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EGYPT'S REPLY TO COLONEL ROOSEVELT.

BY SHEIKH ALI YOUSSEF.

WE Egyptians anticipated the arrival of the ex-President of the United States with great pleasure and impatience, for all Egyptians believed him to be the best representative of the great American nation, and they still consider that the Americans are the greatest nation in civilization of the present time, and that they are the best friends of the liberty of nations, inasmuch as in that country constitutional principles have received their widest development. Moreover, Egyptians have a greater liking for Americans than for Europeans, because they consider they have not been harmed by the Americans, while at the same time they are getting the same benefit from the American civilization that they gain from Europe. Therefore, the merchandise and goods of the United States of America are in the first rank with the Egyptians, who are anxious to obtain the fruits of the present civilization. Moreover, Egyptians derived special benefit from Americans who were brought by the late Khedive Ismail Pasha to fill posts in the Irrigation Department (Ministry of Public Works) and in the Egyptian army. These Americans are, in fact, the only and real teachers who taught the Egyptians honestly and did not interfere in politics. They may rightly boast that all Egyptian lieutenant generals in the Egyptian army are the pupils of General Stone and other American officers who were with him during the reign of the late Khedive Ismail Pasha.

For all these reasons as soon as Colonel Roosevelt came near the capital of the Sudan on his way from the south all the Egyptian papers of different parties began to praise him and publish long articles on his glorious history and career, and many notables of Cairo prepared themselves to meet him with the greatest cordiality and honor. Many members of the Constitutional Re-

form League of Egypt, of which I have the honor to be president, suggested that we should entertain him at a great political banquet, and a representative of our league actually called on Mr. Iddings, Consul-General of the United States of America, and asked if that honor could be conferred on our Party, begging the Consul to transmit our invitation to Colonel Roosevelt.

Mr. Iddings answered as follows:

“ Colonel Roosevelt cannot accept a political invitation because Americans do not allow themselves to interfere in the political affairs of other people; moreover, an Egyptian who was a naturalized American lost his citizenship when he allowed his name to be used for the protection of a certain Egyptian paper from the press law. If that was the case of the public, it is more so in the case of a man like Colonel Roosevelt, who was the President of the United States and may be expected to fill the post in the future.”

Notwithstanding his answer, we decided to do our best to receive with great honor the illustrious guest of Egypt. This feeling was shared by all the Egyptian parties and by every person who knew his great name. But as soon as Colonel Roosevelt arrived at Khartoum and made his speech at the Egyptian Officers' Club and at the American School, we were suddenly and exceedingly astonished. His advice to the Egyptian officers was that they should have nothing to do with politics. The advice in itself was very good, for when a soldier is occupied with politics he will be a weak soldier and a very poor politician. Such has been my advice for a long time to the Turkish officers. But Colonel Roosevelt volunteered this advice at a particular moment which changed its effect from a good result to that of insulting the officers and hurting their feelings, and made those who are aware of the facts and state of affairs, amongst whom I am, feel astonished at the behavior of our celebrated guest in the Sudan. We were afraid that he would say more on his arrival at Cairo. Therefore, I at once wrote my open letter to him in “ *Al-Moayad* ” in which I criticised his speeches at Khartoum and begged of him that he should respect the dignity of the Egyptian nation when in their country.

Wishing to explain the particular cause which changed this advice into criticism and insult, I will state the following:

Before the arrival of the ex-President at Khartoum, it was

well known that the late Boutros Pasha Ghali, the Egyptian Prime Minister, was murdered. He was a Copt, the Copts being in the minority in the Egyptian nation. When the report of his assassination was read at the Egyptian Officers' Club at Khartoum some young men among them were reported to have cheered and welcomed the news. If that were the case, I need scarcely say that they were foolish and devoid of manners. This information was sent by wire and privately to the authorities and was only known to very few, and not one Egyptian paper referred to it whilst it was only a private matter, and it was never known to the public. Even the British officers, who are the superiors there, did not think it was proper to mention the affair to the Egyptian officers. Being aware of what was said about the Egyptian officers before the address of Colonel Roosevelt, I was sure that the ex-President had a weakness, which is not unusual in great men, that point being vanity and the belief that they are altogether above criticism. I knew that, notwithstanding what was well known of his strong will and independence, he might be sometimes one of those politicians who are induced by flattery to do what they never intended to do.

