

Deception

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1 That the Egyptians are weary of this happy era whose blessings and benefits they have enjoyed for the past four years is beyond doubt; and perhaps those most weary of this era, and most eager for it to pass, are the very men who brought it about, after having tasted what they tasted of its fruits, and reaped what they reaped of its benefits. And perhaps Sidqi Pasha himself is now the one who most detests this era, chafes most at it, and is most eager for it to pass, after having founded what he founded, and built what he built, only to look and find himself cast off and discarded, ending in a condition as wretched and as bad as he has never known in all his days.

2 And perhaps the good man himself is no less weary of this era than Sidqi Pasha, no less chafed by the burdens it imposes, and no less eager to be delivered from its weight and to win a happy outcome after the gamble he took the day he assumed power — accomplishing nothing, while loading upon himself troubles and responsibilities he had been free of before he was pushed into what he was pushed into.

3 Nor are people's talk of the good man's unease in his place, and his weariness of his post, and his eagerness to leave it neither in credit nor in debt, in short supply; for the Egyptians' consensus in detesting this era, and in wishing for its end by whatever means, is plain and leaves no room for doubt. And if you must make exceptions to this consensus, you might except a handful of people who enjoy the strength, might, and authority this era secures for them — authority they could never have dreamed of under any other era; and alongside them you might except other individuals who detest this era between themselves and their own hearts, yet come to love it once they take up their pens and give themselves over to writing and editing in certain newspapers, because they are compelled to live, and living carries its burdens and its costs.

4 And perhaps, once you are done with this exception, and wish to trace the source of the Egyptians' weariness with this happy era, you will arrive at a single cause: that the Egyptians are an ungrateful people, pleased by nothing, content with nothing, incapable of thanking a blessing, unwilling to acknowledge a kindness; for they have grown

weary — and how quickly they grew weary! — of this sweet life whose doors Sidqi Pasha opened for them, giving them a taste of its pleasures; and they have grown weary — and how quickly they grew weary! — of the sweetness of this delightful existence, in which blood and lives go cheap, in which sanctities and honor count for little, in which poverty runs rampant even among those one could never have imagined thinking of, in which governance grows so corrupt that its corruption becomes the stuff of idle talk and evening gossip, and in which morals grow so debased that consciences become cheap to their owners, offered up for sale, sold at the basest of prices — sold, perhaps, for a sweet smile, a false promise, and a deceptive hope.

5 The Egyptians grew weary of all this, when it was rather their right to love it, and to ask God for more of it, were it not that they are by nature made for ingratitude and the denial of kindness, and for this vanity which deludes them into thinking that, like other peoples, they may aspire to justice, aim for good, hold fast to fairness, and rise so high as to have their affairs governed as the affairs of other nations are governed, under the shelter of freedom, order, and law, and lift themselves to the point of founding their politics on equity between rich and poor, between strong and weak, between rulers and ruled. But what can be done, when God has created the Egyptians vain enough to imagine that, like other peoples, they may detest evil and recoil from it, and love good and desire it?

6 Made as they are, they have grown weary of this era with a weariness upon which they have agreed as upon nothing else; and yet they have borne this era with a patience in which they have succeeded as in nothing else; and they have withstood the trial of this era with a steadfastness they may well boast of, and claim that very few nations in this modern age could rival them in it.

7 Made as they are, they denounced, and bore, and stood firm, and resisted, and compelled their oppressors into failure and bankruptcy, forcing them to admit that they must change their policy and turn away from the course they had pursued.

8 All this is a truth beyond doubt, admitting no dispute; some used to deny it, and now everyone believes it. The English used to deny it, and have now become quicker to proclaim it than the Egyptians, and more eager to change it than the Egyptians. But this is one thing, and what the English think, or what the English show that they think, is another thing

entirely; for the Egyptians do not want to escape one evil only to fall into another, nor to be cleared of one disgrace only to become entangled in a disgrace more hideous still.

9 The Egyptians do not want to leave this era, in which the English wrong them while feigning neutrality, for another era in which the English wrong them openly, humiliate them by force, and tell themselves and tell others that they do not wrong the Egyptians except with their consent and obedience, with their acknowledgment and acceptance. And the Egyptians know full well that what the English offer them in the Times article, and in other than the Times article, is humiliation in its ugliest form, and injustice in its vilest shapes; for nothing is uglier, more shameful, or further from dignity than a life in which its people relinquish their right to be men who govern themselves, erring and succeeding as they will, in order to become a flock tended by foreign masters, who provide it water and pasture, and guarantee it a semblance of justice and equality.

