

PROLOGUE

The Turkiyya Hasan Affair

THE STORY OF THE TURKIYYA HASAN AFFAIR is told here from the perspectives of ten characters who were directly involved. The aim is to give insight into the diverging ways participants experienced, remembered, witnessed, or heard about the beating of Turkiyya Hasan in the Swedish Salaam Mission on the morning of June 7, 1933, and its aftermath. The narratives will revisit some of the same terrain, retracing steps and recounting conversations, to get at the heart of this explosive encounter between orphans, missionaries, Muslims, and officials of the semi-colonial state. An attempt has been made to give the points of view of all the major characters involved in the affair, but the Swiss missionary who caned Turkiyya is surprisingly silent. Alzire Richoz seemed to leave little record of her voice, only bruises on the body of a teenage girl.

At the Eye of the Storm: Turkiyya Hasan

Turkiyya al-Sayyid Hasan Yusuf remembered her arrival at the Swedish Salaam Mission in Port Said in a part of the city known as “Arab town” at the age of nine or ten. Her father had died (or vanished), her mother had been unable to care for her, and an older sister and brother were not able to raise her.¹ Upon her entry, the Finnish matron Anna Eklund told her, “Now you are our daughter in God,” and gave her a doll and chocolate, which she enjoyed, and images of a strange man. She realized it wasn’t Muhammad, for Muslims did not depict their prophet. Who was it? Only later did she learn that the images were of the man the missionaries called Jesus Christ.²

During the school year, Turkiyya studied with upwards of four hundred other day students in the mission girls' school. At night, the day students returned to their homes and parents; she stayed with the twenty or so female boarders at the mission, finding some distractions there. Encouraged by the Swedish founder of the mission, Maria Ericsson, she tried to teach the stream of adult visitors who came to visit how to speak some words of her native tongue. She made them repeat the Arabic words just as her teachers made her repeat words in the English language that they taught in the school.³

As the months grew into years, Turkiyya realized that living in the home came at a price: pressure to accept Jesus. She looked up to an older Muslim girl named Fathiyya, who clung to her faith in spite of extreme measures to convert her like placing a Qur'an in the girls' bathroom to make the Muslim girls boarding in the home ashamed of their religion. Turkiyya was happy to help Fathiyya get out of what she called "this desolate prison" in the spring of 1931. One night, Turkiyya kept watch while Fathiyya escaped, taking sanctuary in a local police station.⁴

Turkiyya missed the older girl and wished she could tell her about the disturbing letter she had received from Maria Ericsson over a year later: "My dear Turkey, will you be among those who are washed in the BLOOD of the LAMB?" the letter dated September 8, 1932, from Flint, Michigan, asked. "Are you ready when the Lord your Saviour comes? He is coming soon." Miss Ericsson then warned her, "Do not fight against Him any longer. Do not try to silence His voice speaking in your heart. The dear Lord is coming back very, very soon, and oh, what cries of agony there will be from all who rejected HIM. . . . For then the great day of HIS wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? . . . Even the mighty kings on earth shall not know how to escape from His judgment."⁵ Turkiyya hid this intimidating letter and another from Finland, hoping to show them to someone, anyone who could help, as proof that the missionaries were frightening the Muslim girls in the home into becoming Christians.⁶

The pressure on Turkiyya increased until her last Sunday at the home, when the acting principal, Miss Marshall, gathered the girls and asked for a sign from those "who want to be washed by the blood of Christ." Conversion appealed to some of her classmates, but it did not appeal to Turkiyya, so she kept quiet. Miss Marshall then told her privately to get "ready to travel to Zaytun," where the British Egypt General Mission had a home for female Muslim converts, "for it is time to wash you with the blood of Jesus, and we want to baptize you next Sunday."⁷ Turkiyya said that she was a Muslim and did not want to travel

to Zaytun to be baptized. At that, Miss Marshall slapped her across her face. Turkiyya ran out of the dining hall, refusing to eat with the missionaries that day or on Monday or Tuesday.⁸

