

Shepherd's Hotel

Cairo

January 6th 84

My dear Anna,

We posted letters to you from
Alexandria last week, hoping to catch
the Canadian mail but there seems
great uncertainty here as to how letters
go. We are told that it takes 7 or 8 days
to reach England so our letters will be very
old before they get to you. When we go
up the Nile of course the distance will
be increased daily & very likely we
may not be able to send letters by the
ordinary Canadian steamer. So
don't be alarmed if our letters are irregular.
Things here are quite safe as long as the

Troops remain - If they are withdrawn I suppose we too will gracefully withdraw too. But at present we intend to go up the hills by the steamer of the 15th Jan - There are several people at the hotel here who are going also & I think that we will have a very pleasant time. The cholera is quite over now & no one here thinks any more of it. But I must tell you a little of what we have been doing. We got to Alexandria last Wednesday (Jan 2.) morning & drove about the city a little as there was no train before 2 P.M. A great part of Alexandria is still in ruins, the result of the bombardment. The people are the chief interest, for the buildings we find are all very inferior. Even the mosques exteriorally look much better in photos

there in reality. But the natives are all
 more than all, one can expect. I continually
 feel that by some reverse process fr. that
 adopted by Rip Van Winkle, I have got back
 into the Arabian Nights tales. All nationalities
 are represented here & they all wear
 their distinctive costumes. Here they
 prefer to wrap their heads to covering
 their feet. They all wear caps of some
 sort & around this a turban or sometimes
 a small shawl. The women still wear
 veils over the lower half of the face &
 carry water bottles & bundles of all
 descriptions on their heads. Donkeys &
 Camels & buffaloes & goats are seen
 everywhere & in fact it is all just as
 one has seen it represented in pictures
 often, but one needs to come here to believe
 it all & realize how many of these things

people there are. But it is of no use to try to describe the indescribable. It is like an ant-hill & the streets are teeming with all sorts of odd oriental people. The "one-eyed Kalkandar" is to be met with at every turn & indeed it is sad to see so many people with sore eyes. I should think at least half of the people here have something wrong with their eyes & about a fourth part of them are reduced to one eye. I should think that there wd be a marvelous market for glasses here if they became fashionable. But I have wandered off in a sad way from my account of what we have been doing. We got to Cairo a little after 9 P.M. last Wednesday & so saw nothing until Thursday when we got a carriage & a driver & drove about to see a little of the place. Kresides Papa wanted to make some calls & leave letters of introduction. We visited the oldest Coptic church which doubtless is very old.

as it is built over the cave where Joseph &
 Mary stayed when in Egypt & is supposed to
 have been made at the time. But it is very
 dirty & dingy. The baptismal font is made
 of the stone, on which Joseph sat leaving a very
 evident hollow thereon. These people of old
 must have been strongly muscular. As
 another evidence of which we saw a little
 later, the stone pillar that Mahomet caused
 to fly fr. Mecca to Cairo by giving it a push with
 his shoulder. The mark of his shoulder is still
 there as a proof to disbelievers. We also
 visited several mosques, the finest by far
 being that of Mahomet Ali. It is nearly
 all of alabaster & the floor is all covered
 with oriental mats & the rounded roofs
 very prettily ornamented. Before entering we
 were obliged to put on enormous red felt slippers
 or rather bags for they were quite without
 shape, & have them securely tied on so as to keep

our unholy feet fr. touching the pavement. Then we went to the citadel too & saw the view fr. it which is very fine & includes a distant sight of the pyramids. We were fortunate enough to meet on one of the streets, a wedding procession, accompanied by a billious band of players who played on various instruments without the least regard to time or rhythm. The bride veiled, & wearing a brilliant scarlet robe with white trimmings walked under a magenta coloured canopy held over her by four bearers. We also met the Hedive who is preceded by some very fine outrunners & a few mounted officers. This drive occupied most of the day & the rest was spent quietly by us in arranging our things & also in taking a walk in a very pretty garden or park that is quite close to the hotel. I cannot enter into a description of the vegetation

7

in the latter or there will be no end to it.
One of the most ^{beautiful} plants, or perhaps I should say
gorgeous, is the poinsettia - the plant we
thought so very new in Montreal last year
that has most brilliant scarlet bracts.
Here it grows into a large bush with
hundreds of scarlet topped branches & in the sun-
light looks most brilliant.

