

Protection (3)

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1 If the Times correspondent is honest with himself, then the English opinion of the Egyptians is truly poor — one that invites no optimism, revives no hope, and does nothing to narrow the gap of disagreement between the two differing countries; for the Times correspondent claimed, in his article published a week ago and much discussed in Egypt since, which *Kawkab al-Sharq* reprints in full today, that the Egyptians regard the slightest word the High Commissioner utters to an Egyptian minister as though it were an ultimatum from Great Britain.

2 The Times correspondent claimed that the Egyptians attend with the greatest and most anxious care to the slightest act of the High Commissioner; the Times correspondent claimed that the new High Commissioner will find no difficulty and no hardship in accomplishing whatever service and rescue Egypt expects of him; and the Times correspondent claimed, finally, that the High Commissioner can manage Egypt's affairs with his little finger.

3 If this is truly the Times correspondent's opinion, and if many Englishmen share this opinion with him, believing among themselves that the Egyptians have sunk to such a degree of abasement that they cannot withstand a single word spoken by the High Commissioner in conversation with one of the ministers, and that the High Commissioner is now able to run their affairs with his little finger — then we truly do not know why the English should trouble themselves over us, or show such care, and conceal still more than they show, for coming to an agreement with us and concluding a treaty between us. For a nation so docile and pliant, so frightened by the lightest word, whose affairs are managed with a little finger rather than an index finger or a thumb, is not a nation anyone need trouble over, or think about, or bother coming to terms with; it is, rather, a nation fit only to be ruled and degraded as the weakest of nations and the most abject of peoples are ruled.

4 It is certain that the Times correspondent deceives both himself and his people when he writes such words and broadcasts them in his great newspaper; and it is certain also that the Times correspondent is excused for misleading himself and his people in this fashion. For were it

not that there are in Egypt weak-spirited men who credit the High Commissioner with this supernatural power, who regard his lightest word as an ultimatum from Great Britain, who pin their hopes on the High Commissioner, who place at the High Commissioner's service whatever strength and effort they possess, and who make the High Commissioner believe that they are capable of carrying out his orders and submitting to his opinion and serving him as instruments in managing affairs — were it not that there are among the Egyptians weak-spirited men to whom their own souls and their own nation count for so little, down to this degrading extent — the Times correspondent could never have supposed what he supposed, nor said what he said.

5 Yes, and were it not that there are among the Egyptians weak-spirited men brought by meanness and abasement to speak to the Times correspondent and his like in just such terms, painting their nation in a weakness and abasement that must tempt the covetous, invite the mockery of mockers, and encourage trifling with its interests by those who trifle — the Times correspondent could never have supposed what he supposed, nor said what he said.

6 But every people, however great its pride and strength, however fierce its care for dignity and its refusal of wrong, has its affliction in a few of its own sons, by whom it is tried in its private life just as it is tried in its public life.

7 And the English know this just as we know it, and suffer from it just as we suffer from it; for where is the European people among whose sons there are no spies who deal with the foreigner in peacetime and aid the enemy in wartime — men whom the advanced, free peoples know how to repay with the just punishment their sin and their wrongdoing deserve? And were the English subjected to the kind of foreign occupation we are subjected to, they too would find among themselves individuals who regard the lightest word uttered by the occupying power's representative to one of their ministers as an ultimatum from that occupying power.

8 But the English do not suffer foreign occupation; rather, they impose through their own occupation a suffering upon nations that deserve no such suffering... So the English have no individuals of the kind the Times correspondent has pictured; but they are never without, from time to time, other individuals who serve the foreigner in peacetime and serve the enemy in wartime, and they guard against these individuals just

as every advanced and living nation guards against them.

9 The difference between us and the English, and the peoples like the English among the independent nations, is that they are truly independent; they find in no foreign power anything to shield such individuals from them, and so they are able to bring them before civil or military justice, and visit upon them the punishment they deserve. As for us, we are not truly independent; it is the English who usurp our independence, and it is the English who shield from us and from our laws these sinful individuals who see the High Commissioner's word, however slight, as an ultimatum from Great Britain, and who make the High Commissioner and other Englishmen believe that the affairs of their nation are so slight and so easy that they can be managed with a little finger, rather than an index finger or a thumb.