Four months ago Colonel Roosevelt was hunting big game in Africa, and very little reached him about what was going on in the outside world except what interested him of his home affairs and the affairs of his party. Such meagre news was sent to him with the greatest difficulty, but with great care. Consequently, he was too busy to know the affairs of other nations, and it did not matter to him to get the real facts about the affairs of Egypt and the Egyptians. Khartoum was the first civilized city reached by Colonel Roosevelt after his shooting tour, and on the next day after his arrival he gave the Egyptian officers the above mentioned advice in their club. How did he know that these officers were politically occupied, seeing that when they went to the Sudan they were not connected with any political affair and no native or foreign paper ever accused them of being concerned in politics? Was not the ex-President induced to say what he said by persons who are interested that the officers should hear that advice? Therefore, I felt that the ex-President, on coming to Cairo, might be induced by what he saw from his great reception to again submit the Egyptian nation to his criticism and give us a very severe lesson like that which he actually did give afterwards in

the Egyptian University. I therefore wrote that open letter to him, which was the first thing he read as soon as he arrived at Cairo. I have known that he was greatly interested in what I wrote and wished to see me personally, but thought afterwards to see me with some other newspaper men. I remember that when we called he was all smiles and goodness, though he used to strike one hand on the other whenever he wished to influence us with his words. He said:

"I have been informed that an unfounded rumor has been spread about what I said in the Sudan to the effect that I wounded the feelings of the Mohammedans. I wish to say that this rumor is a lie."

He also said what proved to me that he greatly felt my criticism, namely: "I do not want newspaper men to dictate to me. I am going to speak to-morrow in the Egyptian University. Wait till you hear what I shall say and then say what you wish to say."

Since then it was stated that after we left him he edited his speech and omitted many paragraphs, but, unfortunately, there remained in the speech a great many insults to the Egyptian nation, amongst which was his advice to the nation that it had to wait many generations before it could deserve self-government. Colonel Roosevelt took the trouble to learn an Arabic proverb, which is, "God is with those who are patient if they know how to be patient," and pronounced that proverb in Arabic, thinking he might be able (borrowing another Arabic proverb) to throw melted lead into the heads of the Egyptians, where it would cool and get hard. But as soon as he pronounced those words in Arabic every one present smiled, including myself. The ex-President looked at me when I was smiling and smiled in return and nodded to me. Most of those, however, who laughed did so because they saw that the speaker took too much trouble to influence his audience. But every Egyptian, on being told that he had to wait many generations before deserving self-government, had to laugh through his tears and was also astonished.

Egypt is occupied by a foreign Power which Colonel Roosevelt knows is managing our affairs much in the same capacity as a powerful guardian managing the affairs of a wealthy person who is under age. Neither is the guardian willing to release the said person and his property, nor is that person able to become *sui juris*

as long as the guardian prevents him from gaining that end for his own personal interests. Ought not Colonel Roosevelt, while advising the Egyptians to wait generations for God's help, to have taken the opportunity of lecturing his cousins (the occupying Power) in a manner applicable to the strong and ambitious guardian? If it is said that the speaker refrained from giving that advice not wishing to put the Occupation in a critical position before the natives, why did he allow himself to make the position of the natives critical in the eyes of the Occupation?

Does an American who feels as powerful as Colonel Roosevelt find it proper and gallant to attack a nation whose guest he is with that insult, no matter what his personal inclination may be? Moreover, Colonel Roosevelt, in his speech at the Egyptian University, sorely wounded the feelings of Mohammedans and thereby did what he had denied having done in the Sudan. He referred to the assassination of Boutros Pasha Ghali while referring to the minority and majority. He said that "there are Mohammedans in the Philippines, but we do not allow the majority to attack the minority." Thus he inferred plainly that the assassination was an attack of the majority on the minority in Egypt, though the investigation proved beyond doubt that the murderer committed the crime alone and had no accomplices whatever—neither in will nor in deed. It was just as if Colonel Roosevelt was repeating the imputations of certain newspapers which try to provoke disagreement between Mohammedans and Christians by attributing religious fanaticism to the Mohammedans. If we add to the above that Colonel Roosevelt refused to accept the invitation of many notable Mohammedans amongst whom were some members of the General Assembly, saying that his time was too short, whilst accepting the invitation of some notables of the Copts of Cairo the day after his arrival, we may somehow excuse the Mohammedans for attributing to him what he himself has attributed to others.

