

[Arabah el Madfunah]  
April 16<sup>th</sup> 1934.

285  
April 16<sup>th</sup> 1934.

Dear Mother.

I think my last letter told you about my journey & stay at the village in the Gebel Haradi. my return was along the strip of desert that lies between the cliffs of the high desert & the cultivation. out there I passed several villages, the people were of the fine desert type of Arab, quite different to the peasant people who work in the fields. In the first village called Galaweyia I met my old friend Mahommed Kheir. I had heard from the Ombashi that he was stationed there this month, & by some means news had reached Mahommed that I was coming, for he was waiting out in the desert on the look out for us. there were hearty greetings all round. & of course I had to return to Galaweyia with him & drink coffee, & after that he came quite a long way with us & was very reluctant to say good-bye. or in their language. "go in peace." I had lunch that day under a clump of trees

Dear Mother.

I think my last letter told you about my journey & stay at the village in the Gebel Haradi<sup>sic</sup> {Haridi}. my return was along the strip of desert that lies between the cliffs of the high desert & the cultivation. out there I passed several villages, the people were of the fine desert type of Arab, quite different to the peasant people who work in the fields.

In the first village called Galaweyia (= el-Jalawiyah) I met my old friend Mahommed Kheir, I had heard from the Ombashi that he was stationed there this month, & by some means news had reached Mahommed that I was coming, for he was waiting out in the desert on the look out for us. there were hearty greetings all round. & of course I had to return to Galaweyia with him & drink coffee, & after that he came quite a long way with us & was very reluctant to say good-bye. or in their language. "go in peace." I had lunch that day under a clump of trees

285.2

the sheikh of the village came & offered me refreshments I accepted coffee which was delicious. he had a regular banquet spread for my men, Sandic tells me, he has a sheep killed for him every day. of which he eats what he requires for himself & any guests & gives the rest to the poor people in the village. my visit was evidently a very great occasion & I hope I made all the proper replies to the ceremonious greetings & compliments.

It was very hot travelling along the desert as the ~~hill~~ cliffs cut off the breeze so my progress was slower than I had calculated on. I had intended spending the night at some caves about three miles beyond Swamah which is Sheikh Sarbits' home but it was getting near sunset when we sighted Swamah, & we decided to camp out in the desert there, after getting food & water for the donkeys & the camel. before reaching our camping ground we met three of the Soudanese camel patrol, they had had instructions to look out for me & perform any service I might require of them

the sheikh of the village came & offered me refreshments I accepted coffee which was delicious. he had a regular banquet spread for my men, Sandic tells me, he has a sheep killed for him every day. of which he eats what he requires for himself & any guests & gives the rest to the poor people in the village. my visit was evidently a very great occasion & I hope I made all the proper replies to the ceremonious greetings & compliments.

It was very hot travelling along the desert as the ~~hill~~ cliffs cut off the breeze so my progress was slower than I had calculated on. I had intended spending the night at some caves about three miles beyond Swamah (= el-Sawamah Sharq) which is Sheikh Sarbits' home but it was getting near sunset when we sighted Swamah, & we decided to camp out in the desert there, after getting food & water for the donkeys & the camel. before reaching our camping ground we met three of the Soudanese camel patrol, they had had instructions to look out for me & perform any service I might require of them

285 3.

they were mounted on splendid white camels & looked magnificent, I asked a few questions about the desert there & they advised me as to a good camping place free from scorpions & snakes. They came with me as far as the well when we watered the animals & Sandic made tea for every body, & then they rode off again & we went out into the desert for the night.

I was so tired that I turned in at once, preparations for bed were very simple. The Ombashi measured out what he thought was my length & width on the sand, (I must say he was not flattering as to width) & he & Sandic loosened up the sand & removed any stones, & I scooped out holes for my hip & shoulder. then the saddle bag was spread over the sand, my hold all rolled for a bolster & the cushion for a pillow & my rug for a cover. my sunshade was opened & the mosquito net draped over it & all was ready. Sandic & the Ombashi retired to their own selected spot some yards away & I just removed my shoes & stockings, pulled off my

they were mounted on splendid white camels & looked magnificent, I asked a few questions about the desert there & they advised me as to a good camping place free from scorpions & snakes. they came with me as far as the well where we watered the animals & Sandic made tea for every body, & then they rode off again & we went out into the desert for the night.

