Resignation . . .

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), 18 June 1934

The Prime Minister has not yet submitted it to His Majesty the King, and perhaps he has not even thought of submitting it — but national duty has now come to impose it upon him as an obligation, making any delay in it, or reluctance toward it, a failure toward the very homeland itself, unbefitting a man who prefers his nation's good, who wishes health upon his country, and who regards governance as a means and not an end, a duty and not a right, a charge and not an honor. For everything around the Prime Minister cries out to him, and to the people, that the Ministry is utterly, absolutely incapable of upholding the homeland's due against the ministries. And when clear, decisive proof stands before the people and before the Prime Minister that the Ministry has been struck by incapacity and failure, then national duty — which brooks no negligence or doubt, and admits no hesitation or confusion — demands that he resign. For peoples are not served by incapacity, and the interests of nations are not realized through failure, and living consciences do not permit their owners to persist excessively in attempting what they cannot achieve, and to defy events and crises, claiming they are able to withstand them and emerge from them, even as those events take them by the chin, then by the ears, and very nearly swallow them whole — very nearly swallowing along with them innocent people who ought not to drown, since they neither erred nor fell short, nor committed any fault or sin. And the Prime Minister knows full well, when he speaks to himself and his conscience, and knows full well when he speaks to the people, that no sooner had he taken up the burdens of government than he declared, more than once, that he would attend to economic matters more than political ones. And he knows equally well that his colleague, the Finance Minister, no sooner had he taken up his assistance than he declared that he had firm and decisive plans in matters of finance and economy, which he would carry out with resolve and determination, and would, through their execution, rescue Egypt from the crises surrounding it.

Both men, then, made financial rescue the Ministry's foremost task, both declared this and declared it repeatedly, and both gave, in doing so, pledges and covenants before the people and before Parliament. Then both failed at it, a gross failure, and proved incapable of it, a frightening incapacity. Both swore their utmost oaths that they would find decisive solutions for the crisis of mortgage debts, that would rescue landowners

from the banks and their control, and would render unnecessary those half-measures Sidqi Pasha had resorted to. And both proved utterly incapable of these solutions, or of anything resembling them, or approaching them, or resembling even the half-measures Sidqi Pasha had contented himself with. The political year has now passed, and neither the good man nor the brilliant man achieved anything of this. Both men, too, took a hard line on the question of the public debt — a hardness and a weakness at once. Both declared that Egypt would pay in nothing but paper, and would concede nothing of her right. The Finance Minister went further, declaring that he would not negotiate, would accept no bargaining, no give and take. And yet, despite all this, both nonetheless let the matter of the debt proceed along its judicial path and its political path at once, litigating on one side, negotiating on the other, and achieving nothing at all from either negotiation or litigation. Absolute failure in the matter of the mortgage debt, absolute failure in the matter of the public debt, complete and total incapacity in every political problem that has arisen, and complete and total incapacity, too, in every internal administrative problem that has arisen. And alongside all this, tremendous confusion in understanding ministerial duty and managing the public interest. A life entirely muddled, containing both boldness and hesitation, both advance and retreat, apparent resolve, and undoubted defeat. And this corrupt, disordered, muddled life has now persisted for a political year, or nearly a year, adding nothing to the people's life but disorder and corruption, adding nothing to the people's affairs but confusion and complication, until there remains not one Egyptian able to trust in anything, or feel secure in anything, or think of his present day without anxiety, or hope for his tomorrow without wariness and apprehension.

A nation that was once tranquil in spirit, and had every right to remain so, has become, thanks to these two ministries, restless and unsettled, bewildered, not knowing what is intended for it — though it does know what it wants. Is this what ministries are established in government for? Is this why Prime Ministers take up the burdens of rule? Let the good man believe us: everything around him, in the public and private life of the people, proclaims to him that his remaining in power is something undesired, and that his duty to himself demands that he resign, to put his conscience at ease — for we do not think his conscience finds any ease as it oscillates between his home and his office to no use or benefit, but rather to considerable harm and the ruin of affairs. And national duty, wherever it applies, demands that he resign, to spare his

nation this continuing corruption, and to allow his nation to look about it, in the hope of finding some way out of the impasses it has been driven into, and some deliverance from the harm it has been entangled in.

Everything demands the Prime Minister's resignation, except this handful of men who circle around him and his colleagues, seeking the benefits that are sought around men of standing and authority. Let the Prime Minister consider, then, whom he listens to. Does he listen to conscience and to the voice of the homeland, as they press him urgently to resign? Or does he listen to men of interest and self-seeking, as they press him urgently to remain — not for his own benefit, nor for Egypt's benefit, but for their own benefit alone? Let the Prime Minister not deceive himself, and let the Prime Minister place no hope in tomorrow, for his ministry is beyond hope — it has proven incapable, to this day, of realizing any benefit for Egypt, and will be, tomorrow and the day after, still more incapable, still more of a failure. For nations are not governed against their will, nor served against their wishes, in these days. And the Prime Minister knows that the nation does not love his ministry, and will never love it, does not support his ministry, and will never support it. He is, in this respect, without hope, without expectation. And foreigners are not so heedless or foolish as to go on extending unlimited support to a ministry the nation does not approve of, that the people do not support, and that the country does not trust. Foreigners grant their support to such ministries only for brief periods, in order to secure some of their own immediate interests; but when matters grow serious, and touch on their lasting interests, the foreigners know full well that reliance in these interests must rest upon peoples, and upon governments that truly represent peoples. Had the foreigners trusted a government that its own people flee from, the English would have negotiated with Sidqi, and would have signed the treaty with him, and the foreigners would have felt secure with a government that does not represent the people — and the London Conference would not have failed. We are entirely confident that the true source of this conference's failure is precisely the powers' doubt in the worth of the present ministry, and their weak confidence in whatever strength and authority it possesses that might enable it to speak in Egypt's name, or conclude a treaty on Egypt's behalf. So if the Prime Minister truly loves his homeland — and we do not doubt that he does — or if the Prime Minister wishes for his homeland to resolve its political and economic problems, and resume its progress toward security, advancement, and independence, then let him submit his ministry's resignation, for it is his ministry that stands between Egypt

and all of this. Otherwise, let the Prime Minister furnish new proof that he is truly capable of shouldering the burdens of government for the benefit of Egyptians. And this proof would cost him nothing more than issuing legislation that would withdraw the debt question entirely from negotiations, and from the jurisdiction of the Mixed Courts.

As for us, we assure the Prime Minister that his ministry will never be able to attempt any such thing, and that another ministry, one the people love and support, is the only one capable, should it come to power, of compelling the powers to accept what Egypt wants; and if it cannot do that, it is the only one capable of issuing the legislation that would compel the powers, by necessity, to yield to what Egypt wants — for Egypt wants nothing but right and justice.

Let the Prime Minister reflect on all of this. For we still believe that Egypt's benefit is dearer to him than the benefit of individuals, whoever they may be . . .

Taha Hussein

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), 18 June 1934.