

Of Course!

Taha Hussein

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If the governor of Dakahlia can charge and rage, cut short and stretch on, halt and pronounce, and lecture the men of compulsory education the way Ziyad once lectured the people of Iraq, extending his pardon to whoever repents and returns, and unleashing his wrath on whoever doubts and hesitates ...

And if the district officer of Beni Mazar can summon before him a group of Egyptians born free and noble, sons of free and noble fathers, until, when they had come before him and stood there, he grew arrogant and overbearing, then roared like a lion and bared his claws, calling them dogs and sons of dogs, and warning them of bloodsucking and the demolition of homes ...

And if the minister of traditions can send down calamity on the people of the university, heeding neither law nor right where they are concerned, but changing and altering, transferring and appointing, saying what should not be said, and doing what should not be done ...

And if the interior ministry can loosen the hands of governors and district officers against the people, so that they buffet them violently and treat them harshly, and impose taxes on them not as the law wishes but as they themselves wish ...

If all these men can do all this, and meet with no resistance in it, bear no hardship in it, face no question over it, and fear no reproach for it, then it becomes altogether natural, altogether easy, one of those things not worth pausing over or thinking about, that a later minister should be harsh toward a former one, that a member of the People's Party should overreach against the party's own inner circle, that al-Manzalawi Bey should hold aloof from reconciliation with Allam Pasha, and that al-Manzalawi Bey should pay no heed to twenty-six members of the fold, headed by the fold's own leader, Sidqi Pasha, and that al-Manzalawi Bey should stand toward these people, on whom he relies and from whom he seeks backing, in the posture of one who pays them no heed and gives them no account, but leaves them to strive and press on in striving, to prepare and labor in preparing, lining up the glasses, gathering around the tables, waiting an hour and part of another for the honor of his

presence, until, when he is slow in coming, they telephone him, and he tells them, calm, reassured, smiling, mocking, that he does not wish to attend.

All this is possible, and all this happens, and none of it is troubling, none of it strange; for it suits the nature of things most perfectly. Whoever is mighty finds humiliation easy to inflict, and whoever is lowly finds it easy to suffer humiliation. Some in Egypt have grown mighty and prevailed, and everything has been made permissible to them, and some in Egypt have grown lowly and been humbled, and they must bear everything.

It might seem to you that these pictures set out in this piece show difference and disparity. What connection is there between Niyazi Pasha's stance toward the men of education and al-Manzalawi Bey's stance toward the inner circle of the People's Party? What connection between the minister of traditions' stance toward university men and the district officer of Beni Mazar's stance toward the people of Abu Girg?

But these pictures, for all their apparent difference and the disparity that seems evident at first glance, agree most perfectly, harmonize most fully; for they issued from a single source, sprang from a single spring, and arrived at a single end. As for the source from which they issued, it is that arrogance which drives men of power beyond their proper bounds; as for the end at which they arrived, it is that submission to which people are driven by whatever comes to them from men of power.

For were it not that the governor of Dakahlia, the minister of traditions, the officer of Beni Mazar, the interior minister, and al-Manzalawi Bey — were it not that all these gentlemen understand power and office as a kind of strength that permits everything — they would never have ventured what they ventured; and were it not that the men of compulsory education, the university men, the people of Abu Girg, and the inner circle of the People's Party understand obedience to power and deference to it as acceptance of everything, and submission to everything that comes to them from the men of power, these gentlemen would never have dared to do what they did, nor would their subjects have consented to bear what they bore. But the very idea of power has been corrupted in Egypt for years now; those who govern have misunderstood it, and both governors and governed alike have carried it back to that ancient age in which there was neither law nor constitution, nor any ordered relations among people founded on law and constitution,

and in which rule was mere will rather than order, and obedience mere submission rather than respect for the authority of order.

Egyptians now stand not before events that occur and then pass, or misfortunes that descend and then depart, but before a whole disposition that is changing, an idea taking the place of another idea, a life taking the place of another life. Egyptians had taken broad strides along the path of liberty, of understanding human dignity, of appreciating the relation between ruler and ruled, and of setting law and order in the place of will and caprice, and they have now been driven back — by the grace of God, whom none but He is to be thanked for what is unwelcome — to where they stood long ago. And ministers, governors, district officers, and those beneath them have managed to impose upon them whatever they desire, and to compel from them obedience and submission in matters where they had no right to demand either obedience or submission.