I was so tired that I turned in at once, preparations for bed were very simple. The Ombashi measured out what he thought was my length & width on the sand, (I must say he was not flattering as to width) & he & Sandic loosened up the sand & removed any stones. & I scooped out holes for my hip & shoulder. then the saddle bag was spread over the sand, my hold all rolled for a bolster<sup>sic</sup> & the cushion for a pillow & my rug for a cover. my sunshade was opened & the mosquito net draped over it & all was ready. Sandic & the Ombashi retired to their own selected spot some yards away & I removed my shoes & stockings, pulled off my

285<sup>4</sup>

frock & put my nightie over my underclothes. which were of the scantiest possible. then I slipped my feet into one pocket of the saddle bag. pulled the rug over me, & the mosquito net down & I was as cosy as anything, I think I must have fallen asleep at once for I don't remember a thing until some time later Sandic roused me by telling me that Sheikh Sarbit had ridden out to enquire if there was any thing he could do for me, I sent a message to thank him & say I had everything I required & that I was too tired to see him that night, but hoped to say good bye <sup>to him</sup> before I departed in the morning, I have no idea what the time was then, but the stars were all out & the moon was shining. the men were sitting in a little group chatting with the visitors. I do not know how long they stayed for I soon went to sleep again. but I found in the morning that Sheikh Sarbit had brought out a lovely old Persian rug, some cushions & a quilt. (the Ombashi was a lovely sight rolled up in a pale blue quilt) even in the desert one cannot

frock & put my nightie over my underclothes – which were of the scantiest possible – then I slipped my feet into one pocket of the saddle bag. pulled the rug over me, & the mosquito net down & I was as cosy as anything, I think I must have fallen asleep at once for I don't<sup>sic</sup> remember a thing until some time later Sandic roused me by telling me that Sheikh Sarbit had ridden out to enquire if there was any thing he could do for me, I sent a message to thank him & say I had everything I required & that I was too tired to see him that night, but hoped to say good bye <to him> before I departed in the morning, I have no idea what the time was then, but the stars were all out & the moon was shining. the men were sitting in a little group chatting with the visitors. I do not know how long they stayed for I soon went to sleep again. but I found in the morning that Sheikh Sarbit had brought out a lovely old Persian rug, some cushions & a quilt. (the Ombashi was a lovely sight ~~wr~~<ro>lled up in a pale blue quilt) even in the desert one can not

285 s

quite escape Arab hospitality.

I did not wake until the sun rose over the cliffs & shone full in my face, the men <sup>were</sup> building a camp fire to boil the water for the tea for breakfast, so I lazed for a little while, then emerged from my saddle bag & slipped my dressing gown on & called Sardic to bring me washing water. ablutions in the desert are rather amusing. Sardic brought the water in an eathern<sup>sic</sup> pitcher (borrowed from the well). & poured it in a little trickle while I slouched my hands & arms & face & as much of my neck as such publicity permitted, I had just finished drying myself & was combing out my hair when Sheikh Sarbit & his uncle arrived on donkeys to wish me good morning. there was nothing else I could do but receive them in my nightie & dressing gown!! but fortunately I had on one of my nice long pink silk nighties & my Cretean<sup>sic</sup> dressing gown, so probably my visitors thought I was wearing my robes of state in their honour. after greeting me they went to say how-do-you do to the men, so I siezed<sup>sic</sup> the opportunity & quickly got into my frock

quite escape Arab hospitality.

I did not wake until the sun rose over the cliffs & shone full in my face, the men <were> building a camp fire to boil the water for the tea for breakfast, so I lazed for a little while, then emerged from my saddle bag & slipped my dressing gown on & called Sardic to bring me washing water. ablutions in the desert are rather amusing, Sardic brought the water in an eathern<sup>sic</sup> pitcher (borrowed from the well). & poured it in a little trickle while I slouched my hands & arms & face & as much of my neck as such publicity permitted, I had just finished drying myself & was combing out my hair when Sheikh Sarbit & his uncle arrived on donkeys to wish me good morning - there was nothing else I could do but receive them in my nightie & dressing gown!! but fortunately I had on one of my nice long pink silk nighties & my Cretean<sup>sic</sup> dressing gown, so probably my visitors thought I was wearing my robes of state in their honour. after greeting me they went to say how-do-you do to the men, so I siezed<sup>sic</sup> the opportunity & quickly got into my frock

2856

I completed my toilet behind my sunshade, -  
 then joined the party round the camp fire & sat  
 on a cushion on the Persian rug & eat two freshly  
 boiled eggs that Sheikh Sarbit had brought specially  
 for my breakfast. During conversation I heard there  
 was a Coptic church of the Roman period quite  
 near. so when we had all finished our meal.  
 (Sheikh Sarbit & his uncle had breakfast with us)  
 we went to visit it. it was a dingy little church  
 very ancient, with a marvelous old metal studded  
 door which the priest opened with a curious wooden  
 key. the brick work was undoubtedly Roman  
 & it was well worth a visit, of course I had to take  
 coffee with the priest & there was a regular sort  
 of reception in the little courtyard. & many invitations  
 to visit other places in the neighbourhood, but  
 Sheikh Sarbit protected me from too much importunity  
 on the part of aspiring hosts. & finally I escaped  
 back to my camp. where I superintended the packing  
 & then said good-bye to my kind friends. & started  
 off on my return to Sohag

