

Arabah el Madfunah.  
Jan 10<sup>th</sup> 1930.

Dear Mother.

I really have a good opportunity to write today as I am having a day off. I have got a sneezy cold in the head & it is no use trying to do fine pencil drawings & blow one's nose every five minutes. so I am just staying in bed for a day to get rid of it quickly. I think I must have caught it from M<sup>r</sup> Beazley who came back from Luxor with a bad cold.

Yesterday I got your letter with the rest of the sand paper. I am glad to hear you received my first letter about new boots, as now the canvas ones are quite useless, the sole has come right away from the upper. I expect an English boot maker could mend them, as both sole & upper are in good condition its<sup>sic</sup> only the actual stitching that has gone. but the Egyptian cobbler is hopeless. he does not understand how our boots are constructed, so at present I am wearing rubber shoes & stockings. I do not want to ruin my nice riding boots I am keeping them for "swell occasions" it is quite safe to wear shoes now as all the snakes have gone to sleep in their holes for the winter. (I have only seen one since I have been here)

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I seem to be getting through my scribbling paper very quickly, so will economise by using both sides in the future. I enjoyed hearing about all your Xmas festivities. you seem to have had a very good time, rather different to my Xmas however. I am sorry to hear poor Mr Childs has had such a bad time. It must have been very miserable for him. I am glad Mrs B. was pleased with my letter. I know she hears all my news through you, but I thought she might like to have a letter all to herself. We are now settling down to steady work after our many Xmas excitements. We have had a little bother with Mr Beazley's work. unfortunately he has had no archaeological training, but considers his work above criticism because he has studied at the Slade - both Miss C. & I have done our best to help him, but he seems unable to acquire the technique, or the accuracy needed for this work & takes all criticism as a personal insult. This makes the situation very difficult as Dr Gardiner is trusting to Miss C's judgment in this matter. she is the most painstaking & skillful draughtswoman I have ever seen, though she does not claim to be an artist in the matter of original work. It will probably mean she & I will have to do everything except the quite mechanical part such as rubbings & measurements. Capt B's job is the photography & charge of the

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 electric light engine. which by the way has had  
 something go wrong with its innards & has been  
 sent to Nag Hammadi to be repaired. it went by  
 mule cart to the river, & then by boat. I took a snap  
 of it being loaded onto the cart. there was a fuss  
 & a hulla ba loo about it, every one yells instructions  
 to every one else, & each one does exactly what he thinks  
 most suitable until Capt C. comes on the scene & yells  
 louder than all the others; a good British bawl  
 makes itself heard like a big dogs bark among a  
 pack of yapping little dogs.

So far, Mr Beazley is the only one who has  
 taken any leave. he had a week at Xmas.

Miss C & I are trying to plan a gorgeous trip for our  
 leave about the ~~end~~<sup>beginning</sup> of Feb. we want to visit the  
 oasis of Khaga. To do this one has to go by camel  
 along the ancient camel track across the desert.  
 They tell us it takes a good camel rider 3 days  
 & two nights it is over 100 miles, & desert all the  
 way. (we had this in our mind when we did  
 our camel ride to Nag Hammadi) there are  
 several Bedawin in our village who have done the  
 journey many times & we would have two as  
 guides as well as two of our servants. we should  
 need 10 camels as one has to carry all the water

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required for the journey & a good allowance over in case of any delay. We have one tiny tent that we use for a sand closet for our private use in the temple, we should take this for dressing & undressing in, but we would have to sleep in the open with the camels. wouldn't it be fun. I am not counting too much on doing it, as something very likely will occur to prevent it, but we are both very eager to do some real desert travel in Bedawin style. Sandic is very thrilled at the idea. he is a real Bedawi, he belongs to a tribe of camel men & tent makers, & though he has settled in the cultivation & married a woman of the fellahin (people of the fields) the desert is in his blood & I believe he loves camels more than his own children. (don't you love the picture I took of him kissing the lady camel.)

We still have a "hospital parade" several times a week, they are usually quickly dealt with, a bottle of lysol water & a handful of Epsom salts. Miss C is known among the women as "Mother of Purges."

Sheikh Abdu Wahid has been up to Cairo to look after one of his sons. he told us that he was "behaving badly in the ways of young men & bringing shame upon the head of his family." I was walking through the service rooms in the temple when I met the Sheikh & stopped to say the usual polite things, I thought I had got through them very well when he sprung an entirely new lot of salutations on me & took me

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 firmly by the hand & led me to the temple courtyard.  
 here a very handsome young man was presented to me  
 who proved to be the erring son. he certainly didn't look  
 the sort who could easily resist the temptations of a gay  
 town like Cairo, I am rather doubtful whether such  
 a dashing youth will be content to stay on a quiet country  
 farm, but the Sheikh seems quite capable of ruling his  
 family with a firm hand.