Mr. Roosevelt made his speech in the Egyptian University at 11 A.M. on March 28th. Many of those present were not able to understand what he said at the time, and therefore the effect of the speech was not apparent, but when the Egyptian papers published the literal translation the same afternoon the people were greatly disappointed. Some speakers held meetings the same evening as well as the next day in many places, protesting

against the speech, and thousands of telegrams were received by the papers from different parts of the country censuring the strong language used by him. I am stating a fact in saying that the Egyptians were not wounded and pained by the attacks of Lord Cromer, in the speech he delivered two days before his last departure from Egypt on May 6th, 1907, as much as they were wounded by the speech delivered by Colonel Roosevelt at the Egyptian University. Lord Cromer was at that time leaving Egypt full of anger against the Egyptians, inasmuch as both parties had many differences which are usually found between a despot and a nation governed by sheer force; whereas, on the other hand, Colonel Roosevelt came to Egypt as an honored guest having the good wishes and respect of all the Egyptians. There was no political reason to induce him to take that unwarranted stand where he judged very cruelly a nation which history acknowledges to have been illustrious throughout the ages and in which the light of civilization has always burned brightly, notwithstanding constant suzerainty of different invaders in past centuries. Moreover, Mr. Roosevelt did not know about the affairs of Egypt more than what he had read in Lord Cromer's "Modern Egypt," and what he read in the British papers. If he knew anything more than what he had read, it could not exceed what a clever tourist knows in the same time as that spent by your ex-President in Egypt, where he was also surrounded by that officialdom which prevented him from knowing many things in a very short time. When I say that the Egyptians were pained by Mr. Roosevelt's speech and that they protested, it must not be understood that the ex-President was at any time in personal danger or that he was insulted, as was published by the "Daily Mail" of London, whose correspondent sent an interview which he said was given to him by our Prime Minister, an assertion which proved to be false.

The correspondent did not state the facts. No! and a thousand times no! That statement was invented by mean persons who wished to ruin the reputation of Egypt, and the same statement was circulated by the help of some British officials who dislike Sir Eldon Gorst.

Unfortunately, the present representative of His Majesty in Egypt is still trying to master the men left by Lord Cromer, who regret bitterly that the days of his Lordship are gone and who

are ill-disposed towards the present British agent because he has prevented them from governing the Egyptian departments and the native officials as they were heretofore accustomed. In the time of Lord Cromer they were all-powerful, to such an extent that it was impossible to tolerate their bureaucratic and overbearing attitude. Therefore, they always try to throw mud at the reputation of the present British agent, who does not countenance such behavior. When these angry officials found that the Egyptians were annoyed at what the ex-President said in the Sudan, they found a chance for circulating a rumor which cuts both ways. On the one side it would make the Egyptians appear as savages, and on the other side it would show Sir Eldon Gorst as being politically weak to the extent that if a great man visits Egypt as a distinguished guest he is not safe and that his life is threatened by Egyptian anarchy.

I don't deny that hundreds of enthusiastic young men stood at the door of the Shepherd's Hotel shouting, "Down with Roosevelt!" "Down with the Occupation and long live the Constitution!" But at that time the ex-President was being entertained at the German agency. Their shouting must be taken as a simple manifestation of the Young Egyptians to show their disapproval of the policy of the ex-President and nothing else. It is true that when the ex-President returned to his hotel and was informed of the state of things he did not approve of it; yet I do not think that he felt afraid for his safety, however much our enemies may have induced him to believe that his life was in danger. The fact is that sensible Egyptians did not approve of that demonstration and considered the same as childish. The result was that the language used by Colonel Roosevelt in his speeches both in the Sudan and in Cairo, as well as in his conversations, which pained Mohammedans—all these acts of his induced the Copts to feel especially inclined towards him, and hundreds of young Copts went to the Cairo station on the day of his departure and shouted, "Long live Roosevelt!" It is likely that they wished to answer those who shouted against the ex-President at his hotel.

