

Arabah el Madfunah.
March 18th 1937.

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Dear Mother.

The four painting books have arrived safely. many thanks for them, I am sure they will cause great surprise & amusement

Now to continue the account of our adventures.

Amice & I were up bright & early & all ready when Hanafey Bey arrived in the government lorry, it was an eight cylinder Ford, it had enormous balloon tyres & was a nice grey colour. Amice & I sat in front beside Hanafey & Sardic & the two men who had accompanied us the day before sat in the box part at the back along with the water tank & petrol tins & luncheon basket, Hanafey having come fully provided with everything for a twelve hours jaunt. He had left word that if we were not back by 7 o'clock that evening they had better send out a search party. The car bounded along the sandy track to the mountains with the greatest ease. none of Joey's puffing & chuggings. we heard afterwards that our host was driving as if he had a load of china aboard, later, when he discovered what really tough females we were

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he changed his tactics entirely, but of that later in the story. If you look at the little map I have drawn you will see the dotted line where we left the main track & went along a way that Hanafey had made possible for a car by sending a gang of men ahead to roll the largest stones out of the way, it seemed impossible that anything on wheels could get along, but get along we did, great mountains towering over us on either side, after about three & a half hours drive we were right in the centre of the range of the porphyry mountains & we got down from the car & examined the ruins of the settlement the Romans had made there who were in charge of the prisoners who worked in the quarries. we saw first of all the ruins of a reservoir where they stored the water, with pipes & conduits to carry it to the troughs where the animals were watered, then next we visited the ruined temple, we do not know to what God it was set up. it was about noon then, so we decided it would be a good place for lunch, so the basket was brought up. Amice & I were wondering

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what was expected of us in the eating line knowing the usual Egyptians idea of a picnic. but we had a pleasant surprise. Hanafey said he had brought the sort of food that he found best for desert expeditions. It proved to be fish, caught & fried early that morning, bread to eat with it, a tin of pineapple slices & a slab of chocolate for after it was delicious & I cant tell you how we enjoyed it, we had expected a lot of rich greasy food, but it seems Hanafey is as abstemious as we are, he neither smokes or drinks & was very surprised to find we were equally frugal. He thought all English women smoked endless cigarettes & drank cocktails on every possible occasion. after lunch we burnt a libation to the gods on the altar, we thought it best to propitiate them as it was a truly terrifying place, our host quite entered into the spirit of it all & seemed most entertained by our ideas & remarks about everything & most patient in answering endless questions about matters geological. The next thing was to see the quarries where the

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Romans cut the slabs of purple porphyry. They had made a great ramp at the foot of the mountain for loading the blocks on the sledges & from this ran a slip way, we began to ascend, it was rather like the last lap up Snowdon where Pat & I lost the track & had to scramble up the loose shale. we went on & on, the gradient varying slightly but mostly as steep as it was possible to go up without crawling on hands & knees, I can't tell you how glorious the scenery was, we looked over range after range of mountains of every hue, purple, rose-granite, orange, greenish black, every shade that stone can take, at various turns of the track there were ruins of little guard houses where the overseers must have sat when watching the quarry men lowering the stones, we had occasional rests, at one Hanafey said, "this is one third up." then, "now you have gone two thirds" when it came to three thirds the track still led up & we said where are the quarries? so the Paganter & said "well I am afraid there is still another third

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to go if you really want to see them?" we asked why he divided the distance into four thirds, & he said it was because most people were quite content with one, or perhaps two thirds & he had'nt expected us to survive more than a little way up. Of course we went on, we were quite determined to reach those quarries after that. The sun was very hot & the ascent stiff & we noticed that Hanafey was looking at us with a very worried expression when we sat down to rest for a minute, so we asked what was troubling him, he said "Its your faces, you are both the colour of beetroots," how we laughed, we told him that most fair skinned people went very red after extra exertion, he said he had never seen any one go as red as we did & was wondering if we were going to have apoplexy!!! & he was considering how he could carry us both down again - we assured him his fears for us were quite groundless, we went on & on, & at about five ~~four~~ thirds we really did reach the quarry. Hanafey told us it was about a mile up.

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he also said he personally wasn't going any higher but from that point we could scramble about & examine what we liked, Amice of course had to scramble up a bit higher but I was quite glad of a good rest, the view was grand, we could see the Red Sea over 50 miles away. I have got some really splendid photos of the views from the quarries. we had a good look at the various quarry faces & the chippings & found one of the granite rollers that they used for moving the great blocks on to the slip way, it must have been a sight to see them coming down the mountain.

Our own descent was more rapid than that on ascent, & when we reached the car again we all sat & eat the lovely juicy oranges that our host had provided to refresh us after our exertions.

On our return journey there was a specially fine view of the distant mountains in the evening light from the top of a spur of the phorphory^{sic} mountain. I have marked the place II on the enclosed map. Hanafey stopped the car for us

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to admire it, we asked him how long it took him to get back to Hurgada from there, he said it was about 60 kilometres & he usually did it in about an hour, but as he had ladies with him he was allowing longer time so as to avoid bumping them, we looked at the time, it was about 5.15 & we said if he would forget we were ladies & would drive at his usual pace it would just give us time to make a sketch. by this time he had realized that we did not bother about our personal comfort when we were interested in anything, so he agreed to our request, but we noted a wicked twinkle in his eye & guessed we were in for an exciting hour. out we hopped & sat down on each side of the car & dabbled vigorously ~~fr~~ until six o'clock, then we got in again & started off. it was some ride the road was like this in parts

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I must tell you the rest in my next letter, we spent this Tuesday at Sohag so there was very little time left for letters.

Lots of love to you both  
Your affectionate daughter  
Myrtle.

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