Egyptian Leader of Women's Rights Tells Of Literacy and Suffrage Gains in Land
New York Times (1857-Current file); Nov 2, 1954; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 20
pg. 30

Egyptian Leader of Women's Rights Tells Of Literacy and Suffrage Gains in Land

If women have equal rights they should take equal responsibilities, according to a present-day champion of women's suffrage.

She is Mme. Doria Shafik, who described yesterday the struggle by Egyptian women over the last thirty-five years to achieve emancipation. She spoke at a meeting of the National Council of Women of the United States in the Carnegie Endowment International Center, 345 East Forty-sixth Street.

A leader in what she described as "the last and greatest fight, that for the vote for women," Mme. Shafik reflects the emancipated life for which Egyptian women fought in the past. At the meeting she was smartly dressed in a black wool jersey ensemble, her black hair covered with a vivid pink hat. The traditional veil worn by Moslem women in Egypt is disappearing, largely because of the efforts of the "mother" of the Egyptian feminist movement, Mme. Hoda Charaoui Pasha, Mme. Shafik explained.

Mme. Shafik received a doctorate from the Sorbonne in Paris after studying in Alexandria. In 1924 there were no secondary schools for women in Egypt. In 1929 the University of Cairo was opened to women.

A poet and novelist, Mme. Shafik is a publisher of five magazines. During the last six years, she and the Daughters of the Nile (Bent el Nil) group, of which she is president, have worked for women's suffrage. Egyptian women now, she said, have been promised that their political rights will be written into the new Egyptian constitution. Mme. Shafik and her colleagues stormed the Parliament buildings and went on a hunger strike to obtain this promise.

"To fight is most important to a human being," she said. "Without it we can do nothing interesting."

Fighting the battle of illiteracy in Egypt is the civic responsibility Mme. Shafik has taken on. She estimates that in her country 60 per cent of the population is illiterate today. Her goal is 100 per cent literacy.

She started her literacy projects when she was told by Government representatives that the vote would be given only to literate women. "Although I felt that the vote was a civic—not a literate—right, I set out to find out how fast we could teach women," she said.

The Daughters of the Nile operate fifty schools in which 2,000 women learn to read and write in three months. One of her magazines ran a competition based on Dr. Frank C. Laubach's method of teaching reading with phonetics and illustrations. Rather than his "Each One Teach One" method, the readers were each asked to teach ten. Of the one thousand persons taught in this campaign, 78 per cent passed the examination given by the Ministry of Education at the end of the course, she said.

Mme. Shafik predicts that in three years her 100 per cent literacy goal for Egypt will be reached.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.