

Resigned

Al-Wadi, 20 July 1934

Yes, the good man has resigned from the leadership of his great party — and had he not been a good man, he would never have accepted that leadership in the first place. And the good man has resigned from the premiership — and had he not been a good man, he would never have accepted the premiership either. For men of his kind, good men, were never made to lead parties, or to head ministries; they were made to enjoy ample wealth and a soft life, to frequent their clubs, and to appear at social gatherings where people chatter endlessly and take nothing seriously, great or small.

This is exactly the sort of thing a good man was made for. But greed tempts, and vanity burdens people with more than they can bear, and behind good men there always stand wicked men who push them and they lurch forward, who pull them and they are dragged along, who raise them up and they rise, who bring them down and they fall — playing with them the way a child plays with a ball, and the good men obey them the way a ball obeys a child. Tell them, 'Come forward and take power,' and they never hesitate to come forward. Tell them, 'Stay in power,' and they never refuse to stay. Then tell them, 'Step down from power,' and they feel no shame stepping down: their own will is never consulted in any of this, because their will is incapable of attaching itself to any of it — and perhaps some of them have no will at all, since will finds no home in men of this kind.

And the strange thing about these good men is that they do not obey the advocates of good; they place no faith in honest counselors or sincere friends; they obey instead the men of mischief, and answer the call of the advocates of corruption. Perhaps the reason is this: that the honest men who love sincere counsel, and who take care and integrity seriously in both word and deed, simply do not trust men of this kind, do not feel at ease with them, and do not rely on them when things get serious — knowing full well they are capable of nothing in that regard. It is almost as though God Almighty had created these good men to be the skillful, unwilling instruments of clever schemers who honor no right they ought to respect, who take neither diligence nor sincerity seriously, and who seek nothing but the quick gains that bring honor neither to those who chase them nor to those who broker them. Whatever the case, something

pushed the good man toward the premiership, and he went along with the push; something pulled him away from the premiership, and he let himself be pulled; something raised him to the leadership of his party, and he rose; and then something lowered him from the leadership of his party, and he fell. And the amusing thing is that he was

a good man in the broadest and most exact sense of that word, so that the deceptiveness of words, and the enchantment of appearances, deceived him into thinking he really was Prime Minister — and he came to believe this, and remained convinced of it right up until the moment he resigned from the premiership; and thought likewise that he was leader of his party — and came to believe this too, and remained convinced of it right up until the moment he resigned from the party's leadership as well. Nor did he stop at mere belief and conviction: he actually took it upon himself to carry out the work of a leader, speaking as leaders speak, giving orders and prohibitions as leaders give orders and prohibitions, while everyone believed, without exception, that he neither spoke nor commanded nor forbade anything at all. As for Abrashi Pasha, he was the one who actually spoke, ordered, and forbade — yet the good man himself believed he was the one who spoke, the one who ordered, the one who forbade, and perhaps he even believed he was the one mocking Abrashi Pasha as he pleased — all because he was a good man, resembling Yehia Pasha. And it is worth noting that Yehia Pasha himself has acknowledged that these people, who conspire together, imagine that they are the ones giving orders and issuing prohibitions, and suppose that they are the ones who forbid, and see themselves as ruling, expressing, representing, and believe themselves to be acting, when in fact they do none of it.

The good man resigned from the leadership of the People's Party without any noise or uproar, leaving the entire political field to whoever wished to hold sway in it and roam it freely — wicked men and good men both. Nor has he despaired of returning to that field one day, for he remains, even now, a good man, still waiting for some wicked man to push him forward, should the opportunity arise or circumstances permit, so that he might become Prime Minister once more, and gain control over the affairs of the People's Party — if the People's Party still manages to survive that long.

The good man had once appeared to resist Sidqi Pasha, and had once appeared to resist all of Egypt — resisting Sidqi within the People's Party, and resisting Egypt from the premiership. It has now become clear and evident that the man resisted neither the one nor the other; it was

Abrashi who fought Sidqi Pasha and defeated him, and it was Abrashi who fought the Egyptian people and was defeated by them.