On Wednesday, Turkiyya was pulled aside by Miss Richoz and was forced to listen to the missionary speak about Jesus for a quarter of an hour. Having had enough, Turkiyya ran up to the building roof. "Oh God, I am a Muslim," she shouted out, calling for salvation from "these tyrannical people." She knew Richoz, who had followed her up, had heard her and saw that the American missionary John Afman, who headed the Salaam Mission boys' school, was there on the roof as well. She sat down, preoccupied and angry, and when Afman left, she refused to rise. When Miss Richoz asked her why she hadn't risen, she replied, "I forgot." Richoz admonished Turkiyya for her bad manners, to which Turkiyya retorted: "These are the manners that I learned here at this school."⁹

Turkiyya was surprised by the intensity of Miss Richoz's reaction and unprepared. First the missionary attacked her with a sharp pen, and when she screamed out in pain, Miss Richoz dragged her inside a sitting room on the roof and closed the door. Richoz then began hitting her with both hands on her head and face, telling her not to scream like a Muslim, "because we are not Muslims here." The missionary next picked up a cane and beat Turkiyya with it in a frenzy, and then threw Turkiyya down on a sofa, sat on her back, covered her mouth with her hand to muffle her screams, and continued to beat her. With great effort Turkiyya lifted herself off the couch to ask, "Are you trying to kill me?" to which Miss Richoz replied, "I won't kill you, but I will kill the devil that keeps you from Jesus."¹⁰ When Turkiyya had finally stopped screaming, Richoz told her she believed she had been chosen by Jesus, to which Turkiyya replied that she wasn't chosen, that she was a Muslim from a Muslim family. She fled, retreating into the room that she shared with other girls, and fell into a deep sleep from exhaustion.¹¹

The next day, Thursday, Turkiyya's nephew came by the mission to ask after her. She told him to tell her sister Amina to come quickly, because they wanted to take her away the following day. When her sister came, Turkiyya showed her the marks on her body from the beating and cried. Angered, Amina went to talk to Miss Marshall and Miss Richoz, but they refused to let her take Turkiyya out of the orphanage. They did give her Turkiyya's birth certificate, which they had wanted to keep in order to baptize the girl. Turkiyya then asked her sister to find someone, anyone, who could get her out of the orphanage, for she was worried that the next morning she would be forced to leave for Zaytun.¹²

That night her brother appeared to ask for her release. Still, the missionaries refused to let her go. Only when her sister and brother-in-law showed up with a Port Said police officer who said he had orders to have Turkiyya released into his custody did they relent. On her way out, Turkiyya grabbed a bag containing the letters from Maria Ericsson and other missionaries. At the police station, she told the story of Richoz beating her to make her accept Christianity and showed the medical examiner the cuts and bruises on her arms and legs, and the gouge close to the spine that really hurt. She listened as he said that she was going to be put under observation at the hospital for a few days.¹³

Instead of undergoing a baptism in Zaytun that Sunday, as the missionaries had planned, Turkiyya appeared before the Parquet. She told the officials from the Port Said office of the Department of Prosecution in the Ministry of Justice investigating the case that the matron had beaten her for refusing to embrace Christianity. The prosecutors then cross-examined her on statements they had already taken from Richoz and Marshall that she had been ill-behaved and impolite. Turkiyya admitted that she had made a scornful remark to the matron, yet she insisted that the missionary's desire to convert her was the reason for the beating. As evidence she pointed to four other Muslim girls who had been converted at the school—half of the eight who lived in the home. As further proof of the pressure brought to bear on her, she pointed to the letters she had slipped into her bag when she left the home.¹⁴

Overnight Turkiyya's life changed, as she was catapulted from anonymity in the orphanage to the public limelight. Her picture at the public prosecutor's office appeared prominently on the front pages of Egypt's largest daily newspaper, *al-Ahram*, as well as on page one of *al-Jihad*. Other newspapers—*al-Balagh*, *Kawkab al-Sharq*, and *al-Siyasa*—carried stories about her ordeal.¹⁵

