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The Quranic Concept of Miracles (Mu'jizat)

INTRODUCTION :

"Miracle" is so vast a subject that it requires volumes to be discussed in detail. If, on the one hand, David Hume and Spinoza (being hostile critics of miracles) insisted on its incredibility, on the other hand, much has been written in its defence by numerous writers to prove its possibility and its being in accord with the laws of nature.¹ This is probably because of the fact that the Bible is full of accounts of miracles.² But very little attention has been paid to the Islamic concept of miracles. The article on "Mu'djiza" in the Encyclopaedia of Islam is even less than half a page. Even that brief article is a misrepresentation of the Islamic concept of the miracles. This small article is an attempt to present the true picture of the Islamic view point about miracles.

Definition of "Miracle"

The word "Miracle" is derived through French from Latin "miraculum"³, meaning literally, "a thing to be wondered at"⁴ "something wonderful"⁵ "a departure from the usual course of nature",⁶ or "anything beyond human power and deviating from the common action of Nature."⁷ Many define miracle as "purely natural fact which especially arouses sentiments of piety."⁸ Some opine that miracle is, "supernatural interference with the ordinary course of

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1. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, art. "Miracle".
2. *Dictionary of Bible*, 1914, art. "Miracle".
3. (a) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Chicago, 1960, V. 15, p. 585,
(b) *Collier's Encyclopaedia*, New York, 1958, V. 14, p. 4.
(c) *Chamber's Encyclopaedia* (New Revised Edition) Pergamon Press, London, 1967, Vol. IX, p. 434.
4. *Collier's Encyclopaedia*, V. 14, P. 4.
5. *Chamber's Encyclopaedia*, V. IX, P. 434.
6. *The Columbia Encyclopaedia*. p. 1180.
7. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, V. 15, p. 535.
8. *Collier's Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 14, p. 5.

ardent love for Islam. In its present form the Arabic version hardly gives the impression of being a translation from another language. Both, Dr. Azhar and Professor Tashkandi, deserve the warmest of compliments for their contribution to the present publication.

Before I conclude, let me offer an apology. If I have said more about Nasim Hijazi and his novels in general, and less about '*Muhammad bin Qasim*' in particular, I have done it with some reason. Hijazi is being introduced to our Arab brethren for the first time and I felt it was only natural that they should long to know a little more about the author, than what the pages of this book can offer. As regards the story, the reader will hardly brook any introduction once the book goes into his hands.

and trickery, and never lets go his grip over the readers interests. Indeed, the author achieves a large measure of success in making his readers hark back to the call so movingly articulated by the poet of the East :

کبھی اے نوجوان مسلم تدبیر بھی کیا تو نے
وہ کیا گردوں تھا تو جس کا ہے ایک ٹوٹا ہوا تارا

(Muslim youth ! Hast thou ever tried to think and find
What was the heaven of which you are a lost meteor ?)

Whether one reads Muhammad bin Qasim's letter to his wife³ or his address to his soldiers on the eve of the decisive battle with Raja Dahir (d. 712 A.C.)⁴ one is carried away inexorably with the tide.

Gradually and ever so imperceptibly the irresistible charm of the personality of Muhammad takes hold of the reader's mind, and the pathetic but dignified end of the young general makes the reader's heart bleed. The book has gone through numerous editions in Pakistan and, like Hijazi's other novels, has been pirated extensively in India. It has already been published in Bengali and a Sindhi version is under print.

Without going into details of the story, just a word about the translation. Dr. Zahur Ahmad Azhar was entrusted with this difficult job. Indeed, transmuting a literary work of art into another language without losing effect is a demanding task, but Dr. Azhar did a commendable job. It will be extremely unfair, however, not to give full credit to Professor Noman Mrhammad Tashkandi, a Saudi Arabian scholar on secondment to the Allama Iqbal open university Islamabad (1976-79), who painstakingly revised the first version prepared by Dr. Azhar. I had the privilege of being closely associated with the work at this stage and can bear witness to the extreme devotion with which Professor Tashkandi worked on improving the text, giving delicate touches here and there, at places giving it an altogether new garb, with no motive other than his

3 Nasim Hijazi, *Muhammad bin Qasim* (Arabic trans.), Lahore 2980, p. 366.

4 Ibid, pp. 368-371

Like Sharar and others of the fraternity of Islamic historical novelists, he too, has been criticized for his 'lack of realism, stereotyped characters, didactic discourses and long-winded harangues'. In his case, surely the charge has been repudiated by generations of readers who do not appear to be wearied by his 'sermonizing'. This is amply borne out by the yearly editions of his books which have remained in continual demand. The criticism stems not only from imperfect knowledge of the historical phenomena the novelist writes about, but also from a lack of sympathy and understanding for his *purpose*. Nasim Hijazi is wedded to a mission and all his writings are aimed consistently at rekindling the old spark in the Muslim youth and bringing about a resurgence of Islam. He wants to light up their imagination with their past glory and greatness and disabuse their minds of the sense of inferiority and unworthiness. He wants them to emulate the grandeur of their ancestors and build their destiny on the bed-rock of an unswerving belief in God. If that goes against the grain of 'literature par excellence' according to some, Nasim Hijazi has doubtless been consistently proud of it.

