

Comments on Those who attended Conference at the Ministry of Education
To discuss Education in the Private Schools in Egypt
(by Dr. Robert S. McClenahan)

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Muhammad Hussain Haikal Pasha, Minister of Education - professionally a journalist
Former editor of the SIYASSA, a rather extreme Nationalist paper who used the conditions of five or six years ago when there was the anti-missionary movement on, to print a number of very unreliable purely sensational papers sent in by extremists. At that time he had rather a poor name among Mohammedans as not being a good Mohammedan but he was working for restoration to favor of the public and took that position editorially that the religion of the State was in danger simply in order to undermine some of the politicians who were then in. It was he who after having delivered two lectures in Ewart Hall on "The Great Responsibility of the Press in creating Public Opinion", when I approached him face to face with this thing of creating public opinion which was based upon things which were not true, he merely shrugged his shoulders and said, "Oh, do not be worried about that; that is just journalism."

Shortly after that he further made an effort to restore himself to public opinion by going on a pilgrimage to Mecca and issuing a volume on Mohammed which did partially restore him and took him out of the infidel class. He has not been either of the Wafdist Party or of the severest opponents of the Wafdist Party but of the Independent Constitutional Party, and politically, he stands pretty well. (Keep this in entire confidence - he is a man of not good principles, drunk half the time if not all the time, but with a remarkably clear fine mind.)

Shortly after he became Minister of Education I called to make a formal call on him and he insisted on my staying for half to three-quarters of an hour and discussed some of his serious problems. Said he wanted my opinion on them; I found he had done the same with others. Said he wanted to do the constructive thing and wanted advice. His career as a Minister has not been a failure by any means. As I said before, the man has a fine mind, but in this case he, just like everybody else, is playing for the political values. I have no reason to think that he is an earnest conscientious Mohammedan because his life has not been in harmony with Mohammedan thought.

Abdul Raziq el Sanhury Bey has been for a number of years Dean of the School of Law of the Egyptian State University. Before that and while he was still professor, I had him in for two lectures on the legal system of Egypt in Oriental Hall, one of a series of lectures. He did it remarkably well in English, although he is much more familiar with French than with English. Then he was Dean of the School of Law for a few years and I regarded him as one of the most dependable men we could deal with in the Government circles. In the summer of 1939, just before I came home, Badeau and I went to him to state the situation relative to the American University at Cairo. In our collaboration whether on financial subsidy or the content of the teaching it was our feeling that he would have a very progressive enlightened view and attitude. We were a little bit disappointed, for apparently he too was influenced by the political fears and exposures which might come with anything that might be interpreted as not loyal to the State religion. So Badeau and I argued the thing out but in a very pleasant atmosphere and I was hoping that he would not take any reactionary attitude. These statements of last summer and fall have certainly been a disappointment and have indicated that he is determined to stand by Islamic affairs rather than any Christian European intrusion.

Shafiq Ghurbal Bey has lectured a number of times in Ewart Hall under the Division of Extension and written a book or two and magazine articles as Professor of History and perhaps of Economics. He is a man of very fine character, at least he has shown himself to be in all our contacts with him. We have never had any indication that he was fanatical or unduly biased but that he was a man who had so much modern enlightenment that he would not go to any extreme, although he might being Mohammedan sympathize with the religion of the State and all that that involves.

Hassan Fayiq Bey, Inspector and more recently, I believe, Secretary General of the Ministry of Education - a perfectly delightful youngish man, cultured, refined, absolutely loyal to A.U.C. for the last ten or twelve years, attending our commencement and public exercises, lectures, and always welcoming us most graciously at the Ministry, having no indications whatever of a fanatical turn of mind. He recently had his son enrolled as a student with us; whether he is still there or not, I do not know.

Mahmud Abdul Rahim Bey, Inspector and I believe now Controller of Education in non-Government Schools. Has been very cordial and frequent in his attendance with us and collaboration through lecturing and conference time and time again. We have had a very high admiration of him.

Maitre Farid Abu Hadid - I do not know.

Gad el Mula Bey - not much acquainted with him but I know that Dr. Amir Boktor has regarded him very highly and had a great deal of collaboration with him. His reports as Inspector have always been very cordial and charitably inclined toward A.U.C.

Mtre. Mursi Qandil, Chief Inspector of Social Sciences in the Ministry of Education. Has lectured and been very active in his collaboration with the Division of Extension.

Dr. Taha Hussain Bey, Controller of General Culture; Dean of the Faculty of Letter of the Egyptian State University. Has lectured a number of times in Ewart Hall; very liberal-minded man. Graduated from the Sorbonne in Paris; has a French wife Has been accused of being an infidel by the fundamentalists of the Mohammedans time and time again and has had many differences with the Government and the Ministry of Education but has always been supported a great deal by public opinion because of his courteous and successful working out of a career as a real literary man although he is blind. His attitude a few years ago when the stir was on against missions is shown by the following which he said to me, "Why, I tell the public, if they preach to us, we preach to them and that ends the matter," indicating that it is his deep conviction that people had a right to their convictions and opinions. It was he who gave a series of five lectures four or five years ago on the general theme Freedom of Thought which was received with great enthusiasm by the Hall being full of the public and a large number of students of the Azhar, but all cordially welcoming his emphasis upon the necessity for freedom of thought in politics, in science, and in religion. In his lecture he condemned Voltaire a Rousseau and one or two others as insanely biased and destructive in the realm of morals and religion but worthy of commendation for blazing the way in independence of thought. On the other hand, he paid the highest of tribute to the founders of the Christian Church and martyrs and also to the reformers of the 16th century as to all who had for conscience sake endured hardship, at the same time he condemned vigorously the Inquisition.