10 This is what the English want, and this is what they offer the Egyptians, if what the Times published on Friday indeed pictures the view of a faction among them other than the man who wrote the article. For the English, as we know them, are too clever, too skilled, too versed in life and in living, and too perceptive about Egypt and the Egyptians, to believe among themselves that the Egyptians would be pleased with this interference which they promote and desire; and the English, as we know them, are too clever and too skilled to deceive themselves to such a degree. But the English are a strong people, and when strength gathers to them they heed no one and nothing, and they are not ashamed to burden themselves with deceiving themselves and deceiving others, and to make of that a means to achieving what they want. And they are now burdening themselves with deceiving themselves and deceiving others, picturing to themselves and to others — laughing between themselves and their consciences — that they will stand before Egypt in the place of a fair rescuer who uncovers harm and lifts evil, and realizes justice, fairness, and equality. It is therefore our duty not to fall short in showing the English, and the people, and ourselves, that we understand their deception fully, and that no small part of it escapes us; and that we know full well that it is they who established this era we complain of and chafe under — established it by the hand of Sidqi Pasha, the partisans of Sidqi Pasha, and the likes of Sidqi Pasha — and established it as a lesson to us, because we did not yield in the negotiations to what they wanted, and did

not accept in the negotiations what they offered. They established it, labored to establish it, and filled it with every pain and every sin we have tasted in it, reckoning that the lesson would be harsh, and that for that very reason it would be useful and deterring, and that once we were scorched by the fire of injustice we would incline toward peace, grow modest in our demands, and content ourselves with whatever ease of the humiliated they might graciously grant us — the humiliated, who have no share of dignity or pride, and no hope of freedom and independence.

11 And the English have seen — in their resentment — that their discipline disciplined no one, that their lessons profited no one, that their harshness deterred no one, and that the fire of injustice, however much it hurt us, neither melted our spirits nor weakened them, but only added strength to strength, patience to patience, and steadfastness to steadfastness. They saw this, and saw that they were powerless to deceive us; and so they were driven to what the despairing strong are always driven to: deceiving themselves. They are now deceiving themselves, now telling themselves what no one else tells them, demanding of themselves what no one else demands of them, and picturing to themselves that we are refugees fleeing to them, taking shelter with them, waiting for their rescue and their help. No — we are neither refugees fleeing to them nor seeking shelter with them, nor ought we be, and they ought expect of us nothing but what a strong adversary expects of a strong adversary: theirs is the might and the violence, theirs the numbers and the equipment, theirs the troops and the arms, theirs the fleets that fill the sea and the aircraft that fill the sky; but ours is the patience, the steadfastness, and the clinging to the right. And so long as the English are powerless to annihilate us, and to erase us utterly from the earth, they will always find in us a strong and stubborn adversary — one whom injustice may strike, whom torment may befall, whom disasters and misfortunes may beset, yet none of this will do anything but increase his pride, his defiance, his clinging to the right, and his obstinacy in the dispute.

12 The English are an experienced people; they have tried wrestling with nations, they have tried seizing peoples through tyranny and injustice, and they have learned from this experience that living peoples are not overthrown, nor turned by injustice from what they want of freedom and independence.

13 So let the English deceive themselves as much as they please, and let them delude themselves as much as they like — it will avail them

nothing, and it will not spare them the sight of Egypt standing before them, demanding her right, disputing it with them, and meeting their injustice with the one thing that melts injustice and the unjust: insistence upon the right, and refusal of wrong. The English are free to shorten the road or to lengthen it: if they want ease and well-being for themselves, let them recognize the Egyptian people, speak to them, come to terms with them, and yield to them their right; and if they want to lengthen the road, let them continue as they have continued ever since they set up the era of Sidqi Pasha, exchanging one era for another, one form for another, showing themselves to people in different guises, speaking to them in different tones, emerging from one failure only to enter another — ending, after all this effort and toil, after committing sin upon sin and wrong upon wrong, at the very point they could have reached today, and could have reached yesterday as well: an honorable accord with a people who will be content with nothing less than to be treated honorably.