As pointed out earlier *Dastan-i-Mujahid* was his first novel. It could rightly be regarded as a prelude to Muhammad bin Qasim, the Arabic translation of which is being introduced today. The story of *Dastan-i-Mujahid* proceeds in the historical setting of that eventful period when Arab armies were marching simultaneously to Africa and Spain in the West, Central Asia in the North and Sind, the gateway of India, in the East under the triumphant banner of Islam. Muhammad bin Qasim is introduced in *Dastan* as a youthful general adored by his fiery Lieutenant Na'im, the central character of the book. The novel gained tremendous popularity and has gone through forty editions. *Muhammad bin Qasim* was a sequel to this popular book. It traces the course of Muhammad bin Qasim's childhood and his early exploits in Basra, the official seat of his formidable uncle Hajjaj bin Yusuf, the Caliph's vicegerent for the Eastern flank of the sprawling Umayyad empire. Side by side with the narration of events leading to the expedition of Sind, the author keeps on unfolding little dramas of human love and hate, chivalry

tragedy brought forth his "*Khak aur Khoon*" ("Dust and Blood", written in Abbottabad) which I regard as one of his best novels. The late Chaudhery Muhammad Ali once remarked that the book was not only a chronicle of this unforgettable tragedy of our past but also a pointer to the dangers looming large on the horizon.

"*Khak aur Khoon*" was followed by "*Yousuf bin Tashfin*" which took the readers back to North Africa and Spain. In his *Aakhari Marka* (The Last Battle), written after his return in 1951 from a global tour of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, he dwelt upon Mahmud Ghaznavi's conquest of the Western Frontier of India including Punjab and his forays on the interior of the sub-Continent which paved the way for future consolidation of Muslim rule in India. *Muazzam Ali*, and "*Aur Talwar Toot Ga'i*" ("—And the Sword Broke") bewailed the decline of Muslim power in the sub-Continent in the 18th/19th century, just as "*Aakhari Chatan*" (the Last Rock) narrated the woeful tale of treachery and fratricidal conflict which culminated in the sack of Baghdad in 1258 A.C.

The sad drama which drew the final curtain on that golden era of civilization and culture in Spain forms the theme of Hijazi's two latest novels entitled "*Andheri Raat Ke Musafir*" (Travellers of the Dark Night) and "*Kalisa aur Aag*" ("the Church and Fire") which mourn the fall of Granada and the final collapse of Muslim resistance on the Spanish soil. Special mention should be made of "*Qaysar Wa Kisra*" ("The Caesar and the Khosro") in which Nasim Hijazi's genius seems to touch its apogee. Here he tells the story of those traditional rivals and commemorates the advent of the Religion of Peace which was soon to supplant the empires of these belligerent kingdoms and light up the world with the message of "There is no god but God". One hopes that this great story will soon be translated in Arabic to reach our brethern in the Arab lands.

Nasim Hijazi has been a quite prolific writer. What is more, all his novels enjoyed a measure of popularity which could be the envy of any writer. This impressive output becomes all the more respectable when one considers his heavy involvement in Journalism, first with '*Tamir*' and later with '*Kohistan*' from 1953 to 1966.

“*Zamana*”. Mir Jafar Khan Jamali spotted this talented young man and took him to Baluchistan with him. Here he edited Jamali’s paper “*Tanzeem*” which was distributed free to 500 educated men in Quetta and its environs. The inspiring struggle of this devoted group for the eventual accession of Baluchistan to Pakistan is a story by itself.

