

Fallacy

Kawkab al-Sharq (Hadith al-Massa), 8 April 1934.

The Morning Post mocks the Egyptians; for a group of them, it claims, set about burning down a police station when they wished to see independence, and the police stood between them and what they wished, and these people were asked what independence was, and they said it was something to be eaten, and in any case something to be seen. We confess we do not understand the Morning Post's mockery of these people, who certainly never existed — but let us suppose they did exist — and who certainly never did what the English newspaper attributes to them — but let us suppose they did; for it is a certainty that independence is something to be seen and something to be touched, and perhaps among its fruits is something to be eaten too, and it is the Egyptians' right, having borne every shade of hardship, endured every manner of toil, and sacrificed life and property for the sake of this independence, to see it, and to enjoy it not merely by looking upon it, but by tasting its fruits and benefiting from its effects however that benefit may come — in eating, in drinking, in equality, and in every other kind of sense and feeling besides.

And we do not understand how people can dispute that independence is something to be seen, and something to be touched, and something that may be eaten and may be drunk, when all of them see independence with their own eyes and touch it with their own hands, and see how its possessors enjoy it in the countries where independence has truly taken root, where it appears to people free and unconstrained, with no veils cast between them and it, and no curtains drawn between them and it. Go to any free and independent country, and watch its people as they strive upon the earth, and as they struggle in pursuit of life; and you will see the very person of independence standing before them, striving with them as they strive, struggling with them as they struggle, driving them toward what is rightfully theirs, turning them away from what is not rightfully theirs, and warding off from them every mishap and misfortune that stands, or attempts to stand, between them and what they seek, within the bounds of order and law.

This independence resides in the police stations, forbidding policemen from assaulting the sons of the people, or setting about assaulting them, or driving them to where they would be subjected to

what some of the people of al-Badari, al-Muti'a, Bani Husayn, and Tutun have been subjected to, and to what Egyptians are subjected to in every city and every village, whenever they set about saying or doing what those who govern do not like. This independence resides in the halls of justice, forbidding a judge to be transferred or dismissed, or touched by the sultan's wrath because he ruled in a manner the sultan did not approve. It resides in the ministries, and in the ministers' own offices especially, forbidding them to overstep the law in word or deed, and setting them before tribunals of trial when they do overstep the law in word or deed, and at times casting them into the depths of prisons, and forbidding the heads of lighting companies and the heads of courts from writing to them letters that demean the state and diminish the dignity of independence. It resides in the offices of civil servants, forbidding them to obey ministers and superiors in anything that contravenes the law, and setting them before disciplinary councils if they do, and sometimes setting them before the public prosecution and before the judges, and at times casting them into the depths of prisons. It resides in Parliament, making those who represent the people feel that they are truly the possessors of sovereignty, whose word in legislation is never turned back, with nothing standing between them and the oversight of ministries, and their overthrow, should these ministries fail to please them. Then it resides in the land that is cultivated, which the state owns, protecting it from being wrongfully or unjustly expropriated, setting before the judiciary those who attempt or contemplate such a thing, and at times casting them into the depths of prison; then it resides in the land that private individuals own, restraining the government from wrongfully encroaching upon it, or from coming between its owners and the fruits it produces for them. Then it resides in every house, then it resides in every shop, then beyond all this it is spread across the whole earth, spread through the whole air, spread through every water, seen by the people, heard by them, touched by them, summoned by them against the oppressors, and called upon by them against anyone who exceeds, in dealing with them, the bounds of justice, right, and equality. I do not know, then, how anyone could dispute that independence is something to be seen?! Indeed, I do not know how anyone could dispute that independence is something the individual enjoys in the broadest and most comprehensive sense of enjoyment?! These Egyptians who never existed were not mistaken when they supposed that independence was something to be seen, and when they asked the sultan and the sultan's agents to show them this independence, for which they had struggled and for whose sake they had borne every shade of hardship and toil — not so

that people might speak to them of it, but so that they might see it and touch it, and be assured that it stood among them, protecting them from injustice, and setting them free to attain their rights.

