

Sidqi Pasha, Who...

To My Friend Tawfiq Diab

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), December 6, 1934

Yes, my dear sir — Sidqi Pasha, who...; and you may place after this "who" whatever clauses you please, and you may forge these clauses of fire, or forge them of ice, or forge them of something between the two, neither excessive in heat nor excessive in cold; and you may fill them with whatever jest you like, or whatever earnestness you like, and depict in them, as our friend Tawfiq Diab has depicted, what sin Sidqi Pasha committed, what burden he bore, what he inflicted upon the Egyptians in their persons and their blood, in their interests and their wealth, in their rights and their dignities, in their consciences and their morals; and you may compose, from all this, images injurious to every pure soul, to every noble heart, to every clean conscience, to every cultivated, civilised human being; and you may fill with them the newspapers that appear in the morning — foremost among them Al-Jihad — and those that appear in the evening, and those that appear every day, and those that appear in Egypt and beyond Egypt; and you may fill with them the lectures, speeches, and talks delivered in clubs and assemblies, and broadcast in gatherings and conclaves; and you may fill with all this the earth and the sky, openly and in secret, in light and in darkness — yet Sidqi Pasha will see all of it, and hear all of it, and smile at all of it the smile of the calm and untroubled man, the smile of the scornful, disdainful man, the smile of one who cares for nothing because he fears nothing, pities nothing, and reckons with nothing.

Yes, my dear sir — Sidqi Pasha, who... did what he wished and what he did not wish, and left undone what he liked and what he did not like, and held a whole nation in contempt, and tormented an entire people, and humiliated a homeland that had believed it would never be exposed to humiliation. Sidqi Pasha, who... — this man — is secure, untroubled; no summons from the Prosecution has called him, no one has brought him before the courts, no one has called him to account for anything he did, no one has taken him to task for anything he left undone. And stranger than all this, my dear sir, is that he presented himself to the dissolved Parliament, asking to be questioned, and the dissolved Parliament refused to question him. And stranger than this, my dear sir, is that the people whom Sidqi Pasha tormented and harmed, whose rights he

squandered outright, and whose dignity he treated with contempt outright, itself asked the dissolved Parliament to question him — and the dissolved Parliament refused to question him.

And stranger than all this, my dear sir, is that Sidqi Pasha, who... — this man — still stands, smiling, coming and going, speaking of politics, writing of politics, publishing on politics, striving in politics; and people still listen to him, and ponder what he says; indeed, some people seek him out to ask his opinion of what has been, and his opinion of what now is, and his opinion of what shall be. Do you see, my dear sir, that this Sidqi Pasha, who..., suffers no harm from anyone, no harm from anything, and that he still hopes, and expects, and waits, and consoles himself with hope, expectation, and waiting; and around him a small band — few, perhaps, but like him hoping, expecting, waiting, and reckoning that power may return to them one day?

This, then, is Sidqi Pasha, of whom you may write whatever you wish, and whom the whole Egyptian people may hate with all the hatred at their command, and whom the whole Egyptian homeland may disown with all the disowning at its command — yet none of this will change anything in his case. He will remain as he was, Sidqi Pasha, who...; and he will remain today just as he is, Sidqi Pasha, who...; and who knows, perhaps tomorrow, or the day after, in a long time or a short one, he will become Sidqi Pasha, who...; only then you will have to place after this "who" other clauses, like those the newspapers loyal to him once used to place there, when he was a great man. Everything is possible so long as those who squander the homeland's rights are not questioned about the rights they squandered; everything is possible so long as those who shed the people's blood are not questioned about the blood they shed; everything is possible so long as those who squander the people's wealth are not questioned about the wealth they squandered.

And the strange thing, my dear sir, is that you may look about the Egyptian scene, and you will not see Sidqi Pasha, who... alone; you will also see Qaisi Pasha, who...; and you will see Helmi Pasha, who...; and you will see al-Manzalawi Bey, who...; and we shall see Karim Pasha, who... — God forgive me, for these men, who..., are nothing, since they have stepped down from power, or been made to step down from it, if only for a time. But look, my dear sir, and you will see other men — some of whom sided openly with Sidqi Pasha, who..., and his associates, who..., in what sin they committed; and some of whom Sidqi Pasha, who..., and his associates, who..., drove into the sin they committed. Look, my dear

sir, at men who still hold office in government, and at men who still retain their standing and their share of influence. Look, my dear sir, at all of these: every one of them enjoying his post, every one of them settled in his place, every one of them profiting from his standing and his authority, every one of them paid by the state because he squandered the state's dignity, every one of them provided for by the people because he tormented the people's sons.

Look at all of these, my dear sir, and then write "Sidqi Pasha, who..." and fill the newspapers with it; then give speeches on "Sidqi Pasha, who..." and fill the clubs, the assemblies, the earth, and the sky with your speeches — none of it will change anything, for nothing will change until it becomes an established fact that sinners must be punished for their sin, that the unjust must be called to account for their injustice, and that the blood of the people, their wealth, and their interests ought never to go to waste in a country said to possess some share of civilisation, and said to be subject to the rule of law.

Look, my dear sir, at Sidqi Pasha, who..., and at his associates, who..., and then tell me: what became of them? They were ministers, and permitted themselves what may not be permitted, and then failed, and were removed from the Ministry outright — yet they profited from their time in the Ministry, and now live on the fruits of that profit. They drew salaries during their time in office, and when they were removed, they took to drawing pensions, sometimes amounting to half those salaries — so the state provides for them because they did it harm, and the people pay them because they tormented it. What, then, my dear sir, stops them from living long, and from growing arrogant, and from hoping and expecting, and from mocking the people and the people's rights, and from despising writers and the works of writers, and from taking life as sport and mockery — and is life anything but sport and mockery? Wait, my dear sir, until you are certain that Egypt possesses a respected law that punishes the minister who mismanages the affairs of his ministry, that punishes the governor who mismanages the affairs of his administration, that punishes the ruler in general when he makes of government a tool of oppression. Once you see this law standing, enforced, respected, then write "Sidqi Pasha, who..." and the likes of Sidqi Pasha, who...; for such writing may then serve some purpose, and may have some effect in satisfying justice and doing right by the wronged. But before this law exists, and before it is respected, and before its enforcement becomes one of the foundations of Egyptian life, I advise you to be cautious — first,

because such writing does no good, and second, because such writing may do harm; indeed, it is certain to do harm, for Sidqi Pasha, who..., and his associates, who..., may yet return to power, and you have seen them when they ruled, so you know what awaits you should they return. But you will say to me what I say to myself: that we must perform our duty whatever the circumstances, and whatever the consequences, and that it does not harm us that others should fall short in performing theirs. Write, then, "Sidqi Pasha, who..." — and I shall write, as you do, "Sidqi Pasha, who..." — and let come what may, and let us bear what is to come as we have borne what has already been. And perhaps God will set Egypt's affairs right, so that there may be found in her no more men like Sidqi Pasha, who..., and his associates, who...