His first Novel ‘*Dastan-i-Mujahid*’ (The Saga of a Mujahid) was written here and was followed by a steady stream of Islamic historical novels which brought name and fame to the author. Indeed Nasim Hijazi is one of the most illustrious contemporary representatives of this glorious tradition in the history of Urdu novel. Islamic history attracted the attention of a number of talented story tellers in the 20th century. Here in the Sub-continent, Maulana Abdul Haleem Sharar (1860-1926) of Lucknow pioneered the writing of Islamic historical novels in Urdu with such master-pieces as ‘*Firdaws-i-Bareen*’ and ‘*Fath-i-Andauls*’²

Simultaneously, Sharar’s Egyptian contemporary and counter-part Jirji Zaydan (1861-1914) was piloting the emergence of novel in the modern Arabic literature, relying almost exclusively on personalities and episodes drawn from the great pageant of Islamic history. He produced no less than 22 historical novels. History of Muslim Spain seems to have particularly fascinated these writers ; even some titles are common to Sharar and Zaydan like ‘*Fath-i-Andalus*’.

But Nasim Hijazi’s love for Muslim Spain carries a somewhat different stamp. His strong nostalgia for the glory that was Andalus makes him return quite frequently to this theme. He was working on ‘*Shaheen*’ (The Eagle) in Quetta when the holocaust of 1947 overtook the Muslims of East Punjab and other parts of India, claiming the lives of eleven members of his family in their native village. The

2 It is significant that novel was introduced into Urdu literature, thanks mainly to Islamic historical novels. Although Deputy Nazir Ahmad (1836-1912), and Rattan Nath Sarshar (1845/46 (?) - 1902), preceded him, it was through Sharar that Urdu novel found a distinct form for itself (Ahsan Faruqui, *Urdu Novel Ki Tanqidi Tariikh*, p. 160, quoted by Mumtaz Manglauri, *Sharar Ki Novel Nigari*, *Tarikh-i-Adabiyyat*. Fayyaz Mahmud, vol. IX p. 379). Sir Abdul Qadir quite rightly attributed to Sharar the credit of being the first novelist in Urdu, in the true sense of the term (Mumtaz Manglauri, *op. cit*)

Dr. S.M. Zaman

Nasim Hijazi and the Arabic Version of his 'Muhammad Bin Qasim'

Thirty years ago, on the outskirts of Abbottabad, bypassers would see a tall sturdy man with plain features and a heavy frame striding briskly along the bypaths skirting the beautiful hills and ravines that form part of the breath taking panorama of natural beauty around this charming little town. To early morning walkers the figure was as familiar as his young bear which followed him tamely like a spaniel. During visits to his Rawalpindi home he could be seen riding furiously through the forests and fields along the Margalla hills where now the Federal Capital has emerged. The picture appears to be that of a heroic character sprung to life straight out of one of Nasim Hijazi's novels. But no, it is real ; of none else than the famous writer of a score of novels which have made Hijazi's name a household word for the Urdu-reading public in the last four decades. This profile of the author may not be familiar to many, just as his given name Muhammad Sharif is obscured behind the name he adopted for his literary *mission*, and I choose the word carefully in preference to 'career'.

Born at Suchanpur, a small village near Dhariwal in the District of Gurdaspur (Punjab) on the 19th of May, 1914, Nasim Hijazi received his early education in the neighbouring schools. His father, Chaudhry Muhammad Ibrahim, was a farmer of the lower middle class. Having matriculated from the University of the Punjab, he joined the Islamia College, Lahore in 1932, graduating from there in 1938. History and Classics were his favourite subjects of study. Justice Anwarul Haq, Maulana Abdul Sattar Niazi and the late Hamid Nizami were amongst his contemporaries. The flair for journalism took him to Karachi where he edited an Urdu daily

1 Read at the laundring ceremony of the book held in Islamabad under the auspices of the Pakistan Academy of Letters on 26-10-81

ORIENTAL PUBLICATIONS

(Arabic & Persian)

1. (Iqlid al-Khizana) اقليد الخزانه

Index of titles of works referred to or quoted by Abd-al-Qadir Al-Baghdadi in his Khizanat Al-Adab. 1927, 147 pp.
By M. Abd-al-Aziz Maiman Rs. 3.00

2. كتاب عقد الفريد

(Analytical Indices to the Kitab Al-Ikd Al-Farid of Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abd Rabbihi)

Index I—Names of Poets cited in the work. Index II—Rhymes.
Index III—Names of Persons, Tribes, etc.
Index IV—Names of Places.

With a conspectus of the pagination of the contents in the various editions of the Ikd.

(Cairo edition, A.H. 1321) Vol. I (Indices), 1935, lxxiii + 1044 pp.
and Vol. II (Notes), 1937, xxiv—212 pp.

