

Arabah.  
March 5. [1931]

Dear Mother.

I have received the letters written on my birthday & the flowers you enclosed. Nannie was very interested in them, she is going to use the rosemary with stewed chicken instead of bay leaves. Please thank Father & everyone for the Red Letter, it was great fun. I feel I have had two birthdays.

I must tell you the rest of my adventure last Sunday. My way home was ~~through~~<sup>near</sup> Sardic's house, so I stopped to say how do you do to M<sup>rs</sup> Sardic & see a new arrival in the shape of a two weeks old puppy. When I had mounted the camel again & was leaving, Sardic asked permission to do something or other I couldn't quite understand what he meant. He said there was a woman whose stomach wouldn't work, I asked if he wanted a dose of Eppy for her. He said no. He'd got what was wanted in his pocket, so I told him to hurry up & give it to her. so he ran off through a door in a wall, & the next moment there was a terrific

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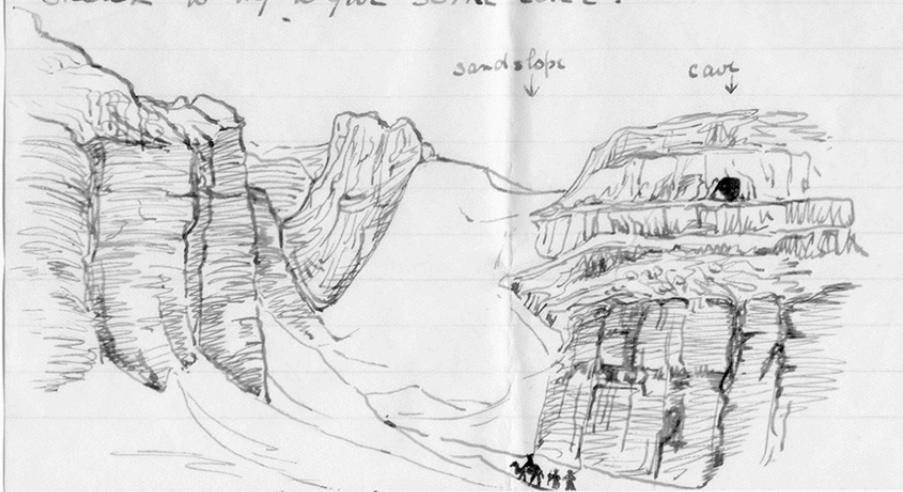
bang, that set all the dogs barking & caused a great commotion, he'd fired his gun in the air. he came back & said to me, "she has been needing that since yesterday". My Arabic wasn't enough to go further into the matter, so I got Nannie to enquire when I reached home, she soon got to the bottom of it. it seems there was a woman who had been in labour since yesterday & was having great difficulty in producing the infant, & when the people saw Sardic with his gun they begged him to fire it off in the hopes that the sudden shock would assist the birth. And it did!!! later in the evening Sardic came in looking very ~~well~~ pleased with himself & told me the woman had given birth to a boy. to translate his explanation literally he said. "the bang frightened the child so much that it at once walked out of her stomach." he evidently took the whole ~~credit~~ credit of the affair to himself I was very amused, Arabs make no attempt to veil these affairs in mystery.

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Tuesday afternoon I went off on another expedition. Ahmud had told me about a hermits<sup>sic</sup> cave up one of the wadys about 2 hours ride from here, so I decided to visit it. Sardic said it was a stiff climb, & remembering the description I had given him how people climb mountains with ropes round them, he went & stole Nannie's clothes line !!

Of course I went on the camel with my usual escort. When we reached the wady it was simply glorious, here is a little memory sketch to try to give some idea.



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[ ₹ ]                      sand slope                      cave  
   ↓                                      ↓

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The camel sat down at the foot of the sand slope. (This is another slope, not the one I have told you about before) & Mahommed took the tea things, kettle etc out of the saddle bags, while Ahmud & Sardic started to climb the sand slope, when they'd gone the length of the clothes line, they let it down & I scrambled up holding on to it while they pulled, then they went up a bit further & pulled me up again & so on until we got up to the shelf of the cliff nearest the cave. it was a very steep slope to climb & the rope was a great help, I could have managed without it but it would have taken much longer & tired me very much as one's feet sink into the sand & unless you keep on you slide back & loose more than you gained, as it was, I was quite puffed & dripping when I got up. we had to make our way along a boulder strewn shelf & then we got to the cave, it was about 8 x 10 ft & about 7 ft high, it had been plastered with mud & plastered whitewashed over, a lot of this had fallen off, but one part was in good condition & was covered with Coptic writing, as far as I could make out

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it gave the names & descriptions of various holy men who had lived there, there was a Father Johannes & a Father Andreas, & several others of less familiar names. I made a copy of it to show the Coptic priest next time he comes to visit us.

Then came the fun of the descent, when we got to the sand slope I sat down & slid right to the bottom & the men ran down, it didn't take us half as long as it did to get up.

Then I walked along the wady as far as possible & took some snapshots, then returned to where the camel was sitting & Sardie got tea ready, I was glad of mine. After tea we just had nice time to get home before dusk.

The following day I had another adventure but must leave telling about it till my next letter.

Lots of love  
your affectionate daughter  
Myrtle.

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