And the English newspaper must know, and all the English must know, and all foreigners must know, that the Egyptians believe with firm conviction that independence is something to be seen; for they have traveled to independent countries and seen it, and they have traveled to independent countries and heard it, and they have traveled to independent countries and enjoyed it in these foreign lands, and tasted of its pleasures there what they have not tasted, and do not yet taste, in Egypt. And it is their right, since the English have told them, and the French have told them, and foreigners have told them, that they themselves won independence and attained it, and secured it in their own lands, to seek out this independence, and to learn where it resides; for they have grievances they wish to lay before independence, and complaints they wish to pour out to independence, and demands they wish independence to fulfill for them, and it is their right to be angry with the sultan and the sultan's agents if these do not show them independence; for they were not playing, nor jesting, nor chasing after illusions and dreams when they rose up seeking independence, and when they shed their blood for the sake of independence.

Yes, it is the Egyptians' right to ask the sultan and the sultan's agents to show them independence; for they wish to tell it that the English remaining in Egypt, and their aiding injustice against the Egyptians, and their interference in matters small and great alike — none of this could possibly endure in a country where independence exists. It is the Egyptians' right to ask the sultan and the sultan's agents to show them independence; for they wish to recount to it many tales — some touching the taking of life and the shedding of blood, some touching the trampling of honor and the violation of what should be inviolable, some touching the squandering of rights and benefits, some touching the embezzlement of the state's wealth, the waste of its properties, and the contempt for its authority — and all these are things that cannot live in a country where independence lives, just as the germs of disease and corruption cannot live in a sound, strong, healthy body. The sultan and his agents tell the Egyptians that they are independent, and so it is the Egyptians' right to ask them about this independence, to learn from it how it can possibly take root in a country where these sins take root, and live in a country whose air has become so corrupted that it no longer

suits the life of the healthy. The Egyptians are just and correct to go searching for this independence; for they wish to know the plain truth of the matter, for perhaps they were deceived when they were made to imagine it had already taken root in their country, and so it is only right that they resume their quest that this independence may take root in their country; and perhaps it has indeed reached Egypt and taken root there, but has fallen ill, for some have slipped into it what is slipped to the healthy to ruin their health; and so it is right for the Egyptians to reach this independence in order to learn its ailment, and to seek a cure for it from some physician; and perhaps it lies sick and neglected in some corner of the government offices, or in some quarter of the ministries, and so it is right for them to move it to a hospital where the means of treatment can be made ready in the modern, beneficial manner.

No — the Egyptians who never existed, of whom the Morning Post speaks, did not err when they said that independence is something to be seen; rather, it is the Egyptians who do exist who have erred, for they believed what they were told, that independence is something abstract, neither seen nor felt. These Egyptians have erred, and it is the duty of every free, cultured person who feels his own dignity and the dignity of his homeland to remind the Egyptians that independence is something to be seen and felt, and that their independence is hidden from them, and that it is their right, for their own sake and their country's, for the happiness of their children and the memory of their fathers, to ask about this independence, and to press their question until the veils are lifted between them and it, until they see it, feel it, hear it, and draw upon it in living their lives. It is their right to ask the sultan and the sultan's agents; it is their right to ask the English and the partisans of the English; it is their right to ask all foreigners — for all of these cast thick veils between the Egyptians and the independence for which they struggled, and for whose sake they bore every shade of hardship and toil, that they might win the free life beneath its spreading shade, its clear sky, its open air, and its life-giving revolution.

If the Morning Post mocks the Egyptians for supposing that independence is something to be seen, then we for our part urge the Egyptians most insistently to believe that independence is indeed something to be seen, and we assure them that once they believe this, they will see independence and feel it, and will eat of its fruits, and will enjoy its effects, and will impose their own respect upon the English by force; and on that day the Morning Post will no longer mock them for

supposing that independence is something to be seen, but will instead marvel at them and reckon with them in full, because they see independence and point to it, and take pride in it whenever some foreign schemer covets them, and whenever some Egyptian oppressor wrongs them; and on that day the Morning Post will no longer speak of Lord Cromer's system, nor of Egypt's annexation to the British Empire, for an independence that is seen cuts off every path leading to such talk.