& completed my toilet behind my sunshade, -  
 then joined the party round the camp fire & sat  
 on a cushion on the Persian rug & eat two freshly  
 boiled eggs that Sheikh Sarbit had brought specially  
 for my breakfast. During conversation I heard there  
 was a Coptic church of the Roman period quite  
 near. so when we had all finished our meal.  
 (Sheikh Sarbit & his uncle had breakfast with us)  
 we went to visit it. it was a dingy little church  
 very ancient, with a marvelous old metal studded  
 door which the priest opened with a curious wooden  
 key. the brick work was undoubtedly Roman  
 & it was well worth a visit, of course I had to take  
 coffee with the priest & there was a regular sort  
 of reception in the little courtyard. & many invitations  
 to visit other places in the neighbourhood, but  
 Sheikh Sarbit protected me from too much importunity  
 on the part of aspiring hosts. & finally I escaped  
 back to my camp. where I superintended the packing  
 & then said goodbye to my kind friends - & started  
 off on my return to Sohag

285

7

After an hours ride I reached the caves where I had originally intended to camp, I scrambled up the cliff & spent a good time investigating, some of the tombs had reliefs & inscriptions & some paintings on the walls, & there were mummies all over the place, some whole & some in fragments I found a nice piece of mummy wrapping to take back to the eldest Oulton boy, who returns to England to school the end of this month.

I had my lunch that day in the shade of a bridge over a dry canal, then in the afternoon on to Akhmim when I saw the weavers again, they are working hard & I hope will complete our order before the end of the month, I cannot get odd lengths, they sell only by the piece that comes from the loom, & they make the lengths about 5 or 6 meters, as required for the native garments. but I have bought some pieces that they weave for handkerchiefs & you could give M<sup>rs</sup> Pinton two of them. I reached Sohag in time for tea & I did enjoy the luxury of a bath.

After an hours<sup>sic</sup> ride I reached the caves where I had originally intended to camp, I scrambled up the cliff & spent a good time investigating, some of the tombs had reliefs & inscriptions & some paintings on the walls, & there were mummies all over the place, some whole & some in fragments I found a nice piece of mummy wrapping to take back to the eldest Oulton boy, who returns to England to school the end of this month.

I had my lunch that day in the shade of a bridge over a dry canal, then in the afternoon on to Akhmim when I saw the weavers again, they are working hard & I hope will complete our order before the end of the month, I cannot get odd lengths, they sell only by the piece that comes from the loom, & they make the lengths about 5 or 6 meters, as required for the native garments. but I have bought some pieces that they weave for handkerchiefs & you could give M<sup>rs</sup> Pinton two of them. I reached Sohag in time for tea & I did enjoy the luxury of a bath.

285  
8

The next day I spent mostly with the Oultons, I went in the morning to drink coffee with the Ombashi, & he showed me various curios from the Soudan. & gave me some tea from there also a little bottle of sweet smelling oil extracted from sandal wood. The following day I returned to camp. Mr Oulton drove me over & he & Harry had lunch with us & Amice arranged a little entertainment in the afternoon in honour of her birthday, we had the native players, & dancers. & camel riding etc.

Now I am settling down to the job again, feeling much better for the change. I very much enjoyed my trip on my own. it was not too long & I did not feel I needed a companion as I should for a longer time. It was very good for me to have to depend entirely on my knowledge of Arabic for three whole days, for in that time I did not meet a single person who could speak anything else & I really got on quite well. though I still find it difficult to follow all that they

The next day I spent mostly with the Oultons, I went in the morning to drink coffee with the Ombashi, & he showed me various curios from the Soudan. & gave me some tea from there also a little bottle of sweet smelling oil extracted from sandal<sup>sic</sup> wood {sandalwood}, The following day I returned to camp. Mr Oulton drove me over & he & Harry had lunch with us & Amice arranged a little entertainment in the afternoon in honour of her birthday, we had the native players, & dancers. & camel riding etc.

Now I am settling down to the job again, feeling much better for the change. I very much enjoyed my trip on my own. it was not too long & I did not feel I needed a companion as I should for a longer time, It was very good for me to have to depend entirely on my knowledge of Arabic for three whole days, for in that time I did not meet a single person who could speak anything else & I really got on quite well. though I still find it difficult to follow all that they



285<sup>10</sup>

say to me as they use so many words outside my vocabulary & a slight difference in pronunciation makes a known word unrecognizable. This is the main difficulty, Arabic ~~is~~ consists of consonants only - the vowel sounds are put in according to the case or tense etc & are purely grammatical, the uneducated get them rather mixed up & one word may be pronounced three or four different ways in different villages.

This letter seems to have run to great length & I must close it for the post today. I expect we shall close camp here the end of this month & I shall try to get a boat the first week in May.

Lots of love to you both.  
Your affectionate daughter  
Myrtle.

P.S. The sweet peas have never arrived. I expect the customs bagged them.

say to me as they use so many words outside my vocabulary & a slight difference in pronunciation<sup>sic</sup> makes a known word unrecognizable. This is the main difficulty, Arabic ~~is~~ consists of consonants only - the vowel sounds are put in according to the case or tense etc & are purely grammatical, the uneducated get them rather mixed up & one word may be pronounced three or four different ways in different villages

This letter seems to have run to great length & I must close it for the post today. I expect we shall close camp here the end of this month & I shall try to get a boat the first week in May.

Lots of love to you both.  
Your affectionate daughter  
Myrtle.

P.S. The sweet peas have never arrived. I expect the customs bagged them.