

Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 1930.

Arabah el  
Madfunah.

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Dear Mother

Many Happy Returns of your Birthday. I hope this will reach you by the 18<sup>th</sup>; I have written to Cairo to order a box of very special Turkish Delight to be posted to you. There may be a small duty to pay, but I do not think it would be more than a few pence if anything.

We had a very exciting day yesterday we have been invited to visit the chief engineer at Nag Hammadi where they are building a new dam across the Nile. Miss C & I decided it would be good fun to go on camels - this was before we actually knew the distance, (we thought it was about 11<sup>miles</sup>) our suggestion was received with some amazement & a lot of doubt as to our riding capabilities, but Sardic quite cheerfully said it was possible, & he could get us good camels. We made further inquiries & consulted the map, & found the distance from here to Nag Hammadi was 22 miles. We still said we would go. & gave Sardic orders to have four camels

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ready for us at 6 o'clock Tuesday morning, this was one for Miss C. one for myself & one for Capt C. (who decided to join us at the last moment after teasing us considerably for our mad idea) & one to be shared between Sandic & the camel man.

We had breakfast 5.30. just before sunrise our lunch was packed, & we were ready by 6. our camels arrived & were induced to fold themselves up. we had our blankets spread over the saddles. (pack saddles. not proper riding ones) & we mounted. Capt C was a few minutes late so of course we hooted at him, he came out with a rush gave a wild yell & charged his kneeling camel intending to leap onto the saddle, the poor camel wasn't used to this behaviour & shot straight up in terror, the Capt managed to clutch the poles of the saddle & was lifted off his feet clinging to them, for a moment the men were too helpless with laughter to render any assistance but finally he was hoisted up on top, I think it was the funniest thing I have ever seen. I can hardly describe it for laughing even now

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The first part of the journey was across desert. It is a gorgeous feeling to be mounted on a great tall beast going along with swinging strides. After a few miles we turned down into the cultivation, & we went along narrow tracks between fields of clover, beans, lentils etc. sometimes our way was along canal banks & under the mimosa trees, we often had to bend very low to avoid the branches. The scent was glorious. Often we stopped to talk to the people & ask them about their crops, & we were given handfuls of flowering beans & clover, we did not have to carry these far, for soon an inquiring nose came round & the camel begged for a mouthful. I ~~quickly~~<sup>quickly</sup> discovered it was quite easy to feed ones camel while riding & very soon my ~~baguet~~<sup>baguet</sup> was all gone.

Sometimes another party of camel's would be going our way for a short distance, & we would all jog along merrily, enquiring after each others health & where from & where going. It is very pleasant to be riding along the country ways of Egypt in the proper native style, far better than hooting along the dusty dirt roads in cars, being cursed by all the people as infidel dogs. We were merely pleasant & interested, & we received ~~courteous~~<sup>courteous</sup> greetings & blessings & handfuls of flowers.

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About 12.30 we came in sight of our destination, so we called a halt at a suitable spot on the banks of the Nile. Had our lunch unpacked & fell too. We had bully beef, tomatoes, baked potatoes & bread, a tin of peaches cake, biscuits & oranges. The men had brought their own food & they were given a portion of ours as well as we could not possibly eat all of it. By that time we were getting very stiff & saddle sore, we had done nearly 20 miles in one stretch, part walking, part trotting, a camel's trot is the most ghastly motion one can imagine at first, one feels as if one's spine is being jarred through one's head, after a while one finds the best way is to let one's body go limp & sway to the motion. After lunch we lay flat on our backs for a short rest, then mounted again & completed our journey. Arrived at Nag Hammadi we found the Ellisons' house, induced our camels to kneel <sup>dismounted</sup> & collected our rugs etc & sent the camels off in charge of the camel man to be fed & watered. Mr. & Mrs. Ellison were delighted to see us, but held up their hands in horror when they heard we had come all the way by camel in 6 1/2 hours, they said such a ride was considered very good going for the camel corps (spelling uncertain) & they would not believe we had only been on a camel

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once before for a quarter of an hour. we had to own to being very stiff & sore. M<sup>rs</sup> Ellison was a dear she insisted on ordering hot baths for us. we were very grateful but suggested we would like to have them after we had been over the dam. so we just had coffee & some lovely sandwiches & adored a glorious bulldog Peter & a terrier Tommy, both very friendly & then went out to see the barrage. it is a marvelous engineering feat, but in its present state hardly a thing of beauty, but it is going to give Egypt many more acres of cultivated land. We had a special thrill, M<sup>r</sup> Ellison took us over in the bucket. This is an iron cage which is lifted up to a great height & passes along a wire right across the Nile. It is said to be the biggest thing of its kind in the world. It certainly was great fun seeing everything from so far above. we saw the pile driving etc & returned in a steam launch. Then Miss C & I each had a glorious hot bath with vinegar in it & doctored each other's sore patches with cold cream, M<sup>rs</sup> Ellison insisted on lending us each a frock & shoes so that we might shed our breeches & boots for a time. we had a very cheery dinner with them. Sandic was entertained in the kitchen (the camel man having started back as soon as the camels were fed & rested).

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 Then we once again put on our servicable garments & were driven back as far as Arabah el Madfunah in our host's car. (a very bumpy journey) the last part of the journey we had to finish on foot. we got home by 10.30, & oh dear we were so tired, but so very pleased with ourselves. nearly every one here had said we would never get as far as Nag Hammardi on pack camels. We were up this morning by 6.30 & at work as usual, none the worse for our adventure (though still a little stiff & sore as to seat & back)

We had the Marmur of Baliana, (he is similar in rank to our Major) to tea today we heard tales of the village fight that has been on in this neighbourhood it seems one man's gamoose got into another man's field & there was a rumpus & some serious fights began & several were killed & wounded, the police came in force but could do nothing until they fired at the people, (I don't suppose they fired to do any damage) this eventually scared the people so that they ran & hid in the houses, where possible hiding them wounded so that they cannot be proved to have had a hand in the affair. now there is an awful to do, because two men killed are Bedawins who have strict tribal laws & have sworn on their beards to take

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 10 lives in revenge for one. The police say they can do nothing in a case like this. These Bedawins will wait a year even, to pay back a blood feud & no one knows when they will strike. The people in this village (some miles from here) are watching day & night, & the police are also alert but the Ma<r>mur says it may go on for an indefinite time. Of course this does not affect us at all, we do not know any of the people in this special village, & I expect the tales that reach us loose nothing in the telling, all the same it is very exciting to be living in a country where such things can happen. It shows the other side of these peoples' characters.

I really must stop now & go to bed.

I hope you have a really nice Birthday & that the Turkish Delight arrives safely.

Lots of love

Your affectionate daughter  
 Myrtle.

I hope you can read this I have so much to say in a short time that my pen falls over itself.

I am enclosing some of the snaps Miss Jonas took at Xmas.

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