Farewell (III)

Kawkab al-Sharq (Hadith al-Massa), 7 November 1933.

A farewell that fills souls with heartache, and hearts with anguish — this is what the sons of Cairo will seek out today, as they receive the remains of this great man.

A farewell that the people of Cairo will not keep to themselves, but in which all Egyptians will share — those who witnessed the ceremony and those who did not, those who made their way to the grave and those who did not; for Adly is not the son of Cairo alone, but the son of all Egypt, and the calamity in Adly's loss is not confined to one group of people rather than another, but is general, all-encompassing, deep and far-reaching in its effect upon every heart.

Adly was faithful and sincere to all Egyptians, so it is no wonder that all Egyptians should be faithful and sincere to Adly in turn. He gave them true love, counseled them with all the counsel within his power, and conducted himself among them as a man who never equates anything with the truth, never swerves from duty by so much as a fingerbreadth, and never prefers, to the nation's right, any authority however great, any standing however exalted, any favor however soft. It is his due upon them — indeed, their own due upon themselves — that they receive him, and escort him, and bid him farewell, their hearts overflowing with love for him and grief for him, with faithfulness to his undying memory and reverence for his great glory.

How fertile an hour is this hour that the noble man spends escorting the noble man, an hour brimming with these noble, pure feelings that lift man above this fleeting, passing life to another life, fixed and abiding, all of it honor and nobility, all of it faithfulness and love, all of it an ascent toward the highest ideal and a rising above the pettiness of things.

A life in which the soul is purified of its impurities, and absolved of its cares, and comes, sincere and truthful, to believe in this truth that is set before people — a truth they outwardly profess yet inwardly turn away from — namely, that death is certain, and that life is vanity unless it is wholly devoted to good, a path to righteousness, a way to benevolence, and a prelude to this undying remembrance upon which people's tongues are set loose, picturing contented hearts and tranquil souls, and drawing for the living a worthy model and a fine example.

Yes — a fertile hour indeed is this hour that the noble man spends escorting the noble man, containing within it both admonition and lesson, and this pure, untainted reflection that no sin of life clings to, and that no enmity of life corrupts, but that rises above sin and enmity, reminding all people that they are equal before this death from which there is no evasion and no escape, and that, since they all arrive in the end at one single destination, in which they do not differ, however much their circumstances, their fortunes, and their stations may differ, how fitting it would be for them to strive earnestly to realize equality among themselves, in this brief and narrow span of time they spend from the beginning of life until they come at last to death.

A fertile and eloquent hour indeed is this hour that the noble man spends escorting the noble man; for it reminds him — indeed fills his heart with — this truth from which he turns away whenever he does not think of death: namely, that this inequality among people in rights, arising from their inequality in wealth or in rank, is false, devoid of good, and a vain contrivance without foundation; for people differ only in their deeds, and in what they offer of good works to themselves, to their peoples, and to humanity.

Great are those who die having been content with people, and with whom people were content; small are those who die having spurned people, and been spurned by them. Great are those who die, and lo, eyes weep for them, and hearts grieve for them, and souls, at their loss, stand stricken, wrestling with despair and nearly surrendering to it; small are those who die unremembered for any good, for whom no eye sheds a tear, for whom no heart feels sorrow, and for whose loss no soul senses even the faintest grief, let alone despair or desolation.

Great are those who die, and people say: would that they had not died. Small are those who die, and people say: would that they had never lived.

Great, like Adly, are those whom God chooses for His own proximity, so that people insist on preserving their likenesses, vivid in their hearts, their statues standing in the public squares, and their memory a fragrant story told to the generations; small are those who die, and people wish their memory were utterly erased, their traces wholly effaced, and nothing of them left but what deters people from evil and turns them away from wrongdoing and the commission of sins.

A fertile hour indeed is this one that Egyptians will spend today, noble as they are, escorting Adly today, he being a noble man; for they will recall, in this hour, that however much evil may be loosed upon their country, there remains in it much good. Adly was in it, and there are in it men who resemble Adly, who, like Adly, possess a pure record, who, like Adly, possess clean consciences, in whom, like Adly, there is a preference for the right, an aversion to falsehood, a love of dignity, a rising above abasement, a reverence for the homeland, and a revulsion toward whatever harms it.

Fertile is this hour that Egyptians will spend today bidding farewell to their great loss; for it will recall to them this ancient verse:

If houses stand peopled with those I do not love,
then graves stand peopled with those whom I love.

It will recall to them these good men who preceded Adly Pasha to the abode of eternity; it will fill their hearts with love for him and for them, and grief for him and for them, and will drive them to follow his example and theirs, and will teach them how to scorn those who sell love of country, its dignity, its counsel, and the rising of their own souls above baseness, for a small price — this wealth that runs out, this standing that passes away, this authority with which the days play as children play with a ball.

Go forward, O great man, to this door that is thrown open wide for you — the door of God's mercy, which has encompassed all things; go forward, dignified after death, as you were dignified before death; go forward, calm and at peace, your lips smiling, your heart rejoicing, your conscience at rest, until, when you draw near to this door, and God's mercy receives you, and the angels of eternity surround you, and you reach that lofty station where your faithful, pure friends await you — recite to them Egypt's greeting, strong, true, and sincere, just as she feels it now, as it passes into your pure soul from the hearts of these thousands who escort your noble remains to their final resting place.

Go forward, O great man; you were happy in your life in your nation's love for you, and you are happy after your death in your nation's grief for you. And what more could a man wish, once God has written for him happiness in both abodes, and once he has gathered to himself, living, the hearts of his people, and God has turned toward him, dead, the compassion of his people's hearts?! Go forward, O great man, and mourn

with us — we Egyptians — for the many people who go on living, for whom death is truly better than this heavy burden they bear, the burden of life itself.