"All of you must have heard of the sad incidents which the missionaries commit behind a veil," she told a crowd of some sixty people gathered at the Port Said home of a local merchant, Muhammad Effendi Sarhan, a week after the beating. "It is not my intention to relate to you any of these incidents as you have already read a great deal about them in the newspapers." Rather, she said, "by standing before you tonight, I mean to warn you against the grave danger menacing our sacred religion as a result of leaving Muslim boys and girls in these dangerous schools." Seeking to help those she had left behind in the Swedish Salaam Mission, Turkiyya exhorted her audience: "If you knew the fate which would inevitably befall these boys and girls if you allow them to remain

in these schools, you would sacrifice money and soul to rescue them from the certainty of becoming infidels.”¹⁶

Turkiyya continued, “The events of today and yesterday have proven that there are Muslims who will not accept seeing their religion insulted.” Imploring listeners to do “everything in your power, promptly and firmly, to establish an orphanage in which these tortured victims can seek refuge,” she stressed that the children “are looking forward to your efforts with hearts full of hope.”¹⁷ Turkiyya’s words sparked attendees to donate three hundred pounds toward a new orphanage, and her new guardian, Dr. Muhammad Sulayman, helped to organize the effort. She was pleased that those friends she had left behind in the orphanage would not be forgotten.¹⁸

Basking in her newfound freedom, Turkiyya was now being looked after by a concerned circle of supporters who were impressed by her standing up to the missionaries. But there were others who saw the affair through completely different lenses.

All Hell Is Breaking Loose: The Governor’s Predicament

On Sunday, June 11, four days after the beating of Turkiyya, the governor of the Canal at Port Said, Hasan Fahmi Rifa’at Bey, telephoned the British advisor in the Ministry of Interior, Sir Alexander Keown-Boyd, to discuss what Europeans were euphemistically calling “the missionary incident.” He told Keown-Boyd that the affair had “taken a serious aspect,” and that he was expecting a large delegation of Muslim protestors in his office. Keown-Boyd tried to dismiss the matter as an ordinary case of punishment, suggesting that the girl’s story was being taken up by local politicians who wished to cause embarrassment. The governor replied that there was more to it than that.¹⁹

“You know me well enough to realise that I have no personal feelings in the matter. I do not care if the whole of Port Said or Egypt embraces Christianity or any other religion,” Rifa’at Bey told Keown-Boyd. But he did care about the escalating protests under his watch. The statements the Parquet had taken from the acting principal of the Swedish Salaam School, Alice Marshall, about disciplining the girl may have been true, “but at the same time I must point out that the affair is really serious. It is admitted that the girl was beaten.” The Swedish Salaam School had already been in trouble, he said, referring to a recent controversy surrounding a young woman (Nazla Ghunaym) who had converted to Christianity, quickly renounced her new faith, and then renounced that renunciation. Now “99% of the population honestly believe that the girls are forcibly

Christianised and feeling is running so high that I receive complaints not only from Moslems but also from Copts and the school has become a menace to the peace and security of Port Said.²⁰

Rifaʿt Bey reluctantly greeted the delegation of six prominent Muslim men who arrived at his office at noon on Monday. The visitors included Dr. Muhammad Sulayman (an ophthalmologist), Muhammad Sarhan and Hamid Tira (local merchants), ʿAbd al-Halim al-Shamrawi (an editor of *al-Balagh*), and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Issawi and Shaykh Mahmud Jumʿa Hilba (Muslim clerics). The men handed him a petition against the Swedish Salaam Mission School with five hundred signatures, an impressive number given the short time frame, requesting “His Excellency” to remove all the Muslim students from the school immediately and close it down.²¹

But the governor was not a man to be pressured, even by a group that appeared to be well organized and that included members of an Islamic reform organization called the Muslim Brotherhood of Port Said. He told the men visiting his office that “if they wish to prevent girls from going to this school, they should first establish a mission, where the orphans and the poor can find food and clothes.” Trying to stop the protest from expanding, Rifaʿt Bey ordered the men to stop writing about the “missionary incident” in the press and to be “men of deeds and not words.”²² Yet his order came too late, or it was ignored, for a petition submitted to the king from the Muslim Brotherhood of Port Said appeared in *al-Jihad* that day and another was published in *al-Balagh* the following day.²³

