

Scheming...

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), November 22, 1934

The hateful era left no Egyptian milieu untouched by injustice, unratified by tyranny, unspread with the dominion of corruption; it planted in every one of them trees of evil that bore their fruit — foul, ugly, and reprehensible — without delay or hesitation. You cannot alight upon any Egyptian milieu without finding in it the traces of evil and the marks of harm; you cannot speak with any Egyptian man without hearing from him complaint and sensing in him pain; you cannot consider any Egyptian interest without discerning in it the traces of mischief, and learning that it has been entrusted to people who show the homeland, its rights, and its benefits neither dignity nor sanctity.

This is a thing beyond doubt. The people have said it, and said it often, and will go on saying it, until justice is restored to its proper place, and affairs settle into their right order, and there returns to hearts, souls, and consciences that security, calm, and peace of mind which they so sorely need. But there is a strange phenomenon which everyone notices, and everyone wonders about, and which people have begun to trace, discerning its hidden sources: for the Egyptians, all of them, are wronged, and all of them demand that the wrong be lifted — yet all of them, too, appreciate the Ministry's position, and know that it has scarcely spent a week in office, and that most of this week has gone in receiving well-wishers, returning calls, and setting about the work of study, inquiry, and preparation for the unavoidable abolition of the detested system. So they proclaim their joy at the Ministry's formation and their expectation of the reform it will undertake, and they lay their grievances before it and put forward their proposals without wearying it or overreaching in their insistence, and without demanding that it change everything in a day or two. The wronged officials trust that the wrong will be lifted from them, and wait in confidence; the wronged village headmen trust that the wrong will be lifted from them, and wait in confidence; and those who are neither officials nor headmen — individuals and groups whom this harm has touched, and their families with them — wait without impatience and ask without insistence. And among the Egyptians are many upon whom an injustice has fallen with no way to lift it, and among them some whom harm has struck with no way to erase it: families bereaved when their sons' blood was shed do not expect the Ministry to bring back their dead for them, nor to restore their martyrs to them;

rather, they reckon these sons to God and to the homeland, and yet, for all that, they are not thrown into turmoil, nor do they show any inclination toward turmoil, but bear it nobly, and accept this painful sacrifice with a good soul and a contented eye, believing in what has been decreed:

And the Egyptians whom harm has touched in their bodies do not expect any redress for what befell them; for what way is there to lift the evil from them, when it has already fallen upon them? And what way is there to remove the harm from them, when it has already descended upon them? The students, too, have grievances they have raised, and hopes they wait to see fulfilled; but they raised their grievances and were patient, informed their families and waited, and went on with what they ought to go on with, of study and learning — all except Al-Azhar and the religious institutes. For the students of Al-Azhar and the religious institutes did not follow the course of other people, nor take the path taken by the students of the Egyptian University and the other institutes; instead, they went on strike, or continued their strike, and protested, and continued their protest, and set conditions for returning from their position, and insisted on that position until these conditions should be met. It was strange, beyond doubt, that the students of Al-Azhar and the religious institutes should diverge from the consensus of the whole nation, and take a path other than that of the other students, and take a stand whose outward appearance was a demand for fairness, yet which, for all that, was not free of defiance and obstinacy. And the Egyptians know the students of Al-Azhar, and know that their feelings are as Egyptian as the feelings of others, that their hopes are as Egyptian as the hopes of others, and that their consciences are as devoted to the homeland as the consciences of others. What, then, is the secret of this strange stance, and how is one to interpret this deviation, which is not free of a certain estrangement from the ordinary? The newspapers reported some time ago that certain people were scheming against Al-Azhar and its people, working corruption between them and the Ministry, wishing to induce them to spoil the affair and thwart the effort, and to occupy the Ministry with themselves, away from reform — indeed, away from the whole nation and the whole nation's rights, and away from the abolition of the hateful system. Then matters began, little by little, to reveal that the newspapers had neither imagined nor erred in what they reported, and here we are, reading in Al-Kawkab, which appeared yesterday evening, a detailed account of these suspicions, a clarification of this scheme, and an assessment that there are people prompting the

students of Al-Azhar to press for the Sheikh's removal, and prompting the Sheikh not to resign, nor to show any readiness to resign, wishing thereby to place the Ministry in a position of confusion, embarrassment, and difficulty.

And now here we are, reading in Al-Ahram this morning that this scheme is, as it appears, an established fact, and that the Ministry has learned of it and traced its origin, and that emissaries have gone about spreading this mischief, and that sums of money have been spent in pursuit of this mischief — and so what was obscure has become clear, and what was hidden has come to light. And it has become plain that the partisans of the hateful system are trying to make Al-Azhar a tool for preserving that system, and that those who spread corruption throughout the land wish to make Al-Azhar a means of spreading corruption. We should like to know, then, who these people are, who have gone about doing mischief between Al-Azhar and the Ministry, and striven to sow corruption between Al-Azhar and the nation, and taken a religious institution as a means to the thing most hateful to religion and furthest from it — namely, corruption. And we should like to know, too, whence they got this money they spent. Who supplied it to them? And from where did he obtain it? And who received it from them, and how did he receive it? Or, again, we should like to know what the Ministry means to do with these corrupters, who scheme against the state, buy consciences, corrupt morals, and plant trees of evil in ground that evil ought never to reach. Does the Ministry mean to search out these people, so that once it has laid hands on them, it will not be content merely to restrain them from evil, but will punish them for it, and make of them a warning to those who wish to spoil this nation's affairs, and to plunge everything back into confusion?

And people likewise report that the nation rejoiced at the Ministry everywhere, and that this rejoicing produced no ill effect anywhere except in a single city, Alexandria; and Al-Jihad has since yesterday been reporting that certain persons charged with guarding public security had gone about spreading mischief in Alexandria, until there occurred what occurred of an evil which God willed should be slight, but which might well have grown worse, and produced ugly, evil consequences. We should like to know, then, whether what Al-Jihad reported yesterday and today is true; and if it is true, who these people are who incited evil and called for it, and from whom they received the order for this mischief; and what the Ministry means to do with them, and with those who ordered them to stir

up riot and disorder.

We should like to know this, and we should like to say plainly: the work of reform will never go straight for the Ministry so long as it does not adopt the resolve that will free it from the causes of scheming, and restrain from itself and from the nation the harm of these sinners, who cannot show themselves openly, but who are skilled at scheming and adept at corruption from behind a curtain. The hateful system has serpents still alive, of which only the tails have been cut off — indeed, scarcely more than a small, harmless portion of even the tails has been cut. If the Ministry truly desires reform, and is anxious to rise to the fulfilment of the covenant it has taken upon itself, then the first thing it must do is free itself of these serpents, so that it may proceed toward reform with confidence that it will not be forgotten from behind it.