The last few nights we have been rather disturbed  
 by jackals. they are getting very hungry & bold, & they  
 can smell our chickens. & prowl round the house:  
 of course our dog barks frantically. we have to keep him  
 tied up at night otherwise he will go off to the village  
 to visit his lady friends. sometimes our night guard  
 fires his gun at them. but they are rather superstitious  
 about killing them.

We have not yet eaten all the good things sent us for  
 Xmas. we have a wonderful desert every night.  
 Turkish delight, stuffed dates, chocolates, almonds, raisins,  
 nougat, candied fruits. as well as our local grown  
 oranges, mandarins & bananas. the fresh oranges are  
 simply delicious & they come in big baskets with lots of  
 leaves on them. Our meals are very varied & we make  
 use of all the local vegetables. just now we are  
 having black carrots. a cross between ordinary carrots  
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one of our favourite puddings is date rice. it is rice pudding & chopped up dates, baked until the milk is all absorbed & the rice is very tender. The flavour of the dates goes all through it. I think you & Father would like it for a change.

When we have chickens we usually have them stuffed with rice & raisins. you have no idea how good this is. sometimes the liver is boiled & chopped up with the rice (or it may be giblets) we don't have bread sauce alas, because the ~~bread~~ native bread is not suitable for it.

The meat is usually rather tough, it has to be eaten so soon, but we do have good soup, & splendid egg dishes & lots of tomatoes all of which I do full justice to.

We are most polite over our desert. we always have finger bowls, & such dear little cups for our black coffee, in fact we are really in the lap of luxury. Nannie is such a dear old soul & looks after us splendidly.

I read her your remarks about her photo. she was so delighted. I heard her repeating them in Arabic for Sardic's benefit

Later. Just received Father's letter enclosing one from M<sup>r</sup> Swain, & the very nice pocket book. for all of which my very best thanks. I am so glad you are both pleased with my Xmas surprise, M<sup>rs</sup> Childs must have managed it splendidly, I expect you must have wondered what was in that big parcel. I had an awful job to smuggle it into the house unobserved.

I am glad Gamages understood my requirements re: boots I expect I shall get them about the end of the month or early in Feb.

Jan 11<sup>th</sup> Cold is better this morning. so shall get up to lunch & sit in the sun. We are planning a little expedition for next week. There is to be a great Mohomadan Festival held at Kena

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which is near to Dendera (Ptolemaic Temple) this festival is held every year & it would be an excellent opportunity for us to see it, as we can probably get the loan of the antiquities rest house at Dendera & see the temple at the same time. we should have to travel by train Wed morning, stay Wed night & return Thurs night. There is a very curious custom connected with this festival, the King sends £100 in million pieces. (less than '6') These are scattered broadcast & when the mob rushes to pick them up they are lashed & beaten with long whips. The man who secures a coin will be lucky all the year. & the more he is beaten in getting it the more merit he will acquire. I expect it will be a very brutal sight, but one has to remember that these people are fanatical & it is absolutely true that when the religious frenzy is on them they have ~~at~~ no physical feeling what ever. One gets quite a different outlook on things out here, Western ideas & standards simply wont work in the east. There will be many other sights besides the coin scramble, there will be the great procession of camels in all their best trappings, the dancing horses & native music, trials of skill, & single stick contests, conjuring etc

Mon 13<sup>th</sup> Have decided not to go to Dendera after all as this wretched cold will hang about & I dont want to risk making it worse. I am very disappointed. we find

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Mr Beazley is leaving for good tomorrow. there is really nothing that he is capable of doing now that the ceiling rubbings & measurements are done, it means Miss B & I will have a lot extra to get through, but possibly a lot could be finished in England. I am glad my work has proved up to standard. I shall probably have the offer of several more seasons work out here.

I went down to the Temple to lunch to-day & the walk absolutely fagged me out. it's a touch of this beastly flu that I've had, there has been one consolation however & that's the welcome I got from the men on my reappearance, the Temple rang with their "Praise be to God the Lady has returned" Old Ahmud took me by the hand & enquired most earnestly after my health, & each time he saw me afterwards he told me he was happy because I was better. I over heard Sardic telling Nannie that he hoped I would be back in the Temple soon, as

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 but anyway I expect my letter will reach you in  
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Tomorrow is English mail & I am looking  
 forward to my usual letter from you.

Love to you both  
 your affectionate daughter  
 Myrtle

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