To add insult to injury, a group of women in Port Said was planning a protest, too. According to intelligence provided to the governor by William Ablitt, the British police commander in Port Said, the women intended to send a telegram to King Fuʿad to voice their opposition to the activities of local evangelicals. Rifaʿt Bey realized that “Hanim” (Lady) Turkiyya’s case gave the female activists a prime example of inappropriate missionary zeal. (Given the girl’s economic background, he thought, she was hardly a lady.) Yet there was little he could do until he received instructions from Cairo. His earlier phone call to Keown-Boyd only produced instructions to write a report. Maybe the petitions would force those in the capital to realize that something needed to be done quickly to quell this storm.²⁴

On Tuesday, word finally came from Cairo that the matron who beat the girl was being expelled from Egypt, which was a great relief to Rifaʿt Bey. He also received instructions to take custody of the remaining Muslim children

in the Swedish Salaam Mission. His commander of police escorted four girls and two boys to Cairo, where amidst great publicity they were turned over to the Ministry of Interior to be placed in government institutions. Others were handed back to their families.²⁵

Yet even the exit of Richoz and the removal of the Muslim children from the orphanage did not subdue local anger. That Thursday, Miss Marshall telephoned his office, concerned about the veiled threats the mission had received about an impending attack. Rifa't Bey agreed to Ablitt's plan to place a police detail outside the building, giving inhabitants round-the-clock protection, and he informed the American consul that he had taken the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of the mission and its teachers. The governor hoped that calm would finally prevail in Port Said, "that the whole matter would be dropped by all concerned and allowed to die a natural death."²⁶

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Minister of Interior

Egyptian minister of interior Mahmud Fahmi al-Qaysi Pasha had been dismayed by the disturbing reports coming from Muslims and Copts in Port Said during the second week of June. Having been notified of an upcoming protest to the king and agitation by the head of al-Azhar, al-Qaysi Pasha was worried about the widening storm.²⁷ The interior minister didn't need special intelligence to tell him about the troubles brewing in the northeast of the country. He could read of the beating of the fifteen-year-old Muslim orphan in Port Said in the daily press, which blamed the government for leniency in dealing with Christian missionaries and negligence in defending the official religion of the state.²⁸

Al-Qaysi Pasha admitted that the government had little to show for its promises to the public in the wake of previous missionary scandals. Yet he recognized that the Egyptian ministers could do little: their hands were tied by British advisors who watched their every move and a British occupation that protected Christian evangelical activity. They were impeded, too, by the Capitulations—fiscal and legal privileges enshrined in treaties inherited from the Ottomans—giving extraterritorial immunities to Europeans and Americans in Egypt. This made it difficult, if not nearly impossible, for al-Qaysi's government to prosecute missionaries (though those who beat young girls might be an exception). Matters were further complicated by the fact that Egyptian law protected freedom of religion, which the missionaries took to mean freedom to spread the gospel and change religion, and Muslims took to mean freedom to protect Islam from proselytizers and to practice minority religions.²⁹

Yet the truth of the matter, as al-Qaysi Pasha had to admit, was that the government had little desire to crack down on missionary activity. Even before Prime Minister Isma'íl Sidqi Pasha had left for Europe to recuperate from a heart ailment, its attempts had been pretty dismal.³⁰ From an economic point of view, the missionaries provided social services on the cheap, and as interior minister he knew Egypt needed the hospitals, schools, and refuges for the destitute that they had opened.

On Monday, June 12, after the beating of the teenage girl, al-Qaysi Pasha met with the Council of Ministers to discuss strategies to deal with the affair and to counter opposition attacks. The council resolved that whatever the Parquet in Port Said concluded, the government would deport the matron involved in the beating and extract the Muslim girls still in the Swedish Salaam Mission. After the meeting, al-Qaysi Pasha informed Keown-Boyd of its decisions and asked him to contact the proper consular authorities so the matron could be quickly deported.³¹

When al-Qaysi Pasha received the report from the Parquet that Monday afternoon, he found the alarming letter that the founder of the orphanage had sent to the Muslim orphan girl, Turkiyya. "Mr. Keown-Boyd—you have told me often that the missionaries do not press or incite Moslem children to change their religion," he told the British advisor. "Here are documents which prove that they use both cajolery and intimidation."³² With further proof that the missionaries had overstepped their bounds, the council resisted some of Keown-Boyd's pressure to tone down the official statement. Al-Qaysi Pasha obtained the advisor's grudging approval of the Arabic statement he proposed reading in Parliament the next day, which the British judicial advisor in the Ministry of Justice had already approved.³³