10 All this is beyond doubt, and it is truly painful; but the consolation for it is easy, for God has refused that sovereignty belong to sin, or that triumph belong to abasement, or that the renegades of a people be the ones who represent that people. And here appears what we have said and say again: that the English deceive themselves if they believe such talk as the Times correspondent writes them, talk which some renegade among the Egyptians may well have fed to the Times correspondent — they truly deceive themselves. For they know full well that among the Egyptians there are ministers who have stood firm, and will always stand firm, against the High Commissioner's word, light or heavy, and who have refused — and will always refuse — to submit to the High Commissioner's order, or to yield to the English, for all their strength and might, anything that does not suit the Egyptians' right or the Egyptians' interest. They know this full well, and they believe it most firmly; and were it not for this, no disagreement would have arisen between them and Egypt, no struggle would have continued, no violent crisis would stand between them and us, no constitution would have been abolished and another promulgated, Egypt would not have been waged this detestable war upon her rights and her institutions, upon her honor and her sanctities, and the Egyptians would not have been divided into two parties: a small party from which rulers and masters are chosen, and a great party that ought neither to attain power nor aspire to it.

11 Were Egypt's affairs truly easy for the English, there would be no need for so much or so little of anything, no need for parties to be picked and chosen, or founded and manufactured outright, and no need for a people to be made wary and afraid, its affairs wrested from it by force.

And the strange thing is that these Egyptians whom the Times correspondent portrays in such demeaning sentences feel no shame before themselves nor before others, and are not ashamed to meet the Times correspondent, whenever the chance presents itself or they create the chance to meet him or his like, and to feed them just such talk.

12 And the strange thing, besides, is that the ministers who read such talk do not expend whatever effort they have, and whatever effort they do not have, to prove to themselves, to their nation, and to the English that this talk the Times correspondent writes is foolish and empty, portraying no one and proving nothing, and does not represent the relations that in fact exist between the High Commissioner and the ministers. And yet the very first duty of Egyptian ministers, whoever they may be, is to raise themselves, before themselves, by word and deed, above having such suspicions entertained of them, or such things said of them, as that they regard the High Commissioner's words as an ultimatum from Great Britain.

13 Al-Muqattam reported some days ago that the High Commissioner had stayed behind in Paris to speak with the French about the public debt question; we denounced this most strongly and found fault with it, because when the High Commissioner passed through Paris he had not yet established his first relations with the Egyptian ministry; and because the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not created for nothing, but was created precisely for a matter like the debt question; and because it is one thing for the English to mediate between Egypt and France, and quite another for the English to take charge of Egyptian affairs in matters concerning France.

14 We had thought that the Egyptian ministry would say or do something to show that it was displeased with what al-Muqattam had published, if the matter had indeed occurred, or that it would deny what al-Muqattam had published, if the matter had not occurred. But the ministry said nothing, and did nothing, and al-Muqattam returned yesterday evening to publish again what it had published days before, then claimed that the English government would negotiate with the Egyptian government on the debt question after the High Commissioner had spoken of it to the French when he passed through Paris.

15 The meaning of this, if we understand the Arabic in which al-Muqattam speaks, is that the English wish to take charge of the debt question themselves, and to speak in it to the Egyptians on behalf of the

French, and to the French on behalf of the Egyptians. The meaning of this is that negotiations on this question will not be direct between the Egyptians and the French, but are meant to pass through the office of the High Commissioner. To what purpose, then, was the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs created? Have we returned to what we were under the Protectorate? Sidqi Pasha himself used to negotiate with the French and the Italians, availing himself of English mediation in doing so; are we meant to understand that the present ministry has fallen two steps or more behind Sidqi Pasha's ministry, content to wait until the English resolve the debt question for it?

16 This conduct, and others like it, if what al-Muqattam published is true — and we hope it is not true — is precisely what allows the Times correspondent to say that the High Commissioner can manage Egypt's affairs with his little finger. Let the sleeper wake, let the heedless pay attention, and let the Egyptians know that independence is not words to be spoken, nor columns to be written in the newspapers, but deeds that nations perform, and deeds that ministries perform, by which they prove themselves truly free. Say what you will; I do not know why I always find myself joining together, in my own mind, these two thoughts: the High Commissioner speaking to the French about the debt question, meaning to negotiate it with the Egyptians, and the High Commissioner hunting duck, then distributing his catch to the poor.

17 How fitting it would be for the Egyptians, that their ministry dispense with the High Commissioner's assistance in the debt question, that their poor dispense with the duck the High Commissioner hunts for them at Aqyad or elsewhere, and that their newspapers be ashamed to publish such talk.