

figurait Taha Hussein entouré de ses étudiants et étudiantes. On cria au scandale! Les ennemis du progrès féminin voulaient que, jeunes filles et jeunes gens soient séparés dans les amphithéâtres, qu'il n'y ait aucune relation entre eux, qu'ils ne se parlent jamais... Le fait d'admettre le voisinage d'un jeune homme et d'une jeune fille sur les bancs de l'Université donnait lieu aux commentaires les plus divers. On considérait ce voisinage comme un véritable scandale.

Taha Hussein dut quitter l'Université. Il préféra renoncer aux avantages d'une belle situation plutôt que de céder un pouce des droits que l'Égyptienne venait d'acquérir. Ce fut une étape décisive dans l'Histoire de l'Émancipation de la Femme. Taha Hussein venait de poser les pierres fondamentales sur lesquelles devait s'élever, avec une vertigineuse rapidité, l'immense édifice du progrès féminin.

En 1937, réélu Doyen de la Faculté des Lettres, Taha Hussein vit naître de nouveaux incidents ayant toujours pour but la séparation des jeunes filles et des jeunes gens de l'Université. Les manifestants traversaient les rues du Caire, criant à tue-tête, et réclamant cette séparation.

Taha Hussein et ses collègues tinrent bon. La cause de la Femme était gagnée.

Pour la sauvegarde de ces droits, définitivement acquis, Taha Hussein fit les plus gros sacrifices. Toujours le promoteur du mouvement féministe en Egypte, il déploya sans cesse le maximum d'efforts pour la protection des intérêts de la femme.

Il prit une part active à la fondation de l'Université Farouk Ier. (Alexandrie). Les étudiantes de cette dernière Université furent également l'objet de sa sollicitude.

Celles qui partaient pour les Universités étrangères (La Sorbonne... etc.) avaient recours à lui chaque fois que des difficultés se présentaient.

Grâce aux efforts continus de Taha Hussein, le nombre des étudiantes d'Université doubla dans l'espace de quelques années. Et maintenant, dans tous les domaines de l'activité sociale, l'Égyptienne fait preuve de ses étonnantes capacités. Dans les branches les plus diverses, elle s'est mise au travail, toujours avec succès: en Médecine, au Barreau, dans le Journalisme, dans l'Enseignement, dans le Commerce, l'Agriculture... etc... etc. Un projet a été déposé au Parlement lui réclamant le droit de vote... Tous les chemins lui sont ouverts.

Cette victoire est due à ceux qui surent lutter et travailler, à ceux qui apprécient la joie de vaincre, à ceux qui aiment résoudre des problèmes, contourner des obstacles, gagner des batailles et ne jamais accepter de rester sur une défaite.

A leur tête, nous eûmes Taha Hussein qui nous donna un des plus beaux exemples de ce que peut une Volonté.

THE EGYPTIAN WOMAN AT THE UNIVERSITY

Up to a few score years ago, Egypt was overburdened with numerous traditions. Many of these were unyielding and aimed at completely isolating the woman, keeping her in total ignorance and only allowing her to live almost like an animal.

The woman always saw lofty walls raised in front of her, impenetrable partitions... separating her from the outside world and virtually burying her alive — our ancestors used to do this in reality. Women and men lived strictly apart. The women, completely unaware of what was happening in the world and lolling about, led a useless and uninteresting life.

This state of things prevailed as if it were necessary. A Herculean force was needed to overthrow these deep-rooted and consolidated customs which existed through so many generations. All the more, as these traditions were claimed to be based on religion which gave them a strong backing of favourable public opinion; the very opinion which was hardly able to distinguish between religious and social origin. Those who advocated for the veil, the sequestration and ignorance of the woman... always spoke with a quasi-religious authority. Yet, no verse in the Koran alludes to the veil, no verse demands the ignorance of the woman... The customs in question were of purely social origin and could have been made to disappear without any prejudice to religion. There always was confusion, however, between religious and social origin regarding some of the customs.

This serious misunderstanding lasted much too long. The word misunderstanding is not misused here, for had the Mohammedan religion been interpreted according to its true spirit and not to the letter as it was often done, the Moslem woman would have found herself among the most emancipated women of the world.

