

Boycott ...

Taha Hussein

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We must congratulate the head of the Piastre Project on this, if evil is a thing one is congratulated for; for His Excellency Dr Ali Pasha Ibrahim has succeeded — much to our regret — in driving people to boycott this project and turn away from it, achieving a great deal more than he would have achieved had he called openly for a boycott, urged it upon people with enticement, and pressed it upon them with insistence.

Yes, we must congratulate the head of the Piastre Project on this bad result the project has come to this year, if bad results are among the things people are congratulated for — and who knows? There may well be those among people who are eager to offer congratulations for good fortune, and, failing that, are just as eager to offer congratulations for ill fortune, because they are determined to congratulate someone no matter what. And legend has preserved for us the story of that Greek man who wished history to remember him whether it would or not, and so set fire to a splendid, magnificent library, that history might have something to say of him; and the grammarians cite, in matters of grammar, a verse not without a certain wit, which has passed into the currency of proverbs:

If you cannot be of use, then do harm — for a young man is looked to only that he may harm or be of use.

The head of the Piastre Project was, without doubt, of use, so long as he kept the project safe from the mischief of politics, and carried it along the innocent path the innocent youth had wished for it; but once sinful politics began to creep into this project, the people alerted the head to it, and he took heed somewhat bashfully, showing a concern for what the people had pointed out to him; but this — regrettably — was no more than an outward concern, which availed nothing against the painful realities on the ground, so that politics went on along its path into this project until it had afflicted it with its ills and its sins, until those who worked for it and cherished it came to see and hear things that wounded them in their opinions, their feelings, and their loftiest patriotic ideals.

Thereupon they pressed their head to ward off from them the sin of politics and the scheming of politics, and to preserve for them a work that was economic and innocent, young as they were, pure as they were,

devoted to the homeland as they were; but the head turned away from them entirely, and held himself aloof from their continual pleading and their insistent appeal; so they were compelled to shield themselves from sinful politics by their own effort, and to save their hearts, their souls, and their consciences from this corruption. Nor did they stop at this salvation — and when has youth ever been content with little? When has youth ever been satisfied with a trifle?

They did not stop at saving themselves, but wished to save their fellow citizens too from this hidden politics, which cannot show itself to people openly, and so approaches them from behind a veil, and which cannot meet people face to face, and so creeps in upon them by way of religion, by way of economics, and by way of grandiose words that signify nothing. Thereupon the youth resigned from the project and withdrew their support from it, and called upon their fellow citizens to resist it until it should return as innocent as it had begun, and devoted to the people as it had begun, and should rise above serving the hidden purposes of those who traffic in everything and exploit everything.

Thereupon something appeared that those who schemed against this project, and those who fish in troubled waters, had not reckoned with. It appeared that the youth, calm and settled though they were, had not forgotten their youth, had not forgotten their strength, had not forgotten their boldness in the right, and were not deceived by those who plotted against them and wished them harm. Yes, and it appeared that the youth were still able to will a thing and do it, to speak a thing and mean it truly, to call out and have people answer their call. Yes, and it appeared that this violence, carried on for more than three years to kill liberty openly, and this scheming, carried on for more than three years to kill liberty by stealth, had achieved nothing against liberty in the souls of the youth; for liberty is not killed, liberty is not assassinated, liberty is not deceived out of itself, and liberty is a sacred, undying ember that no way exists to put out.

Yes, and it appeared that the body of youth remains as it was in Egypt's reliance upon it, not to be deceived away from the right, not to be driven toward falsehood, and not to be touched by trickery; and thereupon those who schemed against the Piastre Project, and those who had taken it as a tool of politics, were compelled to cast it into the embrace of those parties which have no strength but through authority, no existence but through authority, and no support from the people's love or the public's backing.

