Arrival ...

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If this evening arrives, the High Commissioner arrives with it upon Egypt: his airplane cleaves the Egyptian sky, then his airplane descends upon the great Nile. This time the Egyptians will not receive him gladly or unwillingly; this time the Egyptians will not look upon those grand, ostentatious displays with which the High Commissioner's departure, and his return, are usually surrounded — displays that wound the Egyptians' sense of dignity and pride, and wound their hopes for freedom and independence. And were we able to think well of a High Commissioner, we would thank the new High Commissioner for leaving Egypt by air, and returning to Egypt by air, and avoiding those displays that other high commissioners before him loved, and saw as exalting the word of the English, in a country where there is no necessity, and no right, that their word should be exalted. We would have judged him a man of delicate feeling and refined taste, pained that the arrival of political representatives in his country should be surrounded with the same grand, hurtful displays that surround the arrival of high commissioners in Egypt; a man loath to see the Egyptians suffer the same pain the English would suffer, were the like to happen in their country, touching their dignity and independence.

But we know that the new High Commissioner most likely gave none of this a thought, never considered it, and it never crossed his mind to spare the Egyptians a pain he would not wish upon himself; he is simply a modern man, who believes that civilization did not arise in vain, and that airplanes were invented precisely so that people might fly in them; he makes use of civilization, and puts airplanes to the use they were made for, and prefers speed, with its pleasure and its benefits, over the train and the ship, with their slowness, and the displays of pomp and reverence that surround travel by either. Whether the High Commissioner gave the Egyptians a thought, and spared them these displays of ceremony in his departure and his return, or thought of nothing but himself and his need for speed, it is his due from us that we acknowledge this quiet, gentle departure, which hardly anyone felt, and this quiet, gentle return, which hardly anyone felt.

Yet it would not be fair to say that no one felt the High Commissioner's departure for England, and the High Commissioner's return to Egypt; for his quiet, gentle departure became the subject of long, extended talk that has not yet subsided, and this quiet, gentle return of his has become the subject of long, extended talk that God alone knows when it will subside. Politics alone is what carried off the beauty of this quiet and this gentleness — and what else would you expect from politics?! It touches nothing without corrupting it, carrying off its beauty and its freshness. For some reason, a crisis arose between the High Commissioner and the good man during that short period Sir Lampson spent in Cairo, and Sir Lampson's departure only deepened its complication; for he did not visit the prime minister, or the prime minister did not visit him; or because the two of them did not meet again after their meeting at the station — and this became a topic of talk with a beginning whose end is not yet known: which of the two men was wrong, and which was right? Which of the two will yield to what the other wants, once the High Commissioner returns to Cairo? Will the prime minister go to the Doubara Palace? Or will the High Commissioner go to the seat of government, or will the two of them meet midway, at some reception, or at some banquet, or at the home of some mutual friend?

People began to talk, and talk at length, and some answered others, and people are to be excused for it, for so long as this story has created a crisis whose talk has traveled back and forth between Cairo and London, it is people's right to plunge into this crisis; for crises were not created in vain, but were created for people to plunge into, just as airplanes were created for people to fly in. And so people persisted in talk, and persisted in argument; and one group among them said the crisis had been resolved, and another group said the crisis had not been resolved, and those who love mischief said it was resolved and unresolved at the same time; and people go on talking still, until it becomes clear to them where the fault lay and where the right lay, and which of the two men will yield to what the other wants.

Now, the new High Commissioner inherits an old High Commissioner, and people spoke at length about the old High Commissioner — they spoke of him while he was in residence, and spoke of him while he was traveling; they spoke of him while his position was secure, and spoke of him while his position grew uncertain; and they spoke of him after he was transferred. It is only natural, then, that they should speak of his successor and heir, and they do speak, saying that

high commissioners were not created in vain, but were created, on one hand, for people to speak of, and, on the other, to represent their countries with distinction in certain foreign lands; and the new High Commissioner will not be a true high commissioner unless he fulfills both these conditions. As for fulfilling the second condition, there is no doubt about it, and Sir Lampson knows more of it than we do; but as for fulfilling the first condition, that is something that touches us and concerns us, and we can assure the High Commissioner that we shall fulfill this condition for him in the fullest and finest manner, and we have already begun to fulfill it: we speak of him, and speak at length; we speak of him in the clubs, and speak of him in the newspapers, and speak of him from every quarter from which people speak of people. The English newspapers described his stature to us, so we speak of his stature; the English newspapers described his career in China to us, so we speak of his career in China; and we have seen a very small portion of his career in Egypt, so we speak of this small portion; but we speak, in particular, of the career of his we have not yet seen, because it has not yet come to be — we speak and we vie with one another in speaking, foretelling what he wants, foretelling what he will do, and indulging to excess in foretelling. And if our talk of him occupies our clubs for no small part of the night, let the High Commissioner be reassured on this score: he occupies the clubs, sets tongues loose, stirs in people's souls an eagerness to think, and in their minds a need to find out, and none of this is a small thing. And yet we would like the High Commissioner not to form, for himself, a mistaken picture from people's talk and their thinking, and from what they mean by that talk and that thinking; for some portrait-painters might depict to him people's preoccupation with him as a dependence upon him, a recourse to him, a waiting for deliverance at his hands; and we would like the High Commissioner to know that, were this portrait presented to him, it would deserve neither his admiration, nor his trust, nor any confidence in whatever notions and meanings it suggests; for this portrait does not match the original, does not represent the true state of things, and gives no true, honest idea of what occupies people in this matter. For the vast majority of Egyptians speak of the High Commissioner because they love curiosity above all else, and because curiosity is a nature people cannot resist.

