upon Egyptians that their dignity suffers no harm — and when he does this, he receives from the president of the Mixed Court of Appeal — if what the newspapers have published is true — a harsh, severe letter, such as ought never to be sent from a court president to a minister, containing lessons meant, in its author's view, to teach the minister how to handle such matters, and drawing the minister's attention to the error of raising such matters in Parliament or in the newspapers.

And the meaning of this is that Egyptians — ministry, parliament, press, and people alike — ought not to raise such matters, nor declare any opinion of their own upon them, nor show their disapproval — should they feel what ought to be disapproved of; for if they do so, they are met with reproach, and lessons are delivered to them by a man, however elevated his standing, however exalted his post; for he is an Egyptian official, who ought to safeguard for Egyptians their inviolability and their dignity, and their sacred right to be masters in their own country.

We believe that the foreigners, if left alone with themselves, and reflecting on all this, could not help but share our regret over this wild storm, which ought never to have been stirred up, which ought never to have driven matters to this embarrassment, and which ought never to have exposed the relations between them and us to such corruption. And it is truly painful that Egyptians should look to any corner of Egyptian life, and scarcely take a single step toward realizing any of their hopes, or any of their interests, without encountering obstacles, difficulties, problems, and terrors whose substance is: foreigners, the interests of foreigners, the privileges of foreigners, and the English standing guard over the interests of foreigners, claiming to protect them for themselves, and making of them a means to fight the Egyptians, and to set up obstacles between them and what they seek of freedom and independence.

This is a great deal, and it is not the sort of thing that can realize the sincere cooperation that ought to exist between Egyptians and foreigners; indeed, it can only widen the gulf between them, sharpen the disagreement between them, and fill hearts with the doubt, suspicion, and ill opinion they ought never to be filled with.

In any case, foreigners are naturally free to weigh or not to weigh these matters we invite them to reflect upon; but it is their due to know that Egyptians weigh this at its true weight, and are resolved to protest every encroachment on their rights, every degradation of their dignity, and every violation of their inviolability, whatever its source, and whatever consequences they may face in defending right, dignity, and inviolability.

In any case, the Egyptians have seen the General Assembly's position in the Mixed Courts, and what is said of its president's conduct toward the Egyptian judges and toward the Minister, and of his opinion of the press and of Parliament; and they now wish to see the Ministry's position on all this, and they now wish to see Parliament's position on all this, and they now wish to see the press's position on all this.

And they utterly refuse to be given such lessons, whoever the professors delivering them may be, and they insist most emphatically that Egyptian judges enjoy equality with their foreign colleagues, and they cannot understand how an Egyptian judge can be asked to secure equality among people, when he himself has not secured his own right to equality.