Prepared by Dr. Muhammad Shafi Vol. I Rs. 26.00
Vol. II Rs. 6.50

3. مكاتبات رشیدی

(Letters of Rashid Al-Din Fadl Allah)

Persian text and abridged translation. 1947, 479 pp.
Edited by Dr. Muhammad Shafi Rs. 12.00

4. غرة الزينات يا كرن تلک

(Ghurrat-al-Zijat or Karana Tilaka)

Arabic text of Al-Beruni's Ghurrat-uz-Zijat with English translation & copious notes. 1978
Edited by M. F. Qureshi. Rs. 45.00

5. The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau

Doctoral thesis of Dr. Mirza submitted for the Ph.D. Degree of the London University in 1920. 1962, 262 pp.
By Dr. Mohammad Wahid Mirza Rs. 15.00

6. The Life and Works of Yaqut ibn Abd Allah al-Hamavi

Doctoral thesis of Dr. Rana submitted at the University of Cambridge in 1959. 1965, 84 pp.
By R. M. N. E. Elahi Rs. 10.00

7. The Imperial Library of the Mughuls

The book is a brief but interesting account of an hitherto little known subject. It deals with the library of the Great Mughuls and throws light on their love of books and their munificent patronage of arts and letters. The book has been edited by Dr. A. Shakoor Ahsan. 1967, 62 pp.
By Sh. Abdul Aziz Rs. 10.00

University Sales Depot
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Lahore - Pakistan

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2. Tom Little, *Modern Egypt*, 57, 58.
3. E. W. Polson Newman, *Great Britain in Egypt*, 49.
4. *The Encyclopaedia Americana*, 2 : 157.
5. Tom Little, *Modern Egypt*, 45.
6. J. R. H. Weaver, *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 84—86.
7. W. S. Blunt, *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt*, 62.
8. Ibid.
9. W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries*, Part II, vi.
10. J. R. H. Weaver, *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 85.
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12. W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries*, II, 463.
13. Ibid.
14. J. R. H. Weaver, *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 84—86.

ata, but Ali Fehmy remained at Cairo. And I saw nothing of Ali Nizami. But being at Zagazig on a visit to friends, Ahmed Eff. Shemsi and Suliman Pasha Abaza, as I was returning by train to Ras el Wady, it happened that Ahmed Pasha Ratib was on his way to Suez, for he was going on to Mecca on pilgrimage. And I found myself in the same carriage with him, and we exchanged compliments as strangers, and I asked him his name, and he asked me my name, and he told me of his pilgrimage and other things, but he did not speak of his mission to the Khedive, nor did I ask. But I told him that I was loyal to the Sultan as the head of our religion, and I also related to him all that had occurred, and he said, "You did well." And at Ras el Wady I left him, and afterwards he sent me a Koran from Jeddah, and later, on his return to Stamboul, he wrote to me, saying that he had spoken favourably of me to the Sultan, and afterwards I received a letter dictated by the Sultan to Sheykh Mohammed Dhaffar telling me what you know.

As to Yakub Sami, he was of family originally Greek from Stamboul. He went by my order to Alexandria to inquire into the affair of the riot, but they would not allow a true inquiry to be made into it. It was Yakub Sami who, with Ragheb Pasha, proposed that we should cut off the Khedive's head. You say we should have done better to do so, but I wished to gain the end of our revolution without the shedding of a drop of blood.

And the Khedive entered by the back door on the East side, and presently he came out to us with his generals and aides-de-camp, but I did not see Colvin with him, though he may have been there, and he called on me to dismount, and I dismounted, and he called on me to put up my sword, and I put up my sword, but the officers approached with me to prevent treachery, about fifty in number and some of them placed themselves between him and the palace, but Riaz Pasha was not with the Khedive in the square, and remained in the palace. And when I had delivered my message and made my three demands to the Khedive, he said "I am Khedive of the country and shall do as I like" (*"ana Khedeywi'l beled wa'amal zey ma inni aweze"*). I replied, "We are not slaves, and we shall never more be inherited from this day forth" (*"Nahnu ma abid wa la nurithu ba'd el yom"*). He said nothing more, but turned and went back into the palace. And presently they sent out Cookson to me with his interpreter, and he asked me why, being a soldier, I made demand of a parliament, and I said that it was to put an end to arbitrary rule, and pointed to the crowd of citizens supporting us behind the soldiers. He threatened me, saying, "We shall bring a British army," and much discussion took place between us, and he returned six or seven times to the palace and came out again six or seven times to me, until finally he informed me that the Khedive had agreed to all, and the Khedive wished for Haider Pasha to replace Riaz. But I would not consent, and when it was put to me to say I named Sherif Pasha, because he had declared himself in favour of a Mejlis el Nawwab, and I had known him a little in former times, in the time of Said Pasha, when he served with the army. And in the evening the Khedive sent for me and I went to him at Ismailia Palace, and I thanked him for having agreed to our request, but he said only, "That is enough. Go now and occupy Abedin, and let it be without music in the streets" (lest that should be taken as a token of rejoicing).

