Tails

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Yet the experiment, failed as it is, still has tails it drags behind it and trips over; the present ministry is nothing but one tail among those tails, and the experiment will only pile failure upon failure.

So said the Wafd in the manifesto the papers have been broadcasting since yesterday, endorsed by the former deputies and senators whom the nation elected on the day it elected them in full freedom and complete integrity, with no restraint and no constraint, no inducement and no coercion, answerable to nothing but conscience alone. There is no doubt that as soon as this manifesto reached the people, each of them felt it was a picture of what he found in himself, an echo of that strong voice rising from his conscience. All Egyptians, including the pillars of this blessed era, feel, when they are alone with themselves and listen to their consciences, that things in Egypt were wholly evil under the shadow of that fallen dictatorship, and remain wholly evil under the shadow of this rising one. How could matters be anything but wholly evil, when Sidqi Pasha rose to power, abolished the parliament, suspended the constitution, and ruled alone, propped up by force and force alone, resting on nothing that the people loved and issuing from nothing that the people willed? Even when he issued the new constitution and put on a show of enforcing and applying it, he enforced it only as he and the force that propped him up pleased, suspending even those provisions of that new constitution meant to guarantee Egyptians their most basic rights to freedom, justice, and equality.

So Sidqi Pasha claimed to himself and to the people that Egypt's affairs ran along the best lines a constitutional country's affairs can run, and when he and his companions were alone with themselves, they believed that constitutional life under this tyrant dictator was nothing but illusion, and that Egyptians were being ruled in a manner civilized humanity would never accept. When has civilized humanity, in this modern age, seen people subjected to the rule of a single man who forbids them to move except for him, to travel except toward him, to deliver a speech except in his praise and commendation? When has civilized humanity accepted that some men be given power over others

with no respect for right, no recognition of justice, no enforcement of law? Even when a case reached the courts and the courts exposed the wrong and vileness in it, the ministry, or its head, refused to remedy what the courts had declared corrupt, or to straighten what the courts had proven crooked, as if the continuance of corruption, the spread of evil, and the protection of the corrupt and the wicked were a necessity for his staying in power. And he stayed in power, setting some people against others and letting some hold sway over others, feeling no compunction about it, and not hesitating to claim that this was justice, fairness, and reform.

All this happened, and Sidqi Pasha cannot dispute it, nor can his companions deny any part of it, small or large. And along with all this came a great evil that corrupted people's morals and severed the ties of affection and kinship between them. This friend turns against his friend for fear of authority; that friend plots against his friend to win authority's favor; this official commits a sin, knowing full well he commits it, doing so unwillingly because he fears authority, or doing so gladly because he flatters authority. And these Egyptians spread across the land, spying and prying, carrying tales about people, whatever showed and whatever lay hidden, and inventing from these tales what represented neither truth nor fact, coveting the money authority handed out for it.

All this happened, and with it came a great evil that struck at people's livelihoods and daily bread, until fathers could no longer educate their children or give them comfort — I will not even say that much — but could no longer earn them the barest subsistence; until a mother was driven to offer her daughter for sale to worshippers as they left a house of God; until a father was driven to set fire to his children and his wife, and to watch them, despairing, wretched, in despair even of God's mercy, as the fire crept over their bodies.

All this happened, and with it came a great evil that made people's lives and blood cheap in their own eyes, and made lawful to them what God had forbidden, so that they killed to excess out of aggression and enmity, violated the sanctities of religion and law openly and in secret, defied authority, and killed some of its soldiers and police, driven to it by the despair and wretchedness they were in.

All this happened, and with it came a great evil before which the Egyptian was humbled and the foreigner exalted, over the Egyptian's protest. The foreigner's word carried weight and force; the Egyptian's

opinion was disregarded and dismissed. The foreigner's wealth grew and kept growing; the Egyptian's wealth melted away, and kept melting, until nothing was left of it. Foreign companies met with every assistance and rejoiced in every support, while Egyptian backs were set ablaze with the whip, and Egyptian hands and feet were worked over with chains and shackles.