That Wednesday, June 14, al-Qaysi Pasha stood in front of the Chamber of Deputies to read the Council of Ministers' statement summarizing the Parquet report on the Turkiyya Hasan affair:

As soon as the police learned of this incident, before the newspapers published the story, they began an investigation, which the Parquet completed. The inquiry revealed that Turkiyya al-Sayyid Yusuf testified that the matron of the home beat her for her refusal to embrace Christianity. When medically examined, she was found to have contusions requiring her to be placed under observation in the hospital for three days. The matron and principal of the home admitted that the first had beaten Turkiyya because she was ill-mannered and rude

to her. But they denied that they asked her to embrace Christianity and stated that they gave the students their choice in religious beliefs. When Turkiyya was questioned on the matron's and principal's statement, she answered that she in fact had been rude to the matron but she insisted that the desire to induce her to change her religion was among the reasons she was beaten.³⁴

Al-Qaysi Pasha then informed the Chamber of Deputies of the actions the government had already taken. First, the matron of the school had been forced to leave Egypt. Second, the remaining Muslim girls in the refuge were in the process of being sent to government institutions or those of Islamic associations to be cared for and educated at government expense. Third, the government had allocated 70,000 pounds for new institutions and refuges to provide orphans and destitute children with a sound upbringing. The interior minister hoped that the plan he had put together with Keown-Boyd would quiet the affair.³⁵

Reading the organ of his party, *al-Sha'b*, al-Qaysi Pasha found some peace of mind. The paper reported that the government was taking adequate measures in response to the missionary incident. It also suggested to other papers that rather than criticize the government, they ought to urge Muslim parents not to send their children to missionary schools and to establish alternative educational institutions instead. It added that the government could not close missionary schools in the absence of proof of coercion to embrace Christianity.³⁶

Yet much to his dismay, al-Qaysi Pasha's remarks in Parliament drew a mixed response. While many applauded the deportation of the matron and the allocation of funds for Islamic institutions, others viewed the actions as insufficient. The opposition press continued to assail the government. When al-Qaysi Pasha returned to Parliament eight days later to present legislation on allocating the funds to build orphanages, he came again under heated attack.³⁷ The matter would not go away so easily. Yet he had begun to see ways the government might be able to take advantage of the matter, pushing back against the British occupation and becoming the champions of Egypt's children.

Pulling Strings: The British Man on the Spot

In his twenty-six years of serving British imperial interests in the Sudan and Egypt, Keown-Boyd had never seen anything quite like this. As director general of the European Department of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior and the man meant to protect foreigners in Egypt, he had his work cut out for him. Although Egypt had technically gained independence in 1922 and had its own

constitution and Parliament, Keown-Boyd and his British colleagues preserved imperial interests with behind-the-scenes maneuvering; a show of force here, a word or piece of timely advice there. The Egyptian notables who wanted a slice of the pie knew the game, which Keown-Boyd had mastered.³⁸

Yet the Protestant missionaries had really put the British in a tight spot this time. It was on the morning of Saturday, June 10, that Keown-Boyd first heard from Ablitt that a girl in the Swedish Salaam School had told the police that she had been beaten in order to accept Christianity. After instructing the police commander to ascertain the facts directly from Miss Marshall, he waited to hear the missionaries' defense. Shortly thereafter Ablitt informed him that the "beating was not denied" but, according to the missionaries, had been inflicted on the girl for "rudeness and disobedience" by a Miss Richoz.³⁹

The next morning, Keown-Boyd learned that the case had been handed over to the Parquet to investigate. Concerned that it could easily go against the Europeans, he instructed Ablitt to ensure that Miss Marshall and Miss Richoz gave statements to the public prosecutors and that a police officer was sent to the court so that "statements were properly taken." Next he called Zaki Hamza Bey, a deputy in Port Said who sat on the Parquet, to tell him not to close the investigation without these statements and those of corroborating witnesses. His instructions were meant to lead to a favorable report and the desired outcome—the dropping of the case.⁴⁰

