

Bravo

Sawt al-Umma, 12 October 1946.

It is said that a hero of legend fell into certain sins, and so judgment was passed upon him that he should spend in the house of the dead his eternal age that has no end, laboring at one single thing that he can scarcely complete before he is forced to begin it anew; for he never reaches its end no matter how much effort this hero expends, and no matter how much hardship he endures.

This task with which the hero was charged, and which he will never be able to accomplish, is to push a boulder up from the foot of the mountain, to raise it to its summit; and the hero pushes this boulder and toils in pushing and raising it, meeting in this effort of his the greatest affliction and the harshest trial, until, just as he is about to reach the summit and settle the boulder in the place prepared for it, it slips from his grasp and rolls swiftly down, heedless of anything, until it reaches the bottom, and the wretched hero is forced to descend with it, light or heavy, swift or slow, to renew the pushing and the raising, and resume the toil and the labor, and so he continues until eternity comes to an end, if it is possible for eternity to come to an end.

This brave, bold, patient hero reminds me of our great hero Sidqi Pasha in what he has been attempting ever since Egypt concerned herself, in the wake of the First World War, with settling the dispute between herself and the English, and resolving the problems between herself and the outside world.

For Sidqi Pasha is patient and enduring, and a striver and a battler, there is no doubt of that; but I do not know what this sin is into which he has fallen, which has decreed that he shall attain nothing from his striving and his battling, nor from his patience and his perseverance; for Sidqi Pasha strove and endeavored and was patient and persevered until he became a member of the Wafd, a hero among the heroes of the struggle, a luminary among the luminaries of victory, until he reached Paris with Saad and his companions, and it seemed to him that he had reached the goal, and had won from glory what he wished; but he looks, and there is his boulder rolling swiftly down until it reaches the bottom, and there he is following it, descending light or heavy, swift or slow, until he reaches the bottom; and there he is, returning to Egypt and leaving his companions in Paris, and beginning his striving and his labor and his

patience and his perseverance anew, and taking up the pushing and the raising, bearing in it what can be borne and what cannot be borne of burdens, until he draws near the summit once again; and there he is, taking part in the ministry of Adly Pasha — God have mercy on him — and in the burden of negotiations it undertook; but he looks one day, and there is the boulder of the negotiations rolling swiftly down until it reaches the bottom, and he descends with it, light or heavy, swift or slow, until he reaches the bottom, and he takes up again the striving and the labor, and links his political life to the life of Tharwat Pasha, and it seems to him, after much hardship, that he has drawn near the summit, and is about to settle the boulder in its prepared place; but he looks, and there is the boulder rolling down until it reaches the bottom, and there he is following it to the bottom once again.

And he continues thus, pushing and raising and drawing near the summit and falling to the bottom, linking his political life to the life of whichever prime minister God has decreed be appointed over him, one who knows neither weariness nor boredom, and is not acquainted with despair or hopelessness, until an opportunity comes to him in which he did not doubt — nor did many people with him doubt — that it was the final opportunity that would bring him a victory after which there would be no other victory, a victory with no fear of failure or disappointment behind it, for he had removed all the obstacles, or it seemed to him and to many people that he had removed all the obstacles.

He drove the Wafd from power, dissolved the Chamber of Deputies, and it was granted to Sidqi Pasha to abolish the constitution and to put in its place a new constitution which he would take as a safe ladder by which to climb with his boulder to the summit; and he was granted the whole of the Egyptian army, the whole of the Egyptian police, and English assistance neither withheld nor rationed. What, then, could prevent him from ascending, and his boulder from following him or preceding him, until he reached the summit and settled it there and stood upon it safe and secure? But the boulder rolls down in the ugliest manner of rolling, and Sidqi Pasha follows it until he reaches the bottom, and there he dwells, and lingers long.

But he labors and strives and endures every kind of hardship, and tries to climb once with the Wafd, and once again with the Wafd's opponents, and the road is barred to him, and the means are cut off from him before he reaches the summit, and there he is, returning, willingly or unwillingly, to the bottom.

And this attempt which Sidqi Pasha has made this year is nothing but one link in this chain which will never reach an end, and will never stop at any limit; and this time less has been granted to Sidqi Pasha than was granted to him the first time, for he has headed the ministry, and headed the negotiating delegation, but he has not abolished the constitution, and will not be able to abolish it, and has not dissolved the Chamber of Deputies, and will not be able to dissolve it; he is obliged, then, to come to terms with the constitution, and to come to terms with the parties of which the Chamber of Deputies is composed. This is the first weakness. Then, too, he did not form the negotiating delegation as he wished, but this delegation was imposed upon him by force, which allowed him to free himself of the Wafd within this delegation, but did not allow him to free himself of so-and-so and so-and-so, just as it did not allow him to dominate so-and-so and so-and-so, so that he was obliged to come to terms with a faction of the negotiating delegation. This is another weakness added to his first weakness.

