Then…

"Yes"—a single word now repeated by every mouth, spoken by every pair of lips, stirring in every heart, forming itself in every mind, imposing itself upon every conscience ever since the seal was set upon Sidqi Pasha—or rather upon the political career of Sidqi Pasha—on Thursday evening, when overwhelming circumstances finally closed the record of his public life. Sidqi Pasha is a man of politics whose time in politics has ended. The people are finished with him, and politics itself is finished with him as well. Of this there can be no doubt or hesitation. A man concerns himself with politics and devotes his strength and efforts to it only so long as he remains capable of spending those energies and exerting those efforts. Sidqi Pasha possesses none of these powers any longer. We sincerely pray that God may grant him enough strength and energy to care for himself, preserve his health, and spend the remainder of his life in some outward calm. Yet it is difficult not to imagine that the three years he spent crushing his nation, oppressing his people, humiliating his country, and ruling with harshness may have deprived him forever of inward peace. No man can direct the affairs of state while holding a thermometer in his mouth. No man can bear the burdens of politics who is capable of spending only two hours—or scarcely more—at his office before exhaustion overtakes him, forcing him to absent himself from work entire days every week. No man can sustain political discussion even for an hour with another statesman before weakness overwhelms him, appointments are canceled, conversations end abruptly, and he must hurry home to rest. Yes, Sidqi Pasha is no longer capable of political life—neither as Prime Minister, nor as leader of a parliamentary majority, nor even in private political circles. Hope may deceive Sidqi Pasha himself into believing he still possesses some ability remaining to ordinary men. Illusion may likewise deceive some of his loyal supporters into imagining that he remains a statesman. Sidqi Pasha may yield to such hopes and burden himself once more with political tasks, and his followers are certainly free to encourage him in this. Yet one thing admits no doubt whatsoever: from this day forward Sidqi Pasha will contribute nothing further to Egyptian political life. Nor is illness alone what drives him from politics. The path he pursued against his nation for more than three years, together with the disastrous results produced by that policy throughout this heavy and bitter era, have erected before him obstacles and difficulties that even the strongest of men—let alone the weakest—could never overcome. The resigning Prime Minister is therefore a man condemned to inevitable withdrawal—not merely from office or parliamentary leadership, but from public life altogether. What kind of parliamentary leader is a man who cannot speak to his own supporters for more than five minutes without becoming exhausted and worn out? How then could he engage in struggle and debate? How could he reflect and deliberate? How could he oppose argument with argument and proof with proof? How could he prevail over opponents in Parliament, defeat ministries, or address the people in order to persuade them toward one opinion or away from another? All this has

become impossible—not only because Sidqi Pasha's health prevents it, but because Sidqi Pasha's policies themselves prevent it. Sidqi Pasha cannot speak of liberty, either inside Parliament or outside it, when he himself imprisoned liberty, narrowing its prison and lengthening its captivity. Had there been any way to kill liberty entirely, he would not have hesitated to do so. Yet liberty stands above death and beyond destruction, often working more powerfully while imprisoned than while free. Nor can Sidqi Pasha speak of the dignity of the people after he exposed that dignity to humiliation before foreigners, until foreign contempt for Egyptians became open and shameless, until foreigners grew greedy toward Egyptians, exploited them, and degraded them. Nor can Sidqi Pasha speak of national honor after he spent every effort and exhausted every resource trying to make people forget that honor entirely. Nor can Sidqi Pasha speak of independence, which in his eyes became an empty phrase devoid of meaning—a mere game of rhetoric and argument. And as for the economy—what do you know of the economy? As for finance—what do you know of finance? As for the crisis—what do you know of the crisis? Even if health and strength returned to Sidqi Pasha, even if eloquence and persuasion obeyed him completely, he would still never dare address these subjects after losing power, after police and soldiers ceased supporting him, and after his "neutral friends" abandoned him. For if he attempted to speak of them, millions would rise shouting at him: "Do not speak of the economy, which you ruined. Do not speak of finance, which you impoverished. Do not speak of the crisis, which you allowed to dominate people's lives." And if he tried, he could only laugh at himself—and even his friends and followers would laugh at him. Yet once, long ago, people used to call Sidqi Pasha the man of economics, the man of finance, the solver of crises. Everything now pushes Sidqi Pasha away from politics. Everything compels political men to cease reckoning with this once-great leader from this day onward. God has willed—and none may resist the will of God—that the record of Sidqi Pasha's public life should be closed as of Thursday. Perhaps the truest description of the resigning Prime Minister's condition is the one reported yesterday by Al-Muqattam: that next month he will cross the sea to some distant place where he may rest and be left in peace, where he neither speaks nor writes, neither storms nor struggles, and where politics no longer concerns him in any way. And now that this long night of dreams and illusions has passed away, upon what shall the sun rise? It rises upon Sidqi Pasha awakened at last to discover that all his greatness has become dust, all his authority mere illusion and passing shadow, bringing him only fleeting and temporary benefits while Egypt endured under his rule some of the worst suffering it has known in the modern age. As for what the nation desires now that this harm has been lifted from it, now that this darkness has been dispelled and this heavy nightmare removed from its chest, much is being said and imagined, yet the truth of the matter has not fully appeared before the people. Sidqi Pasha seized power when the nation lived in security, and he terrified it. Therefore fear must now disappear and security return. He seized power when the nation was prosperous, and he impoverished it. Therefore poverty must now vanish and prosperity return. He seized power when the

nation was free, and he chained and oppressed it. Therefore oppression and bondage must disappear and liberty return once more—radiant, smiling, and spreading its wings over all Egyptians alike. Sidqi Pasha inflicted all these evils upon Egypt only because he deprived the nation of its rights, ruled against its will, and subjected Egypt to personal passions when everything ought instead to have been devoted to Egypt itself. Therefore conditions must return to what they were before Sidqi Pasha attacked his nation and seized the offices of power. The nation will accept nothing less than this. Affairs cannot truly improve without this. Egypt cannot know peace without this. Meanwhile, the defeated and unsuccessful gather around their defeated and unsuccessful leader, acting out the comedy of a "political party" that still hopes to possess influence or command attention. Nothing in Egypt today is more ridiculous or less deserving of serious concern. At the same time ambitious seekers of office meet secretly and openly, planning combinations and arrangements, assigning the premiership now to one Unionist, now to an independent figure, surrounding him with groups of names and personalities united only by common ambitions and desires, then waiting to see what fate will decree while foolishly imagining they may direct fate itself. And no one speaks of the innocent victim that has suffered every form of torment for more than three years. No one thinks of lifting suffering from the nation, restoring liberty to it, or drawing strength from the people themselves. The defeated seek vainly to conceal defeat, while ambitious opportunists seek shamelessly to leap into power. Meanwhile the nation looks upon the first with mockery and upon the second with challenge, fully confident that those who learned nothing from the downfall of the defeated, and who feel no shame in following the same path, will themselves meet the same fate: the cruelty of circumstances, the betrayal of days, and the irony of destiny. No—the issue is not concealing defeat or leaping toward power. The true demand imposed by present circumstances—and which tomorrow will impose itself still more harshly—is that the defeated should repent of the wrongs they inflicted upon their nation and themselves, and that the ambitious should free themselves from false hopes and greedy desires. Both groups must learn that the life of individuals is too brief, too narrow, and too insignificant to justify crimes against nations, injuries against peoples, and the monopolization of rights belonging to others. O God, guide the ambitious and the hesitant alike to understand their duty, and let them feel deeply that the fate to which Sidqi Pasha has now come is not one that any man possessing heart or reason could possibly envy.