And when Ali Pasha Nizami came to Cairo with Ahmed Pasha Ratib from the Sultan, the Khedive was alarmed lest an inquiry should be made, and Mahmud Sami being again Minister of War ordered us to leave Cairo, and I went to Ras el Wady and Abd el Aal to Dami-

by Mahmud Sami shortly before leaving office, and had not been replaced. This miralai was of us but *khain* (a traitor), and we agreed that we would make a demonstration and demand the dismissal of the whole Ministry, and that a Ministry favourable to the Wattan should replace them, and that a Mejliss of Nawwab should be assembled, and that the army should be raised to 18,000 men. But we did not tell Ali Fehmy of our design, for we did not wholly at the time trust him. And the next morning I wrote stating our demands and sent it to the Khedive at Ismailia Palace, saying that we should march to Abedin Palace at the *asr*, there to receive his answer. And the reason of our going to Abdin and not to Ismailia, where he lived, was that Abedin was his public residence, and we did not wish to alarm the ladies of his household. But if he had not come to Abedin we should have marched on to Ismailia,

When, therefore, the Khedive received our message he sent for Riaz Pasha and Khairy Pasha and Stone Pasha, and they went first to Abidin Barracks, where both the Khedive and Riaz Pasha spoke to the soldiers, and they gave orders to Ali Fehmy that he should, with his regiment, occupy the place of Abedin and Ali Fehmy assented and he posted his men in the upper rooms out of sight, so that they should be ready to fire on us from the windows. But I do not know whether they were given ball cartridge or not. Then the Khedive with the Generals went on to the Kalaa, and they spoke to the soldiers there in the same sense, calling on Fuda Bey to support the Khedive against us, the Khedive scolding him and saying, "I shall put you in prison"; but the soldiers surrounded the carriage, and the Khedive was afraid and drove away, and he went on by the advice of Riaz to Abassiyeh to speak to me, but I had already marched with my regiment through the Hassaneyn quarter to Abedin. They asked about the artillery and were told that it also had gone to Abedin, and when the Khedive arrived there he found us occupying the square, the artillery and cavalry being before the West entrance, and I with my troops before the main entrance, and already when I arrived before the palace I had sent in to Ali Fehmy, who I had heard was there, and had spoken to him, and he had withdrawn his men from the palace, and they stood with us.

our arrest. After the affair of the Kasr el Nil, and seeing the position we had gained in the minds of the people, the Khedive thought to make use of us against Riaz, and he sent Ali Fehmy to us with the message, "You three are soldiers. With me you make four." That was about a month after the affair, and we knew he was favourable to us also through Mahmud Sami, who was then Minister of War. And Mahmud Sami told us, "If ever you see me leave the Ministry, know that the Khedive's mind is changed to you, and that there is danger." In the course, therefore, of the summer (1881) when trouble began to begin for us through the spies of Riaz Pasha, who was Minister of the interior, and who had us watched by the police, we had confidence in Mahmud Sami.

And I was specially involved in displeasure through my refusal to allow my soldiers to be taken from their military work to dig the Towfikieh Canal, they being impressed for the labour by Ali Pasha Mubarak as Minister of Public Works. For this and for other reasons the Khedive turned from us, and resolved, with Riaz Pasha, to separate and disunite the army; and the regiments were to be sent to distant places so that we should not communicate one with the other. And Mahmud Sami was called upon, as Minister of War, to work their plan against us, the Khedive at that time being at Alexandria with the rest of the Ministers. And when Mahmud Sami refused, Riaz Pasha wrote to him, "The Khedive has accepted your resignation." And both he and the Khedive notified to Mahmud Sami that he was to go at once to his village in the neighbourhood of Tantah, and remain there, and not to go to Cairo, and on no account to have communication with him. He nevertheless came to Cairo to his house there, and we called on him, but he refused to see us. Then we knew that evil was intended against us. And the Khedive appointed Daoud Pasha Yeghen in his place, and the vexation on us increased, and we knew that attempts were to be made against us. At the beginning of September the Khedive returned to Cairo with Riaz and the Ministers, and it was resolved to deal with us. Then I took counsel with Abd-el-Aal and Abd-el-Ghaffar, the commander of the cavalry at Gesireh, and Fuda Bey Hassan *Caimakam* in command at the Kalaa. The miralai in command at the Kalaa had been dismissed

