

Arabah. el Madfuna.  
Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1936.

Dear Mother.

Last Saturday we went to Nag. Hamadi to lunch with M. & Madame Roche, they had made a special feast for us. first we had some cold savory sorts of meat with salad. then a delicious cawiflower<sup>sic</sup> sufflee<sup>sic</sup>, then a turkey was brought for M. Roche to carve & we eat<sup>sic</sup> it with beans carrots & potatoes. Afterwards came Xmas pudding. M<sup>r</sup> Roche heaped sugar all round it on the dish then poured half a bottle of rum over it & set it alight, it made a terrific blaze & our serves were all in flames when our plates were set before us. it was very exciting, we had a light white wine during the lunch & then with the pudding champagne. & all sorts of desert to follow, & coffee & liqueur afterwards. As you can imagine we could hardly move after all this. we sat around a bit to let

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 it settle & then went round the garden. we saw some of Madame's pets. There were two white rats in a run specially constructed for them & two cranes who followed us all round the garden. I asked Mr Roche if they were a M<sup>r</sup> & M<sup>ss</sup> & he said rather sadly that they were both Miss. There was also a tame wolf but he did not appear as he is shy of strangers. Madame told us that they cannot keep labels on any of the plants, as he goes round & pulls them all off. He does not do any other damage in the garden, but he cannot bear the sight of a label.

Just before tea time a famous holy sheikh came to pay a call on M. & M<sup>me</sup> Roche & we all sat solemnly in the truly awful French drawing room & drank tea, Amice & I talked in our very best Arabic, <sup>in</sup> fact conversation must have sounded very strange. part English part French & part Arabic. & a radio making unrecognizable noises in the distance

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When the time for departure came Joey was laden with vegetables & flowers.

Mannie is now wearing the skirt I made her, & she looks very nice in it, when I asked if it fitted properly & was comfortable she said, oh yes it was all right but the flannel top pricked her.

Our nice police officer has been removed to Sohag. we are very sorry about it he was quite the nicest we have had, polite & friendly, without being over officious like the others. we have not yet seen his successor.

Amice & I have had a letter from Otto. he says he is getting on quite well. The first plastic case has been taken off. The Dr is very satisfied by the way it is healing & has put a new plastic case that holds the leg rigid right up to the hip. he has to be in this eight weeks, but can leave the hospital soon & stay with Dr Junker, his sister in law is acting as housekeeper to Junker so she can help look after him.

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There is an eclipse of the moon to night, we have been out to see it several times just of all the shadow was quite black, now only a little rim of the moon is visible & the shadow is a sort of coppery colour. all the people in the village are shouting & banging off guns & all the dogs are barking.

We have taken down all the Xmas decorations & last night we lit the candles on Amice's tiny Xmas tree & all the men came in to see it. Sardic told us an amusing story of his first experience of English customs at Xmas. it was many years ago when he was quite a lad. Prof Peet was working here then, & he had an Xmas pudding & set it alight with brandy & called Sardic to come quickly because the pudding was on fire. Sardic came & saw it flaming & siezed the water jug to pour over it, but of course Prof Peet stopped him in time & explained that it was only a joke. Abdallah has a new galabia & he goes about

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Abdullah has a new galabia & he goes about

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crackling & rustling like a bag of sweets at a theatre he looks simply enormous in it, he is the tallest of our servants now & has a moustache, in fact he looked so hairy & bristly that Amice told Sardic that he must be trimmed & not go about looking like a gamoose. it was too much for Sardic's gravity he could not stop laughing, we dare not mention that whiskery animal now for fear of setting him off again. any way Abdullah is now clipped & trimmed & made quite presentable.

So glad to hear Father's cold is better. Lots of love to you both.

Your affectionate daughter  
Myrtle.

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