The first person who dared to raise his voice was Kassem Amin. It was a serious and sincere voice. In his works: 'The New Woman' and 'The Liberation of the Woman', he asked for the abolition of the veil, the education of the woman (at least primary education) and her freedom to go out... In short, he wished to break the chains that prevented the Mohammedan woman from leading a normal life.

Kassem Amin's two books unleashed a most vigorous controversy. Talaat Harb Pasha took the lead in a strong campaign against Kassem Amin who was soon in great trouble.

Kassem Amin made the biggest sacrifices and offered woman the beautiful present which she will always remember — the first step — after taking this, she was to strive and walk towards a brilliant future.

Then came the final stage, the question of higher education. A man made of the right stuff and able to put up a stern fight was now necessary. Taha Hussein took this great task upon himself.

In 1925 the Fuad I University of Cairo was inaugurated and the Chair of Arabic Literature at the Faculty of Arts was entrusted to Taha Hussein, the most brilliant contemporary author in Egypt. Five years later, he was made Dean of that same Faculty. Little by little many disciples gathered round him and formed a sort of school. It was in this home of intelligence and freedom that a nucleus of enthusiastic and gifted youths was first formed. Later, this group was destined to expand and to take part in all intellectual and social activities.

The question of admitting the Egyptian woman into the University, however, had not yet been raised. This was a very thorny subject. An unprecedented courage and a will of iron were necessary for this venture. A man was needed who would be ready to face a real storm of protests which would surely start as soon as the subject was mentioned.

Taha Hussein was the right man. He demanded the admission of the Egyptian woman into the University. With a few exceptions, all Egypt opposed him. The fighting was very hard; but Taha Hussein did not let go. Supported by Loutfy El Sayed Pasha and a few colleagues, he stood up against the reactionists and with a superhuman effort won his case. In 1929, Egyptian women were admitted into the University.

There followed a short lull. Later, the discussions and disputes were resumed. This happened in 1932, when a photograph of Taha Hussein, surrounded by his men and women students was published. Some people shouted: "scandal!" Those who were opposed to woman's progress, wanted the young men and the young women separated in the amphitheatres, no relations between them, no talking to one another... The mere fact of allowing young men and young women to sit side by side on the University benches started all sorts of comments. This proximity was considered really scandalous.

Taha Hussein was obliged to leave the University. He preferred to relinquish the advantages of a good post rather than give up one atom of the rights the Egyptian woman had recently acquired. This was a decisive stage in the History of the Emancipation of Woman. Taha Hussein had just laid the foundation stone on which the huge building of feminine progress was eventually to be built, at great speed.

In 1937, Taha Hussein was re-elected Dean of the Faculty of Arts and witnessed the start of new plans to separate the young University women from the men. Demonstrators marched through the streets of Cairo, shouting at the top of their voices, demanding this separation.

Taha Hussein and his colleagues held fast. The woman's case was won. To safeguard these finally acquired rights, Taha Hussein made the biggest sacrifices. Always the promoter of feminism in Egypt, he unceasingly exerted his utmost effort in protecting the claims of women.

He took an active part in the foundation of the Farouk I University (Alexandria). The women students of this University were also the object of his care. Those who left for foreign universities (La Sorbonne, etc.) turned to him for help whenever difficulties arose.

Thanks to Taha Hussein's continuous efforts, the number of women students at the University was doubled within a few years, and already the Egyptian woman has given proof of her wonderful capabilities in all spheres of social activity. She has successfully taken up work of all kinds: medicine, law, journalism, teaching, commerce, agriculture, etc. A Bill giving her the right of voting has been presented to Parliament... All roads are now open to her.

We owe this victory to those who knew how to fight and work, to those who appreciated victory, to those who liked to solve problems, overcome obstacles, win battles and who never accepted defeat.

Leading them, we had Taha Hussein who gave us one of the best examples of what will-power can do.

GOUTTES D'EAU

*Etre la poupée de sucre...
Pour que mon cœur en fête
Fonde entre ses doigts.*

*Et mon aimé dérobera sept rayons de lune
Pour les piquer en éventail dans mes cheveux.*

*Je ne veux plus t'aimer.
Le jour je t'engloutis dans l'océan qui nous sépare.
Je ne veux plus t'aimer.
Mais la nuit tu remontes en moi jusqu'aux étoiles.*

COLETTE NEVYNE