On Thursday we devoted ourselves to the great
pyramids - It takes about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours to drive
there. I wanted to go on a donkey but out of consideration
to Papa we went in a carriage - Directly we
got to the foot we were surrounded by a host of
howling arabs & with difficulty arranged to
be attended by not more than four or five
each & commenced the ascent. The blocks of
stone are quite as high as an ordinary dinner
table - An ordinary dinner table you will say
sounds quite a simple thing but think of
getting up a succession of tables that reaches
up twice as high as the French Cathedral tower.
Papa was shot up in a very short time but

My attendants were hindered & did not
 take breath once or twice. These pyramid Arabs
 are tall well developed men; dressed in
 long white gowns & white turbans. Their
 legs & arms bear. And I have written all
 this yet never said anything about
 "backsheesh" which was the constant cry.

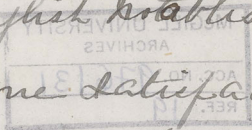
They were particularly bad the day we were
 there for there had been no visitors the day before
 & so they wished to make a double harvest out
 of us. Coming down the pyramid was
 quite as difficult an operation as getting
 up. One of the men tied his long turban cloth
 around Pepis's waist & while two took his hands
 another half on to the turban behind so as
 to be quite sure of him. Happily they did not
 think this necessary in my case. But
 I felt quite stiff the next day although of
 course I w^d not have omitted the ascent.

In the evening we dined with Col. Ardagh
 to whom we had a letter of introduction. We
 found that he keeps bachelor quarters with

two other military gentlemen - Besides ourselves
 & the three entertainers there were two married
 couples & two more gentlemen - I cannot tell
 you the names of any - I think the one
 who was in was Col. Greenfield & the one on
 the other side was a general - But it was a
 very pleasant party & Papa met with a brother
 in a Mr. Schwinpeth a geologist of some
 note here. The table was waited by natives
 in their picturesque dress - embroidered little
 jackets, white loose sleeves & loose pantaloons
 sashes & ^{red} gages.

On Saturday we spent most of our time at the
 Bülük museum & in the latter part of the
 afternoon wrote letters to English friends - These
 letters certainly take a long time, especially
 when one is induced to write such a lengthy
 one as this is. But I think I must finish
 now - We cannot post this until Wednesday
 so perhaps I may be able to add an account
 of a ceremonial that we hope to see to-morrow
 the fête of the return of the carpet of Mecca -

Monday we find that a mail leaves tonight
 so have to get our letters ready & I will have
 very little more time for writing. We
 went to see the procession this morning &
 enjoyed it very much. You must know
 that every year a carpet (or mat) is sent
 to Mecca & then the one of the previous
 year is returned to Cairo & is a most holy
 relic. The procession we saw is in account of
 its return - The carpet itself is too holy for
 common eyes so was under a gorgeous
 canopy carried by an equally fine camel.
 There were also a number of substituted
 banners carried to represent different
 trades. Then a great part of the Egyptian
 army supplemented by Turkish bands &
 bashi-bazouks - Then the Kediwe & "his own"
 were there & many other Cairo notables.
 But the people gathered to watch the process
 were themselves an equally interesting



sight. We also saw most of the English notables
 who are here & had the supreme satisfaction
 of knowing some of them. Now I really must
 stop, both ^{for} your sake & my own & remember
 please that this letter is not altogether
 public property. Mother is writing to George
 this week & so will not have time to write to
 you. We have not yet got our last weeks home
 letters but hope to to-morrow or next day -
 Apparently there are only three mails per
 week between this & England - Please
 give Mr Carpenter my love & tell her I am
 now reading "Learda" with great satisfaction,
 having left it until on the spot. With love
 to Florence & Will as well as to the children
 & kindest regards to Bernard -

Believe me
 Your very affectionate sister
Loa.

sim

McGILL UNIVERSITY
ARCHIVES
ACC. NO. 976131
REF. 19

1871-1872 II

Believe me
Your very affectionate sister

Lucy