

Arabah
March 17th 1936

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We had such a jolly evening with the Crosslands at the Marine Research station, there was another guest. a Navy Reserve Officer Commander Boyd he had come from Alex to chart the coral reefs & find places where large steamers could come near the shore. The conversation was very fishy.
Next morning Amice & I saw the dawn break over the Red Sea then we donned our bathing dresses & were soon splashing in a sea that looked as if it was made of rainbows. After breakfast we went out in a rowing boat with the native divers, the sea was so dead calm that we did not need the sea telescopes we floated over the fairy gardens & showed the men the bits we wanted & they dived in with an iron spike broke off the frond of coral & brought it to us, it was exciting, we spent about half an hour investigating & then came ashore with our "catch". unfortunately corals, though lovely to admire in the depth of the sea have an awful smell when brought into the air

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2

They have to be treated with chemicals before they are fit to live with. However we did not mind as the Professor gave us lots of un-smelly specimens from his collection. The Commander was just going out in a native sailing boat to take soundings & invited us to go with him. we didn't need asking twice, he was sailing the boat with the aid of an old Arab boatman & it amused us to see how their ideas of seamanship clashed. The Commander's Arabic was very limited he could only give the necessary sailing directions & could not understand the old Arabs' dialect. we could, & the Com: was amazed when we began chatting with the old boy & got him yarning & telling tales of sharks & he showed us two scars on his legs when a shark had got him once, you can imagine what fun we had. the Com: got us to make drawings in his note book of the outlines of the mountains in relation to objects on the shore from certain points when there was deep water. we returned for lunch. & then hastily packed up. bade a reluctant good-bye to our new friends & started on our 200 miles

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3

drive across the Arabian desert. The old professor was very worried about us, & got us to promise to send him news of our safe arrival as soon as we reached Kena. He said a Telegram would reach him via Suwayh. After leaving the flat desert near the sea shore we passed into the most mountainous part of Egypt called the Gebel Dokhan where the Romans got their purple porphory^{sic}. The only place in the world where it occurs in bulk, we spent the night among them & saw the sun-set & the dawn, we scrambled about & collected various coloured rocks & found curious herbs. I enclose a little bit so that you can smell it. (Doesn't it remind you of Zan Buk which claims to be made from some secret herb known to the ancients.)

The next day we made a long drive & reached Kena about 3-30. reported our safe arrival to the frontier police there, & sent our Telegram to be relayed on to the Red Sea then we pushed on to Nag Hamadi & stayed the night with the Roches in great luxury. (we did enjoy our baths).

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373

the next morning we were back in camp in time for lunch feeling very pleased with ourselves.

The day after our return Dr Junker came to collate our work. he says Otto is beginning to get about with a crutch but he would not say much about him, I think the affair has upset him (Dr Junker) very much. A week later Amice left, & is probably on her way home now. so I am quite on my own again, I expect the time will go very quickly & I shall soon be sending to books for the Homeward Sailing List.

I found all my birthday letters awaiting me on my return from the Red Sea. it was rather fun spending ones^{sic} birthday in the middle of the desert. Please thank every one for their good wishes.

Lots of love to you & Lotte
Your affectionate daughter
Myrtle

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