On coming to this point in writing this article, the English translator for "*Al-Moayad*" brought me the translation of the following, which appeared in the New York "Evening Journal" of March 31st, 1910:

“At Tintah Colonel Roosevelt was reminded that it was the spot where, in 1882, the Moslems pulled the Christians out of the trains and massacred them. ‘Yes,’ said Colonel Roosevelt, ‘and that is just what would happen again if they had self-rule in Egypt.’”

You see by the above that Colonel Roosevelt was always accompanied by persons full of malicious intentions and self-interest who made him distrust Mohammedans, in consequence of which he unintentionally did Mohammedans injustice in all that he said and, at the same time, was not stating facts.

Colonel Roosevelt spoke on the same subject when the Egyptian newspaper men called on him, and I mentioned to him at the time that Islam was the religion of perfect tolerance, giving the same equal rights to the people of all countries, and that it was through this fact that Mohammedans and Christians lived thirteen centuries in Egypt as neighbors and fellow workers, as one family, and that they enter each other's houses, and that the only difference between them is the way they say their prayers in Mosque or Church. Was the safety of the Copts during all that time due to British occupation or the rule of Christians? We would have doubted the statement of the New York “Evening Journal” had not Mr. Roosevelt given us the severe lecture and had he abstained from insinuating in his University speech that Egypt is not fit for self-government at the present time, but will need many generations. Consequently, the New York “Journal's” statement is worthy of credence, and the words of the ex-President, “That is just what would happen again if they had self-rule in Egypt,” are among the results of his being deceived by bad company, such as is always the curse of great men.

Thus Colonel Roosevelt left Egypt, and when he departed from Alexandria and boarded the steamer “Prince Heinrich” on March 30th, 1910, he saw the following mournful spectacle: On one side stood some young Mohammedans and on the other side some young Copts. (The Mohammedans being in Egypt ninety-two per cent. of the Egyptians and the Copts are six per cent., the remainder being other denominations and foreigners.) The Mohammedans were shouting, “Down with Roosevelt!” and the Copts, “Long live Roosevelt!” This was the last thing seen by him in Egypt and the last result of his visit. He came to Egypt with its people preparing to receive him in honor and left the

country with the natives divided into two parties in regard to him, and the result would have been unhappy had not the wise men of both sections worked hard to destroy the bad effect which remained after this visit.

Had Mr. Roosevelt been an ordinary man, or had his importance been due only to his intelligence, we would have said that he may be right or may be wrong and nothing more. But he is the ex-President of the United States of America and may be again its President, and Americans must share a great part of the responsibility which results from what he says of us if that Republic shall long ignore his mistake. It is neither wise nor in accord with the gallantry of Americans that they should agree that Egypt should be insulted in their name whilst Egypt admires them and loves their civilization and sings their praises.

It is not to the interest of Americans that this insult should remain the only impression left in Egypt by the visit of one of their leading men. When Egypt is insulted every Mohammedan on the face of this world feels the insult, for Egypt is the greatest keeper of Mohammedan sciences. In it is situated the sacred Mosque Al-Azhar, which is the oldest university in the world. It was founded about one thousand years ago, and the number of its students is twelve thousand. Colonel Roosevelt visited Al-Azhar, and, though he is a Christian, the Ulemas received him with honors, and the Vice-President of this University presented the ex-President with a copy of the sacred Koran. It was the first time in history that a copy of Al Koran was given to a non-Mohammedan. That copy was one of the valuable treasures of Al-Azhar.

It is in the interest of both Egypt and America that we, on our part, and the Americans likewise, should endeavor to regard the act of Colonel Roosevelt as a mistake committed personally and that none other should share the responsibility; and we believe that Americans are still, in their country, the friends of freedom and are the friends of nations that are governed against their will. This is the belief of the Egyptians.

SHEIKH ALI YOUSSEF.