At first Keown-Boyd thought that the incident had been overblown and anticipated that the strategy he had set in motion in Port Said would quiet the storm. But late Sunday morning, he received the medical examiner's report and realized immediately that it "alter[ed] the whole aspect of the question." The report described Turkiyya's abrasions: contusions of nearly two inches length on both calves, three contusions of the same length on her left arm, and smaller cuts on her forearm and left wrist. There was also a two-inch contusion on her back. She obviously had been beaten badly. "If the contusions were in fact caused by Miss Richoz's blows, there is to my mind no justification for that lady's behavior and she will have placed us in a very difficult position," Keown-Boyd admitted to his British colleagues. "Egyptian sentiment is strongly opposed at any time to the beating of girls in schools and such indiscriminate hitting does not conform to the accepted ideas as to what the behavior of a Christian teacher should be."⁴¹

From his experience directing the European Department, Keown-Boyd knew that only designated personnel had permission to cane students in foreign schools, and only within certain bounds: the principal had the authority to

cane Turkiyya but Alzire Richoz did not, and a caning was to be administered in a prescribed way. Neither had the right to use the sort of force Richoz had used that day.⁴² Egyptian law was quite clear on that: a 1902 law on school regulations (Number 898) had restricted corporal punishment, outlining what was accepted and unacceptable for different aged school children.⁴³ Keown-Boyd awaited the Parquet's report to see whether it confirmed that Miss Richoz had inflicted the injuries. If she were found responsible, "then I think the Missionaries in Egypt will be well advised to see to it that she takes herself as soon as possible to her native country where she can practice her muscular Christianity on hardier maidens."⁴⁴ Keown-Boyd had clearly lost patience with aggressive Protestant proselytizers who were now breaking laws.

When the minutes of the Parquet's inquiry arrived in Keown-Boyd's office in Cairo on Monday afternoon, June 12, they confirmed that Miss Richoz had beaten Turkiyya, inflicting some eight or nine blows. Keown-Boyd's job now was to arrange for the quick exit of Miss Richoz from the country.⁴⁵ Early the next day, Tuesday, Keown-Boyd admitted two compatriots, Alice Marshall and George Swan (who headed the Egypt General Mission and chaired the Inter-Mission Council) into his office. After listening to Miss Marshall's bare-bones account of the case, he asked his colleague Judge Arthur Booth, the British legal advisor in the Ministry of Justice, to join them. Keown-Boyd then told the missionaries that the actions of Miss Richoz had "placed the government in a very difficult and embarrassing situation." Complaints had "poured in" from different directions, articles had "flooded" the newspapers, and most Egyptians now believed the girl had been beaten to force her to become a Christian. He emphasized that "corporal punishment in schools was forbidden in Egypt, and a beating of the nature indicated ought never to have occurred." Keown-Boyd then conveyed the government's position that Miss Richoz should leave Egypt at once and that the home should hand over any Muslim girls living there to the authorities right away.⁴⁶

Keown-Boyd allowed Swan to consult the Inter-Mission Council, a group comprising representatives of evangelical organizations in Egypt, while he updated the minister of interior and consulted with legal authorities. In the midst of this shuttle diplomacy, Marshall and Swan returned with a delegation that included the heads of the American University in Cairo and the British Church Missionary Society. The evangelicals said that they would accept the government's proposal, but they wanted a declaration that the enquiry had established that the incident at Port Said was a beating for disciplinary purposes and not an

attempt to forcibly convert the girl. Keown-Boyd then went back to the minister of interior with the desired change to the proposal.⁴⁷

While the Council of Ministers considered the new text, Keown-Boyd returned to his meeting with the missionaries. This time, his patience stretched very thin, he repeated the government's ultimatum. Marshall agreed to hand over the Muslim children in the school to their parents or guardians and to send Miss Richoz to Palestine that night. At that point, the head of the British Church Missionary Society asked Keown-Boyd whether Miss Richoz would be permitted to return to Egypt, at least to Cairo if not Port Said. Keown-Boyd, who could not quite believe the man's audacity, replied that while he would not blacklist her right away, it was best to leave this matter alone.⁴⁸