They also busy themselves with the High Commissioner because they want to know what course the English have chosen in the ties between themselves and Egypt — whether it is still the same course they chose after the last negotiations broke down, which drove them to abet

injustice and uphold it, indeed to be driven to it and to desire it, under cover of that neutrality they so artfully assumed and so laboriously contrived, and by which they deceived people who had no way of being deceived; or whether it is a new course. And if it is new, what might it be? Is it the course of those who love fairness, prefer well-being, and desire peace, and so leave Egyptians to their rights and their interests, and prepare the way for a free, honorable negotiation that might, it is hoped, satisfy both contending parties; or is it the course of the strong, whom their strength deludes and whose might makes them overweening, so that they care for neither right nor justice, value neither fidelity to a pledge nor fairness to the wronged, but extend their power wherever they find a way to extend it, and interfere in Egyptian affairs whether the Egyptians consent or not?

And we think that no one can deny the Egyptians their right to speak of all this, and to inquire about all this; for every nation on earth is free to love curiosity and to speak of great men, and every nation on earth is free to ask what is intended for it, so as to meet good with good, and evil with evil, to meet affection with affection, and hostility with hostility. There is no harm, then, in the Egyptians speaking, and speaking at length, of the new High Commissioner; for the new High Commissioner was not sent to their country to enjoy its mild, clear air, or the beauty of the Nile and what stands along its banks; he was sent to Egypt to work in Egyptian politics, which touches the Egyptians' life today and will touch their life tomorrow. But this talk, which is without doubt the Egyptians' right, does not indicate — and should not be thought to indicate — that the Egyptians depend on the High Commissioner, or wait for deliverance at his hands.

It indicates, rather — and it must be understood to indicate — that the Egyptians know their rights as well as people ought to know their rights, and guard these rights as well as people ought to guard their rights, and want, for that reason, to be deceived out of nothing, to have nothing seized from them, and not to let displays distract them from realities.

There is no doubt that some people will claim to the High Commissioner that there are those among the people who hope in him, and set their hopes upon him, and await much good from him, and think of him when they wake, and think of him when evening falls; but it would be well for the High Commissioner not to be deceived by what will be reported to him about these people, for they are few, very few; they speak for no opinion but their own, and portray no hopes but their own; and

they have deceived many of those who came before him, and by this deceived the English government itself. They made the English imagine they were something, and when the English put them to the test, they found them nothing. Perhaps our great dictator is the clearest example of such people; for he made the old High Commissioner imagine, and made the English government imagine, that he was something great, and that he could accomplish what others had failed to accomplish; and when they put him to the test, their affair with him was like that of the thirsty traveler, lured on by the mirage, who presses hard after it, only to find, when he reaches it, nothing at all — and finds God there instead, who settles his account in full.

And the English being deceived by what our great dictator made them imagine became a source of great harm to the English, to the Egyptians, and to the great dictator himself: the English lost Egypt's goodwill, a loss nearly total; the Egyptians lost their freedom, lost countless benefits beyond counting, had their blood shed, had lives taken from among them, and suffered wrongs before which modern civilization shrinks in shame; and the dictator lost the love, trust, and affection of his fellow citizens, and then lost power — until he lost even those closest and most attached to him, those who profited most from the harm he inflicted on his country.

The High Commissioner, and the English, may look at their old friend to see where he now stands with Egypt, and where Egypt now stands with him — and indeed they have already looked: they refused to negotiate with him, and then refused to go on supporting and backing him at the very time he most needed their support and backing. It might then be said to the High Commissioner that there are, among the Egyptians, people who wait upon him, and set their hopes on him, and offer themselves to him; let the High Commissioner remember that there was once a man who waited upon Sir Percy Loraine, hoped in him, and made Sir Percy Loraine hope in him too — and when Sir Percy Loraine was deceived by him, he gained nothing at all for the relationship between Egypt and England, but lost a great deal for that man's sake. We would like to assure the High Commissioner that he will spare himself much trouble, and spare himself and the English much effort and much time, if he looks upon the Egyptians as a mature people, who know what they want, who weigh what is intended for them, and who will accept, from the English or from anyone else, nothing but what suits their right, their dignity, and their national pride. If he looks upon the Egyptians in

this way, he will be able to understand them, and they will be able to understand him, and this may enable him to accomplish, with the Egyptians, what previous high commissioners failed to accomplish. But if he follows the course of Sir Percy Loraine, he will end where Sir Percy Loraine ended; and if he follows the course of Lord Lloyd or Lord Cromer, he will end where Lord Lloyd or Lord Cromer ended.

Egypt will remain standing as it has always stood, demanding its right, holding fast to its dignity, striving for its pride, bearing injustice patiently and resisting it wherever it finds a way to resist. But Egypt's contentment, its goodwill, and its trust are things that will never be won by harshness, nor by injustice, nor by cunning, nor by deceit; they are won by candor, and candor alone — the candor that rests on respect for Egypt, and on acknowledging that it is a noble country. This candor alone is what can spare the English the trouble of the Egyptians, and spare the Egyptians the trouble of the English, and achieve between these two peoples a goodwill it would be well for all the peoples of the East to see achieved.