Here are the men of compulsory education, forced to change their dress, then forced to accept this change with contentment, then herded before the governor, then made to offer him thanks, then receiving his speech with visible contentment, plain gratitude, and boundless submission. And here are the university men, whom the minister of traditions treats outside the law, subjecting them to something other than justice, so that they are pleased or displeased, but show only contentment, and either praise him or mutter under their breath, never concealing the praise.

And here are the people of Abu Girg, cursed and reviled, who receive the curses and go their way, and had a journalist not visited them and listened to them, and then grown indignant on their behalf, no one would have learned of their affair at all. They can do nothing else, they possess nothing else; and what, do you suppose, could they do? What, do you suppose, could they accomplish?

And here is the inner circle of the People's Party, builders of the present order by their own account, and its pillars, keepers of the present order by their own account, and its guardians, holders of the parliamentary majority by their own account — a ministry is formed in defiance of them, some of them join it and some withdraw from it, and they set out to secure for themselves some role in shaping the ministry, but circumstance abandons them, and they submit in the ugliest submission, and surrender in the ugliest surrender, and compel their leader to open the fold's door to those cast out of it. Then the dismissed

men return to the fold like conquerors, and the fold receives them rejoicing, heaping praise upon them. And in the midst of this it is announced that one of the two dismissed ministers has slandered the party director, adding to it matters that ministers ought never voice — this same director having been a minister himself, one day. The director grows angry, but alone; the director withdraws, but alone; the director cuts himself off from the party, but alone. Then it occurs to some well-meaning man to bring the incoming minister to look kindly on the former minister, and to reconcile the two disputants; so he sets to work, and it seems to him he has succeeded, and he prepares tea and invites them, and the slandered director hastens to accept the invitation, and the defeated chief hastens to accept the invitation, but the slanderer, having first accepted, now refuses; having drawn near, now withdraws; having condescended, now rises above it all, and declares, in the manner of politics, that he had wished to meet his colleague alone, not before a gathering — meaning, in the common phrase, that he had wished to quarrel in the street and make peace in the alley.

And those gathered disperse, and I do not know whether they drank the tea or whether their appetite for it, once so keen, had turned to distaste. This affair will leave no mark on the People's Party, for al-Manzalawi Bey is a minister in office, and Allam Pasha a minister resigned; for the ruling ministry keeps hold of power, and Sidqi Pasha and his men are bound to submit to power. And they are bound to submit to power because they hold the parliamentary majority, which possesses power and can grant it to ministers or withhold it from them. Al-Manzalawi Bey has not humiliated them; they have humiliated themselves. And what is al-Manzalawi Bey but a man from among them, representing them in the ministry and enjoying, on their behalf, a share of power? They need him because he is a minister, and he needs them because they are deputies and senators. So each side must show patience toward the other, bear with the other, and forgive the other. They need al-Manzalawi Bey because he is their hand in government, and they need Allam Pasha because he is their hand in the party. And if one hand should trespass against the other, no vengeance should be taken against the trespassing hand, for in doing so they would only wrong themselves by their own doing, and weaken themselves by their own doing.

And so it is God's will, it seems, that matters be understood in this manner in these days, and that the relation between rulers and ruled rest on strength and weakness, on capacity and helplessness, rather than on

liberty and dignity, or on order and law.

And Sidqi Pasha, the author of all this, looks upon all this, and God alone knows whether he feels any pain over it, or whether pain finds no way to reach his soul at all; for he has already won the power he wanted, and won the standing and wealth he wanted, and has come to be able to enjoy the pleasures of life to whatever extent he pleases, and to regard public life as a kind of theatrical performance, one to which a man grants only his hours of rest and leisure, never looking upon it with earnest seriousness, but only as a diversion and an amusement.

How much harm Sidqi Pasha has done to himself and to his fellow countrymen! And how light is the reckoning Sidqi Pasha meets for what he has brought upon himself and upon his fellow countrymen!