All this happened, and with it came a great evil in which authority favored one group of officials over another, corrupting the honest cooperation, founded on advice and sincerity, that ought to exist among the servants of the state; in which authority forced its men and favorites upon the people, granting them every good and leaving others wretchedness, humiliation, and abasement. All of it ended in the ugliest way evil can end, in failure and collapse: Sidqi Pasha was granted no means to a happy, comfortable life, nor was he guaranteed to stay in power and keep hold of authority, for privilege is not preserved by placing large sums at a man's disposal…

…which would let him hand the goods over to the English. Instead, Sidqi Pasha squandered his health, lost his position, and met the reckoning that awaits the arrogant, while the nation on which he inflicted such power, and on which he poured such suffering, looks at him now, mocking and bewildered — gloating over him, that he might stand as a lesson to tyrants and a warning to any who would wrong nations and peoples, or grieving for him and pitying him, because he is, after all, an Egyptian who overstepped and oppressed, and then met the reckoning of oppression and overstepping: a heavy, grievous reckoning.

So the Wafd, when it pictured all this evil for the people in its manifesto, pictured nothing but what they themselves feel and find. It is certain that the Wafd made no mistake and strayed not at all from the truth when it told them that the wretched experiment has failed, but that it has tails still dragging behind it and tripping over them — tails that are many and may run long, unless events cut them off sharply and misfortunes sever them outright. For the fall of Sidqi Pasha did not restore people's freedom to them; that freedom remains a prisoner whose imprisonment has only been pressed harder, a captive whose captivity Sidqi Pasha's successors have only tightened; and the tails of injustice and oppression remain dragging across the land of Egypt, preventing people from saying what they feel or doing what they wish. What is the mobilizing of troops in Rosetta? What is the mobilizing of troops in Cairo on Sunday? What is the mobilizing of troops in Cairo yesterday? Nothing

but a tail of the failed experiment's tails, still stirring among the people and striking them with harm from the right, and striking them with harm from the left.

Yes, and the fall of Sidqi Pasha did not restore prosperity and comfort to people, did not open up anyone's livelihood, did not enable them to keep hunger from their sons and daughters, their sisters and mothers; they are today, as they were yesterday, wretched and despairing, destitute and deprived. Yes, and the fall of Sidqi Pasha did not spare their blood or protect their lives; security remained as troubled and broken as before, and fear remained casting its ugly shadow over both town and countryside.

Nor did the Egyptians' word rise above the foreigners' word, nor did Egyptians become free in their own country, honored in their homeland; they are today, as they were yesterday, subject to whatever exploitation and degradation the harsh circumstances impose on them. The experiment failed, as the Wafd said, and what failure is uglier than this: that those who ran it should fall into such disorder that they deny one another, plot against one another, lie in wait for one another, prepare harm for one another, that a deputy of the People's Party should hold power over its own leader, that the Union Party should scheme against its dear companion and ally, that provincial governors should press their war against the man who was, only yesterday, their chief, singling them out for every good the state had to give and protecting some of them even from the authority of the law.

All this is clear proof that the experiment has failed, as the Wafd says, in a wretched failure. But it is clear proof, too, that the tails of this experiment, as the Wafd says, are still trailing, and that the experiment trips over them, and that the life and hopes of Egyptians trip over them along with it.

This is a ministry that rose to power in reprisal, and does nothing but what the fallen ministry used to do: harness Egypt's strength to degrade Egypt's sons. And while it walks the same wretched path the fallen ministry walked, it strains every effort to fight its great predecessor, to plot against him, and to force him to lay down his arms. It is, then, a tail of the experiment's tails: it goes to the right and there humbles and oppresses, promising while doing nothing and capable of nothing; then it goes to the left and there strays from its path and turns savagely on those who created it and paved the way for its existence —

those on whom it had every right to lean, in whom to take pride, from whom to draw its strength and its life.

The experiment has failed, as the Wafd says, but its tails still flap long in the air, spreading evil and corruption through it, and the days will reveal of the Egyptians' affairs what must inevitably show itself. People will learn whether Egyptians still have patience left for the tails of the experiment, after enduring the experiment itself. And people will learn whether the tails of the experiment can survive as the experiment itself survived, or whether the tails' lifespan is shorter than their owners'.