And he was granted the army, and granted the police, and granted all the means of force, but he found himself facing a people hard and unyielding, not to be toyed with by terror or dread, and found himself facing a public opinion not frightened by force and violence, nor awed by imprisonment or any other form of awe; and there he is, obliged to come to terms with the people and with public opinion. This is a third weakness added to the other kinds of weakness; indeed, he is obliged to do more than merely come to terms with the people and with public opinion — obliged to seek to win their favor with kinds of speech that deceive no one, and forms of action that delude no one; and people look, and there is Sidqi Pasha obliged to make an event in contemporary Egyptian history, postponing the opening of studies at the university, at al-Azhar, and at all the educational institutes by a month or more than a month; and when the journalists asked him about this, he said that he did not want a revolution to occur in the country during the negotiations.

He did not, then, go around the obstacle as the Minister of Education did, nor did he trouble himself with pretexts and excuses, but rather faced the matter with a frankness beyond which there is no further frankness, and recorded against himself, and against his government, and against his negotiations, that the people are discontented and unsatisfied, and that the stability of affairs depends on preventing Egyptians from assembling even in the institutes of learning. And so Sidqi Pasha knows full well that the people are not satisfied with him, nor

reassured by him, not satisfied with his rule over their domestic affairs, nor satisfied with his policy in negotiating with the English, and he wants to prevent the people from declaring their discontent, and his way to that is to come between the people and assembly on the one hand, and to spread force, violence, and fear on the other.

And Sidqi Pasha knows full well that the foreigners residing in Egypt, and those far from Egypt, see our affairs just as we see them, and witness them just as we witness them, and know of their secrets and their fine details just as we know them. And Sidqi Pasha knows that there are foreign newspapers in Egypt that translate what is published and what is said, and telegraph companies that broadcast to every corner of the earth whatever word or deed proceeds from him; and Sidqi Pasha knows that the English are ignorant of nothing in the true state of affairs in Egypt, for they know full well the people's discontent with him, their hatred of his rule, their rejection of his policy, and their doubt of his endeavors.

Sidqi Pasha knows all this as he knows himself, and he is not content with this knowledge alone, but wants to establish proof of all of it, that the people are not satisfied with him, nor trusting of him, nor reassured by him; so he attempts to deliver a speech on Thursday in one of the cities of Egypt, mustering there the army and the police, visible and hidden, and setting up watch-posts around it to turn away whoever he deems undesirable from reaching it, and then delivers his speech to people he has chosen himself, or whom the administration has chosen for him, to speak with him and listen to him. And the strange thing is that he, the clever, perceptive man from whom none of the fine details and secrets of all this are hidden — the strange thing is that he undertakes all of this before the eyes of the people and the eyes of the English, and claims, or imagines himself claiming, that the people trust him, and that the English are reassured about him.

I do not know how the meeting between Mr. Bevin and Sidqi Pasha will go, if he is granted the chance to meet him at the end of next week, or at the beginning of the week after that, nor how the conversation between these two men will proceed; for Mr. Bevin is ignorant of nothing concerning Egyptian realities, and Sidqi Pasha knows that Mr. Bevin is well acquainted with the situation there — so what, then, might either of these two men say to the other? Sidqi Pasha used to accuse his great friend Nokrashy Pasha, when this great friend was head of the ministry, of plotting with Mr. Bevin a conspiracy of silence around Egypt's highest demands. By what name, then, shall we call the meeting of Bevin and

Sidqi Pasha, in spite of what is known — I do not say to the two men alone, but I say to all people, in Egypt and outside Egypt — that Sidqi Pasha represents none of the Egyptians: the people are enraged against him, his fellow ministers deny his ministry's place within the constitution, and his fellow negotiators are suspicious of everything he does and everything he says.

By what name can we call this meeting of these two men, and whatever conversation might pass between them?! Is it a conspiracy of silence, or a conspiracy of speech? And in whose interest is this conspiracy being contrived — in the interest of Egypt, which wants no humiliation, no degradation, which accepts neither violation nor occupation, nor agrees to any bargaining over the matter of the Sudan, and which declares all of this through whatever means of declaration are available to her, until Sidqi Pasha is forced to prevent her youth from assembling in the institutes of learning, and to postpone study in them for a whole month or more than a month?

Or in the interest of the English, who want — so they say — a treaty founded on consent, not on resentment, and on free acceptance, not on the coercion imposed by fire and iron? And how can Sidqi Pasha meet the British Foreign Secretary while preserving the awe and dignity befitting prime ministers, when Mr. Bevin knows, and Sidqi Pasha knows, that the present Egyptian government has postponed study because it fears revolution?

What value, then, has a government that fears the assembly of students, not only in the university and al-Azhar alone, but in the secondary and primary schools as well? Or in whose name can this government speak to foreign states? And by what authority can this government bind an entire people, when it is incapable of keeping the youth to the maintenance of order in the institutes of learning?

Sidqi Pasha delivered his speech on Thursday, and made it long, and troubled himself with preparing and delivering it; and before that, Sidqi Pasha has delivered long speeches, and short speeches beyond counting. Will Sidqi Pasha permit me to close this discourse as I began it, with a tale from the tales of legend?

It is said that in the house of the dead there are maidens who fell into one of the sins, and so judgment was passed upon them that they should fill a jar that has no bottom; and so they pour water into it from the beginning of time until eternity comes to an end, if it is possible for

eternity to come to an end.

So let Sidqi Pasha make his speeches long or short; nothing of his speeches will settle in the hearts of the Egyptians, just as the water will never settle in that jar that has no bottom.