

Attention Mr. Mc Coy
From C. R. Watson
December 31, 1927.

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW

Q. What important developments have taken place in Egypt recently in the sphere of education?

A. You doubtless know that the British policy in Egypt has been severely criticized on the ground that it left the Egyptian uneducated across more than a generation. Invidious comparisons have been made between the achievements of America in the Philippines along educational lines and the policy of Great Britain during the forty years that she was absolutely in control in Egypt. At the end of this period barely six per cent of the entire population were able to read and write. Of course, the defense of Great Britain is that she had to occupy herself ~~to~~ making Egypt solvent to the exclusion of all other interests. This, however, is again objected to by the Egyptians on the ground that it places the material interest of the foreigner above the development of the people. Whatever position we may take with reference to this controversy, the fact is that Egypt now has a comparatively free hand in the sphere of education and that department is entirely under her own control. It is significant as a result of such a free hand, that Egypt has doubled her educational budget within the last five years, has launched a State University, and has multiplied the schools for girls. Even this has not met the demand. On every hand there is an eagerness for education, as is shown in the enrolment in our own institution which has more than doubled this year.

It is almost pathetic to see the trust which the Orient is placing in education to qualify them for the new day of opportunity which is before them and especially for the challenge of independence such as is coming to Egypt today. We agree that education, if it be of the right sort, is a splendid preparation for self-government but there is a very real need that this promising educational movement be properly guided and directed. It is for this reason that the American University at Cairo has opened a Department of Education so as to place within reach of the Egyptian teacher the stimulating ideas and the suggestive methods that have originated in the West and which underlie so much of American success and progress.

Q. Are the Egyptians interested in scientific studies and in science generally?

A. Yes. You have touched on one of the most powerful influences affecting the life and thought of Egypt today. I suppose it was the War that awakened Mohammedan countries to the tremendous significance of science. "Give us science", they say, "and we will be able to match the West." They see that scientific knowledge lies back of medicine, transportation, mechanical invention, the great manufacturing activities, and indeed of everything that makes for material comfort and wealth. It is this lure of science, doubtless, that brings to the doors of the American University at Cairo students from the most remote Mohammedan countries such as Arabia, Persia and Java, and also draws students from sections of Mohammedan society in Egypt which have hitherto been entirely without opportunity for scientific knowledge.

Q. What are health conditions in Egypt today?

A. Of course, health conditions leave very much to be desired. Infant mortality is appalling and the prevalence of almost everywhere of eye trouble, hookworm and bilharzia places a disability upon the entire nation from the point of view of health that may well account for many of the shortcomings of Egypt. However, there is a very hopeful awakening of public opinion on this subject. We feel that it is at this point that America has a real contribution to make to Egypt. We have gone so far in the development of preventive medicine and health campaigns and public education, that we occupy among the nations a position of leadership in this department. The Division of Extension of the American University is carrying over to Egypt many of the most effective methods for the education of the public in respect to health and is using the moving picture, the poster and the leaflet, as well as the demonstration centers in order to assist in the development of a public opinion in Egypt which will deliver the country from these evils. I wish you would observe a general principle here that controls all our work. We do not regard it as the business of America to carry the education or the medical work of a great country such as Egypt, but we do believe that America may cooperate in giving direction and in stimulating such worthy movements so that the country itself will rise up and set in motion those forces that will promote and safeguard health.

Q. Who is taking the place of Zaghloul Pasha as the great Nationalist leader?

A. I noticed recently that in selecting a successor to Judge Gary the steel corporation selected three men among whom it distributed the duties formerly carried by one man. This sort of thing happens almost invariably when any outstanding man passes away, not only because no one is found with exactly his gifts, but because the responsibilities carried have really reached a point where they no longer could be carried by any one man but require to be distributed. It is just so with the leadership of the Nationalist Movement. Zaghloul Pasha combined three principal offices: President of the Wafd, President of the Zaghloulist Parliamentary party, and President of the Chamber of Deputies. Nahas Pasha has been elected the head of the Wafd Party. (But the other offices are held by).

Q. Is England leaving Egypt?

A. It would be putting it too strongly to say that England is leaving Egypt. But certainly England is turning over more and more of Egyptian government to Egyptian leadership and the recent visit of King Fuad to England has opened the way for much more to be effected in the near future. We can never get away from the fact that Great Britain has a vital interest in Egypt, simply because Egypt controls the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal is the highway from Great Britain to India. Nevertheless, it is proposed that adequate assurances will be given to Great Britain with reference to the Suez Canal without necessarily maintaining absolute occupation of Egypt. Many of the government departments have been turned over in their entirety to Egyptian hands.

Many have been surprised at the ability of the Egyptian to handle his own affairs.

To be sure there are a number of instances of deplorable maladministration and official dishonesty, but these must be regarded as exceptions rather than the rule. One cannot get away from the argument which the Egyptian puts forth that he would rather have his country badly managed by Egyptians than managed more efficiently by foreigners. It is just what each one would say with reference to his own family affairs.

However, it is just because we firmly believe and can easily recognize that character training is just as important for national leadership as intellectual training, that we emphasize moral and religious ideals in our own institution. Fair play on the football field, we believe, will yield its fruitage in honesty in public office. Courtesy between students of different races and religions will yield to a spirit of tolerance and even-handed justice later in life. Without such moral training, your dentist will bore holes unnecessarily instead of filling those that exist; your lawyer will continue his case instead of seeking a settlement; your national leader will make his public office an opportunity for graft instead of for the service of his nation.

Q. Has Bolshevism appeared among the Egyptians?

A. In the sense of an economic upheaval of the fellah against the pasha, or in the sense of a political upheaval such as we are witnessing in China, I can say that there is not a trace of Bolshevism in Egypt. In the sense, however, that there is a general lowering of regard for the law and of respect for existing institutions, one may say that there are signs of this movement in Egypt but they are not signs of danger, but rather of a progressive reaching after new and better conditions.

Q. How do the Egyptians regard America?

A. With scarcely an exception it can be said that America is in favor throughout the Orient, and particularly in Egypt. There is a feeling that the future lies with America because of its enormous resources and its progressive spirit. Many Egyptians are coming to America to study. American institutions in Egypt are looked on with favor, whether educational, missionary or commercial. I cannot help ascribing the remarkable growth of our own institution during the last seven years to the prestige of America and the good will of the Egyptians toward America.