

Arabah.
March 16th [1931]

Arabah. 1254
March 16th

Dear Mother

My last adventure was to visit the tomb of Sheikh Ali. This Sheikh was a very holy man & a member of the sect of snake charmers, as are all his descendants, they have a large walled enclosure by the Tomb where the snakes live, If a woman wishes her son to be immune from snake bite she takes him to the Sheikh in charge of the place (who is great grandson of the original Sheikh Ali) & he places a big snake round the boys neck, & writes him a charm, & after that no snake will ever harm him. Also, if a snake is found in any persons house he ~~comes~~ sends for the Sheikh, who comes & takes the snake away, he calls to it & the snake will follow him.

Having heard all these wonders I said I would like to visit Sheikh Ali, if it were possible Sardic said Oh yes, it could be arranged. So I had the camel & started early in the morning with Sardic on his donkey, Ahmed on a borrowed donkey & Mahommed & Semman on foot.

Dear Mother

My last adventure was to visit the tomb of Sheikh Ali, This Sheikh was a very holy man & a member of the sect of snake charmers, as are all his descendants, they have a large walled enclosure by the Tomb where the snakes live, If a woman wishes her son to be immune from snake bite she takes him to the Sheikh in charge of the place (who is great grandson of the original Sheikh Ali) & he places a big snake round the boys^{sic} neck, & writes him a charm, & after that no snake will ever harm him. Also, if a snake is found in any persons^{sic} house he ~~comes~~ sends for the Sheikh, who comes & takes the snake away, he calls to it & the snake will follow him.

Having heard all these wonders I said I would like to visit Sheikh Ali, if it were possible Sardic said Oh yes, it could be arranged.

So I had the camel & started early in the morning with Sardic on his donkey, Ahmed on a borrowed donkey & Mahommed & Semman on foot.

125²

This time our way led through the green, we went along narrow foot paths through the corn which was shoulder high, there were fields of beans & clover also, in the clover the sheep & the goats with the lambs & kids, the cows, buffaloes, camels, donkeys, also with offspring were teathered^{sic} to graze. there were even geese & goslings. (not teathered^{sic}.) It was so pretty to see the various happy familys^{sic} with usually a small boy or girl & a dog to guard them. It took about 2½ hours good going to reach the little village where the tomb is, the village has some very fine pigeon houses, you will see them in one of the snapshots. The Tomb stands in a sort of court yard. where there is a special place for leaving camels & donkeys.

Our arrival caused quite a commotion, the people are used to many & various pilgrims but a white woman was a novelty. The Sheikh was very polite & said I might go into the tomb if I wished, so I removed my boots. (the zip

This time our way led through the green, we went along narrow foot paths through the corn which was shoulder high, there were fields of beans & clover also, in the clover the sheep & the goats with the lambs & kids, the cows, buffaloes, camels, donkeys, also with offspring were teathered^{sic} to graze. there were even geese & goslings. (not teathered^{sic}.) It was so pretty to see the various happy familys^{sic} with usually a small boy or girl & a dog to guard them. It took about 2½ hours^{sic} good going to reach the little village where the tomb is, the village has some very fine pigeon houses, you will see them in one of the snapshots. The Tomb stands in a sort of court yard. where there is a special place for leaving camels & donkeys.

Our arrival caused quite a commotion. the people are used to many & various pilgrims but a white woman was a novelty. The Sheikh was very polite & said I might go into the tomb if I wished, so I removed my boots. (the zip

125³

fasteners caused great astonishment) & went in. The Tomb was gaily decorated inside with painted plaster walls. the floor was just sand & the actual burial was enclosed in an elaborate screen of open wood work, all the Moslems kissed this screen, (Semman rubbed his face hard against it in the hopes of getting extra blessing) I merely walked round. When I came out again the Sheikh invited me to rest on a divan while coffee was prepared. & he wrote me a special charm to protect me from snakes. for which I gave him 10 P.T. Unfortunately I couldn't see the snakes as the old man who had charge of them was in Girga that day & had taken the key with him. The Sheikh was very sorry about it. & he said he would himself bring a big snake to Arabah for me to see next Friday. I said I did not wish him to go to so much trouble. but he said, I have promised it. so I am bound to come.

I had two cups of very nice coffee

fasteners caused great astonishment) & went in. The Tomb was gaily decorated inside with painted plaster walls. the floor was just sand & the actual burial was enclosed in an elaborate screen of open wood work, All the Moslems kissed this screen, (Semman rubbed his face hard against it in the hopes of getting extra blessing) I merely walked round. When I came out again the Sheikh invited me to rest on a divan while coffee was prepared. & he wrote me a special charm to protect me from snakes. for which I gave him 10 P.T. Unfortunately I could^{nt}^{sic} see the snakes as the old man who had charge of them was in Girga that day & had taken the key with him. The Sheikh was very sorry about it. & he said he would himself bring a big snake to Arabah for me to see next Friday. I said I did not wish him to go to so much trouble. but he said, I have promised it – so I am bound to come.

