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25X1X Comments on Political Atmosphere/Mohammed Naguib/Tourists



1. "This season has been one of great contrast to a year ago. The fear and tension of last season have seemed like an unreality, so different is the whole atmosphere and outlook in Egypt now. There is great hope and expectation on the part of the masses of the people under the new government. The spirit even pervades us and we too feel that Egypt now has perhaps a better hope of improving the conditions of life than at any time in her long history. Probably not the smallest burden which the Premier, General Mohammed Naguib, has to bear is the limitless expectation on the part of his lowliest countrymen that he can immediately disperse all their troubles and change almost anything they may wish changed. Of course, hope and confidence of this sort, while inspiring, are charged with the dangers of impatience and hasty disappointment.

2. "General Naguib visited Luxor a couple of weeks ago and some of us had the opportunity to meet him. We were fortunate, for everyone else wanted to do the same. Like almost everyone else we hoped he would visit us, but this time he was devoting his brief stay to the schools, hospitals, churches and mosques. He made a special point of visiting the Coptic church and the American Mission School for Girls in Luxor. He does not miss an opportunity to state and act on his belief that 'All are Egyptians regardless of religious faith or other circumstances.'

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3. "A number of small incidents occurred during the General's visit in Luxor which illustrate what a burden he carries and how unusual a man he is. Perhaps to Americans who recently passed through a presidential campaign, they may sound like usual bits of business from that show, but I can assure you they are very unusual and full of meaning here. They are incidents the people like to hear and tell about.

4. "There was the occasion on the evening of his arrival in Luxor when the General had finished a brief address from the veranda of the Winter Palace Hotel for which it seemed all of Luxor had turned out. The crowd had been asked to make way for him to get to his car but no one had moved. An officer at his side threatened to order the police to disperse the crowd forcibly, but the General reprimanded

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him, 'No, do not send the police. Let the people do as they wish.' A way was promptly and voluntarily made for him. Next day in the course of his tour of the town there was a commotion in the crowd that had gathered at one point. The police was restraining a woman of lowly status who was wildly trying to get to him. When he saw what the trouble was he asked that she be permitted to come. She came in a burst and threw her arms about him. He asked what she wanted and she replied, 'Please lower the prices of flour and sugar.' With his diffident smile the General promised to do what he could. The prices of essential commodities had been lowered last fall and retail markups on all goods limited.

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5. "Another incident related [redacted] by a friend in Luxor points up one of the phenomena which always attend revolutions in government. When the General visited a boys' school my friend's young son was chosen to come forward and exhibit his abilities by writing in the General's presence a letter of appreciation on behalf of the school. When he had begun to write the General jocosely interrupted him with the query, 'Wait, you little rascal. Are you writing another complaint to me?' He receives hundreds of complaints a day, worthy and unworthy, by mail and telegraph, and they are turned over to the competent agencies for investigation. Sometimes they are a help in rooting out injustices and corrupt practices and officials, but very often they represent the attempt on the part of someone to get a knife into a personal enemy. Although I have been the target of a few complaints owing to the inflated ideas of our workmen, led by a malcontent, about what they could demand and get, I have been backed and helped by the harassed men of the regional labor office after they had made their investigation. The campaign to rid the government of corruption seems to be making headway and has thrown a salutary fear into many corners, but not a small part of its larger effectiveness is due to the moral tone lent to government service by the General himself who quite obviously, even to his opponents, wants nothing for himself except the betterment of his country and the life of its people.
  6. "This has been a good tourist year in Egypt. It seemed even late in the season that it would be a poor one owing to fear engendered by the Cairo riots of a year ago. However, the word got around that conditions were better than ever and people came from Europe and America. The situation was reflected and continues to be in the length of the list of callers who signed our guest book. Apart from the casual callers, thirty-six persons not of the regular staff have stayed at the house for varying lengths of time between November 17th and April 10th. They came from the US, England, Germany, Belgium, Canada and Australia. Most were Egyptologists going about their work or orientalist acquainting themselves with the monuments."

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