before the end of 1880. The first time I saw you, was when I called on you with Rogers Bey at the Hotel du Nil, and it was I who recommended to you Mohammed Khalil, and afterwards he brought you to see me at my house. I criticized the Government strongly in the Official Journal, and as Director of the Press allowed all liberty. But I was not in favour of a revolution, and though that it would be enough if we had a Constitution in five years time. I disapproved of the overthrow of Riaz in September, 1881, and, about ten days before the military demonstration at Abidin, I met Arabi at the house of Toulba Ismat, and Latif Bey Selim had come with him, and there were many others. And I urged him to moderation, and said, "I foresee that a foreign occupation will come and that a malediction will rest for ever on him who provokes it." On this Arabi said that he hoped it would not be he. And he told me at the same time that Sultan Pasha had promised to bring petitions from every Notable in Egypt in favour of the Constitution. This was true, for all the Omdehs were angry with Riaz for having put down their habit of employing forced labour. Suliman Abaza would not join in the revolution as he thought it premature, and Sherei Pasha was also against it. But when once the Constitution was granted we all signed to protect it. But Arabi could not control the army, when there were many ambitions.

I did not know of the intended demonstration at Abdin, as I was known to be friendly to Riaz, but it was arranged with Sultan Pasha and Sherif Pasha. The Khedive was in a constant change of mind about Arabi at that time, and joined Riaz and Daoud Pasha in their attempt to crush Arabi, but the day before the event they told the Khedive, who, to overthrow Riaz, approved.]

CONVERSATION WITH ARABI AT SHEYKH OBEYD, JANUARY 2ND, 1904

You ask me at what date the Khedive Tewfik put himself first into communication with us soldiers. It was in this way. Shortly before the affair of the Kasr el Nil he encouraged Ali Fehmy to go to us, with whom we were already friends, his intention being to use him as a spy on us, he being Colonel of the Guard. But Ali Fehmy joined us in our petition to Riaz Pasha, and was involved with us in

first was for an inquiry. During an adjournment, however, of the Council, Taha Pasha persuaded Riaz that if he was for lenient measures it would be thought he was intriguing with the soldiers against the Khedive—to make himself Khedive—and Riaz thereupon made no further opposition. This I learned afterwards from Mahmud Sami who, as one of the Ministers, was present at the Council.

Ibrahim Eff. el Wakil with Hassan Sherei and Ahmed Mahmud were the leaders of the liberal party in the Chamber of Notables.]

FURTHER ACCOUNT GIVEN BY SHEYKH MOHAMMED
ABDU, DECEMBER 22ND, 1903

[When Sheykh Jemal ed Din was exiled a few days after Sherif's dismissal in 1879, I was told to leave Cairo where I was professor in the normal school, and to go to my village. My successor at the school was Sheykh Hassan the blind. I was soon tired of being in my village and went to Alexandria where I was watched by the police, so I went secretly to Tantah and wandered about for a long while. Then I came back to Cairo hoping to see Mahmud Sami, who was my friend, and at that time Minister of the Awkaf, but he was away, so I went to Ali Pasha Mubarak's, Minister of Public Works, who was also a friend, but he received me badly, and everybody advised me not to stay, as it would be thought I came in connection with a secret society which had been recently formed by Shahin Pasha and Omar Lutfi and other Ismailists against Riaz, so I went to my village again. But again I grew tired of it, as the villagers were always quarrelling and resolved to return once more and lecture at the Azhar. Riaz Pasha was at that time in difficulty to find any one who could write good Arabic in the Official Paper, and he consulted Mahmud Sami, who told him that if there were but three more like me Egypt could be saved. And my successor, Sheykh Hassan, gave him the same opinion of me.

So I was appointed at the end of Ramadan (October, 1880), third Editor of the Journal. But my two senior Editors were jealous and would give me no work to do. So the Journal was no better written. At this Riaz was displeased, and made an inquiry, and as the result I was made Editor, and a little later Director of the Press. This was

found out that there was nothing of any value in it and withdrew. Ismail encouraged it for his purposes when he began to be in difficulties, but freemasonry never was a power in Egypt.

Mohammed Obeyed was certainly killed at Tel-el-Kebir. There were rumours for a long time of his having been seen in Syria, and we used to send from Beyrout when we were living there in exile to try and find him for his wife's sake, who was at Beyrout, but they always turned out to be false reports.

Mahmud Sami was one of the original Constitutionalists, dating from the time of Ismail. He was a friend of Sherif and belonged to the same school of ideas. It is most probable that he gave warning to Arabi of his intended arrest, as he was one of the Council of Ministers and must have known. After the affair of Kasr el Nil he was altogether with Arabi and the Colonels. That was why Riaz got rid of him from the Ministry and appointed Daoud Pasha in his place.