With little room to maneuver, Keown-Boyd accepted the final Arabic draft that al-Qaysi read to him. After concluding the marathon negotiations, he assessed the affair. The evidence—the medical report and Maria Ericsson's letter to Turkiyya—had opened his eyes to the culpability of the missionaries. "This letter, I think you will agree, quite possibly may have caused a girl at the susceptible age of 15 mental torture vastly greater than any physical pain caused by the beating," he wrote to his British colleagues. "This and similar attempts at conversion might I think quite possibly account for the unruly and exasperating frame of mind in which she now appears to be. It seems far from impossible that these good ladies have actually driven the girl to take refuge in Islam."⁴⁹

Keown-Boyd was not "favorably impressed" by Alice Marshall and affirmed that "certain disclosures as to missionary methods made in connection with this case have considerably shocked us." Although he realized that his mandate was to protect European nationals and British interests, he thought that immediate steps were needed to rein in independent or semi-independent missionary bodies.⁵⁰ He agreed with the words of the acting high commissioner: British officials could not be at the "mercy of the unwise or fanatical among the missionaries."⁵¹ They could not keep putting out fires, particularly one that had spread all the way to the British Parliament, where the opposition was questioning the response to the affair.⁵² Obviously, Keown-Boyd saw the situation quite differently from those affiliated with the Swedish Salaam Mission.

Unfortunate Absence: The Acting Head of the Home

How unfortunate to have been out of the school Wednesday, June 7, when Turkiyya chose to act up, thought Alice Marshall. Perhaps Turkiyya had thought she could test the diminutive Alzire Richoz, who had filled in for her that

day. The girl must have really acted out for Richoz to so lose her temper. Still, Marshall thought she had contained the matter, for when Turkiyya's sister and brother stopped by the school for an explanation, they "seemed to be satisfied that the punishment had been justly administered."⁵³ But then a police officer came to remove the girl, and two days later the commander of police in Port Said notified her that the matter was being investigated.

Now Marshall had to sort out this mess. On Sunday, she gave a statement, saying that although Turkiyya had been beaten—how could she deny it, given the marks on her body?—it had been for disciplinary reasons. Marshall stuck by that line and instructed Richoz and Nafisa, an Egyptian resident in the orphanage who witnessed the event, to do the same.⁵⁴

On Tuesday, she had to give an explanation of the event to Keown-Boyd. She told him that Miss Richoz had been anxious about Turkiyya, a girl who was "not clever, apt to be bad-mannered and at times unruly," and who had set a bad example for the other girls. Richoz, she suggested, wanted to "reduce Turkia to order" before she went on leave. That day the girl had "failed to stand up to show respect to some distinguished American visitors." Given the location of the roof chapel, "exposed to the curious gaze of the neighbours," Richoz had ordered Turkiyya "into a room for private chastisement." The girl was "rude and aggressive," and "showed fight and seized the cane." Richoz, though smaller than Turkiyya, was tough, and "regained mastery of the situation and clearly by this time considerably roused, hit the girl with the stick where she could."⁵⁵

Marshall had expected Keown-Boyd and Judge Booth to be more sympathetic to the missionaries' point of view than they were. Instead, they gave her an ultimatum: either the mission would send Miss Richoz out of Egypt and immediately hand over the Muslim children in the orphanage to the government or the authorities would prosecute Richoz for administering corporal punishment.⁵⁶ The hastily convened Inter-Mission Council, of which the Swedish Salaam Mission was a member, advised Marshall to accept the government's proposal. Since she could not let her colleague stand trial, the acting principal agreed.⁵⁷

Rushing from the capital to Port Said, Marshall took charge of the mission. Richoz had left for Palestine, where she was certain to find sanctuary in a friendly mission, and Marshall began to arrange for the transfer of the Muslim girls back to their families. She hoped that things would now quiet down. Unfortunately, some young men were hanging about the mission making veiled threats, which Marshall reported to the Swedish legation, the governor, and the police.⁵⁸