Men like the good man can be found in many countries of the earth, and we in Egypt have no shortage of examples among them. One of them was once Prime Minister; one was once President of the Senate; one was once Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, in that hateful era — wanted to appear, so they appeared; then wanted to vanish, so they vanished, and they now sit on the shelf, waiting to be wanted again on the political stage. They are pitiable men, and war ought not to be waged against them, for they are simply incapable of standing in its fire. War ought instead to be waged against the wicked men who exploit their weakness and naivety, burdening them with more than they can bear, and burdening the people, through them, with a heavy and unjust weight. And so long as Abrashi Pasha, and men like Abrashi Pasha, remain

in Egypt, there will always be, in Egypt, an Abdel Fattah Pasha, and men like Abdel Fattah Pasha, among the good men. If Egyptians wish to be safe from the harm of good men, there is no way to that safety except by first making themselves safe from the harm of wicked men — and they will never achieve this unless they legislate for themselves laws and rules that keep the unaccountable from meddling in the work of the accountable, that punish those who trespass in politics for their trespass, and that punish ministers, however good they may be, for overstepping the rights and duties of ministers. If Egyptians legislate these laws, and adopt these rules and principles, and find, in respecting and enforcing them, the security that men like Abrashi Pasha will never again arise among them to corrupt the seriousness of serious governments, and to make sport of good ministers however he pleases — who knows? Perhaps, if Egyptians legislate these laws and adopt these rules and principles, they might cure Zaki al-Abrashi Pasha and his kind of their malice, and cure Abdel Fattah Yehia Pasha and his kind of that goodness which makes one laugh and weep in the very same breath.

Let Egyptians, government and people alike, take my word for it, as the saying goes: there is no cure for their political maladies except that the word 'accountability' should come to mean something. Let no minister, or anyone else, commit wrongdoing while feeling safe from punishment. I swear that if Sidqi and his companions, and Abrashi and his henchmen, had been punished for the sins they committed, the burdens they bore, the rights they squandered, and the dignity they trampled, the Egyptian air would have been purified of corruption and

the corrupt. But the word 'accountability' in Egypt remains a word that runs off tongues without ever reaching hearts — an empty word to this day, signifying nothing. What punishment has ever befallen the corrupt ministers for the corruption they spread? They live secure, they live in comfort, they take pleasure in the fortunes they amassed, they wait for their next opportunity and prepare themselves for whatever circumstances arise. As for the Egyptian people — their very victim, the very people they burdened with every torment — they are blamed even now, when they show the slightest joy at the passing of their ordeal, the lifting of that evil, and the end of that corruption.

No — this is not how the idea of justice takes root in people's hearts, and this is not how sound political education is built for a people. Those who wish to fill the Egyptian heart with love of justice, with trust and confidence in it, must be prepared to punish the corrupt for their corruption, and to bring Sidqi Pasha and his companions, and Abrashi Pasha and his henchmen, and these good men too, before judges, to answer for what they have done, and to bear the true consequences of their actions — to bear them so plainly, so unmistakably, that every Egyptian can feel it,

and so that the wronged may know that the injustice done to them was not in vain, that the comfort of these corrupt men is not worth more than the people's own comfort, and that the corrupt are never rewarded for their corruption with safety, ease, and comfort, while the wronged are compensated only with sympathy that avails nothing, and condolences that help no one.

The good man has now resigned from the leadership of the People's Party, and Sidqi Pasha resigned before him, and Abrashi Pasha may yet resign from his post at the Palace — but none of this will do the people any good at all. It will not repay the wronged for what befell them, nor restore to those whose rights were stolen what these men squandered of their rights; and it will certainly never restore to the martyrs of that hateful era the lives that were seized from them, and from their nation, by force.

Taha Hussein

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