

Arabah el Madfunah
April 18th 1930.

Dear Mother.

We had another adventure last night. there was a very big religious festival taking place in a Moslem cemetery^{sic} about 4 miles from here. people come from many miles round & they gather round certain holy sheikhs^{sic} tombs & chant parts of the Kor'an & go through various fanatical exercises.

This festival takes place at night. so we had supper early & then the three of us mounted on camels & set out with a large retinue including our very holy cook. two of our party carried lamps. it was a glorious star light night. hot as a summers^{sic} day in England, what wind there was came in little warm puffs. it was lovely sitting perched up on our tall striding beasts, of course I had my Kharga camel, nice old Mahomed Abdu Rachman. would be dreadfully injured if I did not have his camel. (his name means - "Servant of the Compassionate, which is one of the names of God)

When we got near our destination we could see the glow of the lamps & the sound of hundreds of voices chanting in unison. we wended our way among the lesser tombs to the large mosque like buildings round which the great multitude were gathered. there were thousands. it was a sea of turbaned heads. from our camels we could see everything beautifully. it was rather a terrifying

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sight, rather like the atmosphere at the Zars one feels these people are swayed by emotions & instincts utterly beyond our comprehension. we watched one immense group for some time. there were squatting figures covering a space quite twice the size of our garden. in their midst stood a holy man, chanting the Kor'an. at the end of each verse the entire company would repeat the names of God, it was simply deafening. Round another tomb in the centre of another huge crowd was a line of men standing in front of a holy man. he beat time with his hands. & they all shouted Allah at each beat. & with each repetition they bowed their heads. then the pace quickened & they bowed from the waist tossing & twisting their bodies to the rhythmic beat of the priests' hands the name of Allah was no longer distinguishable, only a sharp hiss as they took in breath. it was like the sound of a huge saw ripping through hard wood. I cannot attempt to describe the weirdness of these tall swaying figures in the flickering lamplight with the background of the curious domed tombs. it was like a scene from Dante's Inferno. We did not stay long - needless to say we were the only Europeans. & we felt we were intruders. & the temper of a fanatical crowd is a very brittle thing. & it would have been unwise to show too much curiosity. so we just passed through, pausing for a few minutes here & there, & then came away.

An experience such as this makes one realize how utterly different these people are. one can be friendly with them, but one can not get to the bottom of their minds, their actions

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are controlled by a form of reasoning utterly different to ours. It was half past twelve when we arrived home, we were dead tired, so had an extra hour & a half in bed this morning. It has been a very hot day, a south wind, it is like the breath of a furnace, the temperature midday registered over 100 in the shade

I have bought still more amber. I have spent over 10/- for the lot. I wonder if you would like some of the nicest pieces polished for a necklace, they are rather rough shaped lumps like the necklaces one sees in Liberty's for which they ask huge sums

The last large glove you sent I have given to the man who had the boil between his fingers. his hand is naturally very tender now it is healing, but I think he can use it if he has it protected. he is a very big burly man with large hands, so the huge gloves do very well; our beautiful Mahomed has small delicate hands, so the other pair do him splendidly

I think this is all my news for today
 Lots of love to you both
 your affectionate daughter
 Myrtle.

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