Riaz, at the beginning, underrated the importance of Arabi's action. Afterwards he was afraid of it. He began by despising it as he did all fellah influence in politics.

Sherif Pasha resigned in February, 1882, not on account of any quarrel with Arabi, but because he was afraid of European intervention. He was opposed to an insistence on the power of voting the budget claimed by the Chamber of Notables, and he retired so as not to be compromised.

Ragheb Pasha is (as mentioned by Ninet) of Greek descent, though a Moslem. He had been Minister under Ismail, but was a Constitutionalist. After the leyha he was named Prime Minister, with Arabi for Minister of War. He acted honestly with Arabi, and remained with the National Party during the war.

Butler gives May 20th, 1880, as the date of the first military petition. That is probably correct.

Ibrahim el Aghany was one of the best and ablest of Jemal ed Din's disciples at the Azhar. He is still living and employed in the Mekhemeh (?)

When the Council was summoned to consider Arabi's petition asking for Osman Rifky's dismissal, the Khedive was with Osman Rifky for having Arabi arrested and sent up the Nile, but Riaz at

was very rich, made much of him, sending him presents, such as farm produce, horses, and the rest, in order to encourage him, and to get his support for the constitutional movement. It was in concert with Sultan that the demonstration of Abidin was arranged, and it is quite true that Sultan expected to be named to a Ministry after the fall of Riaz. But Sherif Pasha, who became Prime Minister, did not think of him and overlooked him. Afterwards Sultan was pacified and pleased when he was offered the presidency of the new Chambers of Notables. It was not till after the *leyha*, ultimatum, that he had any quarrel with Arabi. Then it is true that Arabi drew his sword in Sultan's presence and that of other members of the Chamber when they hesitated and were afraid to oppose the *leyha*. Up to this they had acted together. Arabi's account of the Khedive's message, "You three are soldiers. With me you are four," is excellent, and exactly shows the situation as between him and the officers. Golvin certainly was the Khedive at Abidin, but as he knew no Arabic he probably was not noticed by Arabi. It was Cookson who did the talking. Baron de Ring had been recalled by his Government on the request of Riaz, who complained of his encouragement of the officers.

6. *As to the riots of Alexandria.*—Arabi is correct in his account as regards Omar Loutfi and the Khedive, who had been arranging the riot for some weeks. But it is not true as regards Syed Kandil who was only weak and failed to prevent it. He is also wrong about Cookson. The firearms introduced into the Consulate were for the defence of the Maltese and other English subjects. Syed Kandil was exiled for twenty years, but was allowed quietly to come back, and is now at his country place in Egypt, and I have often talked over the affair with him. If you like we will go together and pay him a visit next autumn. Arabi is right in saying that neither Hassan Moussa nor Nadim were concerned in the riot. Nadim went down to Alexandria to deliver a lecture and Hassan on money business.]

[The Mufti also added the following remarks on March 20th, 1903.

There was an attempt to introduce freemasonry into Egypt in the later years of Ismail Pasha. The lodges were all connected with lodges in Europe. Sheykh Jemal ed Din joined one, but he soon

was talk of attempts against Arabi and the other colonels.

4. *As to the affair of the Kasr el Nil, February 1st, 1881.*—Arabi's account is confused and incorrect. The first petition made by Arabi and the officers was simply one of injustice being done them. It was made by Osman Rifki, and it drew down upon them the anger of the Minister of War, who determined to get rid of them, and first brought Arabi under the notice of the Consuls Baron de Ring, who had a quarrel with Riaz, interested himself in their case, but only indirectly. The petition talked of by Arabi as having been drawn up in January by him and taken to Riaz, certainly contained no reference to a Constitution or to the increase of the army to 18,000 men. These demands were not made till the September demonstration. The petition of the Kasr el Nil time was simply a strong complaint to Riaz of Osman Rifki's misdoings, and demanding his dismissal from the Ministry of War. Riaz, at the council after the demonstration, was in favour of its being made the subject of an inquiry, which would have necessitated the trial by court-martial not only of the petitioners, but also of Osman Rifki. Riaz was not in favour of violence. But it was pointed out to him, privately that if he opposed the more violent plan it would be said he was seeking to curry favour with the soldiers as against the Khedive, and he, therefore, left the matter to Osman Rifki, to be dealt with as he pleased.

