

Pride

Kawkab al-Sharq, 10 July 1933

Laugh if you wish, for the matter admits of laughter; grieve if you wish, for the matter admits of grief. But be assured that you will laugh alone, and that you will grieve alone in any case, for the matter I am about to relate to you has come to concern no one—or scarcely concerns anyone at all. We write only to record and to tally, not to reform or to set right, for the matter has become beyond either reform or correction. Do you know what I wish to tell you of? Do you know what I wish you to laugh at? Do you know what I wish you to grieve over?

I wish to tell you of the University and its men, and I wish you to laugh at what has become of the University and its men, and to grieve at what the state of the University and its men has come to. We still have an institution called a University, established by law and regulated by laws, laws that were issued—I will not say years ago, nor months ago, but weeks ago. We had thought them narrow, thought them onerous, thought them destructive of the University's independence; and now it appears that they are excessive in breadth, excessive in liberty, and excessive in upholding the University's independence—and that for all this, they are wider than is proper and more than Egyptians can bear. These laws had scarcely been issued when the Minister of Traditions and the Supreme Rector of the University set about its founding statute and demolished it utterly, compelling the Faculty of Science to accept a dean it had not elected; but the Minister of Traditions managed to force the Faculty to elect him, and it yielded, obeyed, did as it was bidden, and joined the Minister in violating the law.

Scarcely had a few weeks passed on this affair before it was the turn of the Faculty of Arts, which was likewise compelled to violate a law that had been issued only weeks before, and which yielded, obeyed, and joined the Minister in violating the law.

It is said that the Faculty of Arts has had a chair vacant for more than a year, since a professor of the University was transferred to the Ministry of Education in an affair people still speak of. And it is said that this chair is not the only vacant chair in the Faculty of Arts, but that the Government is most anxious that it be filled for some reason or

other—who knows? Perhaps the Ministry will resign, and perhaps another Ministry will succeed it, and it would by no means do for this chair to remain vacant until some minister other than the Minister of Traditions comes to head the Ministry of Education.

It is said that a number of assistant professors in the Faculty of Arts were nominated by the Faculty for some of these vacant chairs, and among them an assistant professor nominated for this well-known chair. This assistant professor, by all accounts, is without doubt a capable man, whose competence and distinction are vouched for by scholars of Arabic literature—not in Egypt alone, nor in the Arab East alone, nor in the Islamic East alone, but throughout the circles of European Orientalists generally. You may ask after these circles in Rome, and Nallino and Levi Della Vida will answer you; you may ask these circles in Paris, and Massignon and Marçais will answer you; you may ask after these circles in London, Cambridge, and Oxford, and Nicholson, Gibb, and Margoliouth will answer you. And you may ask them in Germany, and Littmann and Bergsträsser will answer you. All of these will tell you that this professor is indeed capable, distinguished, and that the Faculty acted most wisely when it nominated him for this chair a year ago.

But the University Council did not see fit to rule on this nomination, nor on other nominations, last year, for reasons that perhaps the time has not yet come to set out in detail. Then this year the Faculty again nominated this professor and his colleagues, and the new laws had by then been issued, and this time the University Council ruled on the nominations—turning strict literalist in its respect for the laws—and rejected all the nominations, on the ground that the nominees did not hold the doctorate, which the law required and insisted upon. And it became the plain right of these assistant professors to content themselves with their posts, or else to obtain the doctorate, if they wished to become professors with chairs of their own. But something happened a few days ago: those in authority at the Ministry of Education and the University discovered that this chair was still vacant, and they asked the Faculty about it, and the Faculty answered as it answered. A few days passed, and then the Faculty Council was summoned to meet; it met yesterday, its meeting ran long, there was within it a long and weighty exchange, and the meeting ended with the nomination of a professor from one of the higher schools—a man holding neither the doctorate nor even the title of doctor. The idea had been to nominate this man to fill the

chair, and the members of the Faculty refused, and pressed their refusal; but the long exchange, and the weighing of consequences, and thinking ahead to the future, ended with the members of the Council agreeing to accept the man's nomination to the rank of assistant professor—even though the law, whose ink has not yet dried, does not permit this nomination, since it requires the doctorate of those nominated to the rank of lecturer, let alone to a professorship with a chair.

This nomination will, without doubt, be put before the University Council despite the recess and the summer, just as the Faculty Council was summoned despite the recess and the summer, and very few members will attend the meeting of the University Council, just as only five or six members attended the Faculty Council's meeting yesterday, for people are scattered in these days. God alone knows how the University Council will rule on this nomination, which compelled the Faculty of Arts to violate the law as the Faculty violated it—whether it will reject it as it rejected other nominations before, thereby teaching the Faculty a lesson harsh yet just, and teaching the Faculty that laws are not issued today to be violated tomorrow.

All this is known to God alone; but the one thing beyond doubt—the thing that will make whoever wishes to laugh, laugh, and whoever wishes to grieve, grieve, and which must in any case be recorded—is that the Faculty of Arts was made to violate the law, and violated it. And if this is the state of University men, what would you expect of ordinary people?

As for the Minister of Traditions, we congratulate him on his far-reaching authority, and wish him a pleasant journey and success in securing a clutch of decorations, for he is, without doubt, the champion of learning and of scholars, and the protector of the University and its men.