Thereupon they sought for this project advocates and supporters among the Unionists and the People's Party men; thereupon they took refuge in the newspapers of the Unionists and the People's Party men, to support it and defend it, after the national newspapers had turned away from it, just as the nation's youth had turned away from it. Thereupon the government rose to encompass the project and protect it, and thereupon the project became a government undertaking, or something resembling a government undertaking, while the head of the project hears and sees, while the head of the project witnesses this sorrowful tragedy, which wrested from the people's hand a work that belonged to the people, and cast into the government's embrace a work the government ought never to have taken charge of.

If a result such as this is a thing for which its author is to be congratulated, then we offer His Excellency Ali Pasha Ibrahim our sincerest congratulations, for he has indeed achieved this result. This splendid beauty — the beauty of devoted youth who threw themselves into useful work — is now transformed into another beauty no less splendid: the beauty of watchful youth defending themselves, warding off from their devotion, their liberty, and the purity of their conscience the scheming of schemers and the mischief of mischief-makers.

And now, how dearly we would have wished for our singular physician, our accomplished surgeon, and the director of our young university, that all his work should be good, that all mention of him should be fair, and that all people's talk of him should be praise; for our singular physician and accomplished surgeon was worthy of all this. He holds the highest standing in medicine and surgery, not in Egypt alone, but in other lands of the earth, east and west; he has, upon many Egyptians, the hand of the physician who comes to their rescue and saves them, and he has, upon Egypt as a whole, the hand of the man who made for it a fair name in medicine and surgery. It was fitting that he should be content with this, and seek more of the same, and fitting that he should meet from Egypt nothing but the love, admiration, and praise he deserves; but he insisted on going beyond medicine and surgery, insisted on entangling himself in administration and politics, and insisted on exposing himself to the consequences of this entanglement, opening a path for criticism, blame, and ill opinion of himself.

Saad — God rest his soul — gave Ali Pasha Ibrahim better counsel, and showed him more kindness, than Ali Pasha Ibrahim has shown himself, when Saad — God rest his soul — refused to let Ali Bey Ibrahim

put himself forward as a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies, and when Saad — God rest his soul — refused to let Ali Bey Ibrahim become a member of the Senate.

Would that Ali Pasha Ibrahim had profited from Saad's counsel, devoting himself and his effort to surgery and medicine, and had not entangled himself in the administration and politics he did entangle himself in, nor exposed himself to the lapses he did expose himself to, which invite criticism and blame.

Yet the intelligent, resolute man is the one who does not hold himself too proud for the truth, and is not driven by obstinacy into persisting in falsehood and pressing on in error. Saad's counsel — God rest his soul — still stands, and Dr Ali Pasha Ibrahim is still able to profit from it, and those who love him — and they are many, and we are among the most devoted of them, too jealous of him to see him wasted on the folly of this life — still counsel him, as Saad counselled him, to devote himself wholly to medicine and surgery, and to leave politics and administration to those who are skilled at them, skilled at bearing their burdens, and patient under their fire and whatever ill they bring.

Might our singular physician and accomplished surgeon, now resting in Aswan at the very time the youth suffer the effects of that reckless politics he was unable to ward off, might our singular physician and accomplished surgeon seize this moment of rest to reflect and weigh the matter, so that he might come to be convinced that Saad — God rest his soul — counselled him well, and that he would do well to resign from the Piastre Project, and leave its affairs to those capable of carrying it forward?

Some will tell Dr Ali Pasha Ibrahim: there is no harm in it; the boycott of the Piastre Project will not harm him or hurt him; the youth will turn away from it, but the administration will support it; the public will turn away from it, but the government will make it rich; so have no fear, and do not resign; the project will gather its piastres regardless, and if they do not come from the people themselves, they will come from quarters you know of, and from quarters you do not.

Some people will say this to Dr Ali Pasha Ibrahim, but we would have him know that we are loath for him to become one of the tools that serve the People's Party and the Unionist Party, and others resembling the People's Party and the Unionist Party; let him fear God in himself and in his nation, for God did not intend him to be a party man, but intended

him for all Egyptians alike. Let him, then, spare himself the Piastre Project, and devote himself wholly to medicine and the medical college; that will be better for him, and better for the people.