5. *As to the demonstration of Abdin, September 9th, 1881.*—The seven months between the affair of Kasr el Nil and the demonstration of September were months of great political activity, which pervaded all classes. Arabi's action gained him much popularity, and put him into communication with the civilian members of the National party, such as Sultan Pasha, Suliman Abaza, Hasan Sherei, and myself, and it was we who put forward the idea of renewing the demand for a Constitution. The point of view from which he at that time regarded it was as giving him and his military friends a security against reprisals by the Khedive of his Ministers. He told me this repeatedly during the summer. We consequently organized petitions for a Constitution, and carried on a campaign for it in the press. Arabi saw a great deal of Sultan Pasha during the summer, and Sultan, who

THE GRAND MUFTI'S REMARKS ON THE ABOVE

[N.B.—On March 18th, 1903, I read the foregoing account to Sheykh Mohammed Abdu at his house at Ain Shems. He approved most of its as correct, but made the following remarks :

1. *As to the riot against Nubar.*—Arabi's account of this is correct, except that the order given to the Ali Fehmy to fire on the students was not intended to be obeyed and was part of the comedy. Ali Fehmy fired over their head by order. Latif Bey was arrested and imprisoned after the riot by Nubar, but was released on an application made to Nubar by the freemasons, Latif being a member of that body. Latif in after days freely acknowledged his share in the affair. As to what Arabi says of his having proposed at that time to depose Ismail, there was certainly secret talk of such action. Sheykh Jemal ed Din was in favour of it, and proposed to me, Mohammed Abdu, that Ismail should be assassinated some day as he passed in his carriage daily over the Kasr el Nil bridge, and I strongly approved, but it was only talk between ourselves, and we lacked a person capable of taking lead in the affair. If we had known Arabi at that time, we might have arranged it with him, and it would have been the best thing that could have happened, as it would have prevented the intervention of Europe. It would not, however, have been possible to establish a republic in the then state of political ignorance of the people. As to Ismail's having taken away fifteen millions with him to Naples, nobody knows the amount. All that is known is that it was very large. For the last few months of his reign Ismail had been hoarding money, which he intercepted as it was sent in to the Finance Office from the Mudiriehs.

2. *As to Tewfik in his father's time.*—What Arabi says of Tewfik having taken presents for presenting petitions to Ismail may be true, but the thing was not talked of, nor is it in accordance with Tewfik's conduct when in power. I do not believe it.

3. *As to Riaz tyranny.*—Riaz was tyrannical, but not to the point of shedding blood. This he was always averse to. I do not remember any talk about people being made away with secretly by him. There was no danger of such at any rate before the affair of the Kasr el Nil. During the summer, however, of that year, 1881, there

surprise and for the same reason of treachery. The cavalry commanders were all seduced by Abou Sultan's promises. They occupied a position in advance of the lines, and it was their duty to give us warning of any advance by the English. But they moved aside and gave no warning. There was also one traitor in command within the lines, Ali Bey Yusuf Khunfis. He lit lamps to direct the enemy, and then withdrew his men, leaving a wide space open for them to pass through. You see the marks upon this carpet. They just represent the lines. That is where Ali Yusuf was posted. Mohammed Obeyd was there, and I was at this figure on the carpet a mile and a half to the rear. We were expecting no attack as no sound of firing had been heard. I was still asleep when we heard the firing close to the lines. Ali Roubi, who was in command in front, sent news to me to change my position as the enemy was taking us in flank. I said my prayer and galloped to where we had a reserve of volunteers, and called to them to follow me to support the front line. But they were only peasants, not soliders, and the shells were falling among them and they ran away. I then rode forward alone with only my servant Mohammed with me, who, seeing that there was no one with me and that I was going to certain death, caught hold of my horse by the bridle and implored me to go back. Then seeing that the day was lost already, and that all were flying, I turned. Mohammed continued with me and we crossed the Wady at Tel-el-Kebir, and keeping along the line of the Ismailia Canal reached Belbeis. There I had formed a second camp, and I found Ali Roubi arrived before me, and we thought to make a stand. But on the arrival on Drury Lowe's cavalry none would stay, and so we abandoned all and took train for Cairo. Ali Roubi made mistakes by extending the lines too far northwards, but he was loyal. The traitors were Abdul Ghaffar, I think and certainly his second in command of the cavalry, Abd-el-Rahman Bey Hassan, and Ali Yusuf Khunfis. You say Saoud el Tihawi, too. It may be so. Those Arabs were not to be trusthd. His grandfather had joined Bonaparte when he invaded us a hundred years ago.

Now I return home, after twenty years of sorrowful exile, and my own people I laboured to deliver have come to believe, because the French papers have told them so, that I sold them to the English.