Phenomenon

The “government newspaper” is passionately devoted these days to morality, fiercely protective of virtue, and deeply hostile to vice and human failings. It now rises in indignation, lamenting the decline of ethics and urging the nation to defend them. It calls upon Egypt to strike at those writers who continue to mention that the “Prime Minister” is ill, because in the eyes of the government newspaper prolonged reference to illness is a form of malicious gloating unworthy of honorable people and intolerable for Egyptians.

We would regret offending the government newspaper. But what fault is ours if the “Prime Minister” is a man engaged in public politics and determined to shoulder its heavy burdens? And what fault is ours if those who choose political life must, by the very nature of politics, accept the criticism directed toward them every day?

What fault is ours if people throughout the world agree that full and vigorous health is a fundamental condition for political work and for bearing the responsibilities imposed by public life?

What fault is ours if the “Prime Minister” chose political life despite the illness that struck him and forced him to withdraw from active work for many long months, without however abandoning the advantages and privileges attached to the office of power?

And finally, what fault is ours if the “Prime Minister” himself, after long rest and prolonged treatment, considered resignation, discussed it with the newspapers, then with His Majesty the King, and repeatedly insisted that the only cause of this resignation was illness?

And what fault is ours if the “Prime Minister” now tells us that he has abandoned resignation and chosen instead to sacrifice his health for the sake of his country?

We belong to this country, and we possess every right—whether the “Prime Minister” likes it or not—to decide whether we accept this sacrifice of his health for our benefit or whether we return it to him gratefully, preferring his precious health over our passing advantages.

There is indeed a phenomenon worthy of reflection, and far more deserving of thought than the issue raised by the government newspaper. It is the strange attachment people feel toward power, their insistence upon clinging to it, and their refusal to abandon it even while admitting that they cannot bear

its burdens or endure its strain.

The “Prime Minister” submitted his resignation to His Majesty the King because he was ill, and His Majesty graciously left the decision entirely to him: either persist in resignation so that it might be accepted, or withdraw it so that it might be refused, consulting no one except his own health and strength.

Had the “Prime Minister” proceeded with resignation as he first intended, he would have gained rest from office and relief from the criticism of those who disagree with his policies and who do not wish to entrust government to exhausted and overburdened men.

But since the “Prime Minister” preferred to keep his office, he has at the same time chosen everything that accompanies that office: public debate, endless talk, and heavy burdens. Let him therefore endure the criticism of critics today just as he endured it before.

After all, it was not we who told journalists, after the departure of the High Commissioner: “I am exhausted.”

And if mention of illness truly offends the “Prime Minister,” then the matter is simple enough. What prevents him from issuing legislation forbidding any mention of ministerial illness and imposing punishment upon those who refer to it?

As for us, God—who knows the secrets hidden within hearts—knows that we wish no harm whatsoever to the “Prime Minister” in his health and desire for him nothing but complete and speedy recovery.

But God—who knows both what is hidden and what is openly visible—also knows that the welfare of Egypt can only be secured when its affairs are directed and protected by men in full possession of health and strength.