I had two cups of very nice coffee

125⁴

+ thanked the Sheikh very much & said good-bye
 & mounted my camel & set off again.
 Sardic knew the gardener who worked in the
 garden of a very big estate near there & had
 arranged for me to have my lunch there
 as it would be cool & pleasant under the orange
 trees, fancy having lunch in an orange grove
 & having ones^{sic} desert^{sic} picked fresh from the
 trees, the gardener insisted on making me
 coffee, & I bought 8 PT of oranges & took them
 home in my saddle bags. My camel & the
 donkeys had a lovely time grazing on fresh clover.
 On my return journey I visited Sardic's sister in
 law, she & her family were living in one of the
 little straw shelters that they inhabit during
 the winter months when working in the fields,
 There was a great fuss & to-do & more coffee.
 I began to feel like the day after Ramadan.
 When I got stumped for conversation I showed
 them how my boots worked. that was a very
 popular move.

& thanked the Sheikh very much & said good-bye
 & mounted my camel & set off again.

Sardic knew the gardener who worked in the
 garden of a very big estate near there & had
 arranged for me to have my lunch there
 as it would be cool & pleasant under the orange
 trees, Fancy having lunch in an orange grove
 & having ones^{sic} desert^{sic} picked fresh from the
 trees. the gardener insisted on making me
 coffee, & I bought 8 PT of oranges & took them
 home in my saddle bags. My camel & the
 donkeys had a lovely time grazing on fresh clover.

On my return journey I visited Sardic's sister in
 law, she & her family were living in one of the
 little straw shelters that they inhabit during
 the winter months when working in the fields,
 There was a great fuss & to-do - & more coffee.
 I began to feel like the day after Ramadan.
 When I got stumped for conversation I showed
 them how my boots worked - that was a very
 popular move.

125⁵

It was ^{late} evening when I got back. & wasn't tired, but I had enjoyed it tremendously. The next two days I was busy in the temple & the following day Amice returned. I forgot to tell you that I had such a job to get the men to accept a little present from me for all the extra work they'd done on my account. I told Sardic I wanted him to get himself a new pair of shoes. I had to get Nannie to help me make him ^{take} the money for them. Old Ahmud flatly refused to take anything until I told him if he wouldn't take it for himself, then he was to take it as a present for his little girl. I used the same sort of diplomacy with Mahommed.

On Friday the Sheikh came with a big cobra, he had it wrapped up in a shawl. he put it down & it reared & put its hood up. It realised it was in a strange place & it slithered up to its master as though seeking protection. he picked it up & I took a photo of him holding it against

It was <late> evening when I got back. & was'nt^{sic} I tired. but I had enjoyed it tremendously.

The next two days I was busy in the temple & the following day Amice returned.

I forgot to tell you that I had such a job to get the men to accept a little present from me for all the extra work the'y^{sic} done on my account/<t>. I told Sardic I wanted him to get himself a new pair of shoes. I had to get Nannie to help me make him <take> the money for them. Old Ahmud flatly refused to take anything until I told him if he would'nt^{sic} take it for himself, then he was to take it as a present for his little girl. I used the same sort of diplomacy with Mahommed.

On Friday the Sheikh came with a big cobra, he had it wrapped up in a shawl. he put it down & it reared & put its hood up. it realised it was in a strange place & it slithered up to its master as though seeking protection. he picked it up & I took a photo of him holding it against

125⁶

him, & then another photo of it on the ground with its hood up. I hope they will be successful. The Sheikh refused to take anything for his trouble in coming over.

It is very hot now, even ⁱⁿ the shade, the flies are troublesome too, I have found a good plan is to put some of the mosquito stuff Father got me in about 3 parts eau-de-cologne & keep dabbing it on my forehead, it keeps them away as long as the smell lasts, but needs constant renewing.

We heard a few days ago that Hugh has a new baby boy. This is number 5. Amice says she hopes its the last.

Today I have bought Father another sort of slipper & also a pair for myself. These are like Sardinian wears. They are not so funny as the others & I expect he will be able to really wear these. They are a cheerful orange.

This is all the news for now.

Lots of love to everybody
Your affectionate daughter Myrtle.

him, & then another photo of it on the ground with its hood up. I hope they will be successful. The Sheikh refused to take anything for his trouble in coming over.

It is very hot now, over 90 in the shade, the flies are troublesome too, I have found a good plan is to put some of the mosquito stuff Father got me in about 3 parts eau-de-cologne & keep dabbing it on my forehead, it keeps them away as long as the smell lasts, but needs constant renewing.

We heard a few days ago that Hugh has a new baby boy. This is number 5. Amice says she hopes its^{sic} the last.

To-day I have bought Father another sort of slipper & also a pair for myself. These are like Sardinian wears. They are not so funny as the others & I expect he will be able to really wear them. They are a cheerful orange.

This is all the news for now.

Lots of love to everybody

Your affectionate daughter Myrtle.