Letter No 45.

Semiramis Hotel.
Cairo.
Feb. 12th 1916.

I seem to have rather muddled the figures but they are no. properly. I've to uncle Geo. Freeheim & Glen Tunk & him & what he told as of his trip.

Dear Mother.

I just finished a long letter to you this a.m. but as it was very heavy decided to finish my diary for the week in another letter. It is so difficult to realize that you are in the midst of probably miserable winter weather, whereas this climate at present is perfect, so beautifully cool that unless one is right on the desert with the sun streaming down, a cloth dress fuls quite comfortable, & in the evening a wrap a necessity. Well to go back to Mon. the 7th. We decided to get a guide & go to the pyramids & were fortunate in finding a splendid man, an Assyrian by birth, ~~with~~ speaks splendid English, seems to understand the natives thoroughly, for he never has any trouble with them, & what is better than anything does not talk incessantly. We started off by having just a glimpse

I the Zoological Gardens, but on finding it would be perfectly alright to go there alone, decided not to waste the guides time here. Certainly the gardens are lovely ans, the animals well kept & most interesting, + am keen to go again & spend more time here. From here we took the train as far as Mena House where we all (4) got on camels to go to the pyramids. We had great fun, & once on their backs quite enjoyed the sensation. Even not disappointed in the least in the pyramids, but am can't help regretting the Sphinx is so surrounded by clamouring photographers & numerous children yelling for "backsheesh" - one gets to hate it. I won't attempt to describe any of it except that the desert even for me, hating the sun as I do, has a wonderful fascination. The coloring in the distance, the moveable camel in ~~the distance~~ in the foreground, & the rolling sand in all directions is lovely. We just sat down on a heap of sand & enjoyed our

lunch (you feel very luxurious always having a boy trailing on behind carrying your lunch) & a smoke & then decided it was too expensive work loitering, so wandered on our way the guide taking us straight the Bazaars. Of course I could spend hours & hours wandering here, ~~but~~ not so much on account of the goods displayed as to watch the people at work, so many using the most primitive implements. I have made up my mind to buy nothing for I have seen nothing you would like specially & our luggage is so carelessly handled, & it is so doubtful when we will turn homeward that I think it foolish. Sometimes I have weak moments & wonder if I am making a mistake, & then the future seems so un-certain & it is so difficult to decide on any one thing, that so far I have managed to stick to my original resolution. Our guide apparently has taken numberless good customers straight & so is greeted enthusiastically by many of the ~~to~~ vendors, without our ever being pestered to buy.

Ten Tues. the 8th the a.m. was again wasted in the shops. Although I say wasted I really enjoy every minute I spend on the street & am afraid it is largely owing to this I loiter so much & accomplish but little. Had a shampoo in the afternoon. Unfortunately most of the hair-dressers are French, consequently are at the front so while I got a good shampoo, the curl was miserable. Wandered into Croffi's for tea, then went for a walk. Wed. 9th shopped in a.m. again & went to the Egyptian Museum in the afternoon - A wonderful place, although at present everything is up-set & numerous antiques around the corridors have been placed. Came back to the Hotel for tea where we un-fortunately ran into two men we had met, & felt obliged to be polite to — consequently when they left it was too late to do anything. Thurs. 10th. We had a wonderful. Unfortunately our Matron planned the party, there was some hitch & instead of starting at 9 a.m. it was nearly eleven. We hired a boat (there were over 30 fus - mostly sisters

a few officers & a guide, the latter not nearly such a good one as we had had, but the Matron liked him) & went up the hill, a gorgeous trip. Had lunch & arrived at our destination about 1.30 p.m. Here we were met by numerous donkeys & rode in all 7½ miles to Memphis & Sakkara, through two small villages, farm land & then the dessert. We only had time to visit two of the excavated Temples, but the trip from beginning to end was full of interest & coming back the setting-sun going down behind palm trees with those wonderful green fields in the foreground beyond description. The donkeys were a surprise to all fus, for in Lemnos they are sure-footed but terribly slow, one can scarcely ever get them to run — whereas here one can't get them to stop. My poor little beast became tired on the return trip, & although it still persisted in running, twice its knees gave way & I was sent flying over his head fortunately landing in the sand, so none the worse. You can imagine the ~~spet~~ spectacle! Mildred also was unfortunate her donkey

treating her the same way. We got back to the boat at dusk & so didn't specially enjoy the sail down the river as it was quite cold. Reached the Sotil at 8.30 & had dinner & then to bed good & tired.

Friday - 11th Woke up to find I was bruised from head to foot but felt the day had been well worth it. This morning we took the train to Heliopolis a magnificent suburb of Cairo, with numerous beautiful modern buildings but nothing historically ~~dis~~ interesting. We wandered around, & had thought of driving out to see the Obelisk similar to the one in London I believe, & the only antique in Heliopolis, but the cabby persisted in charging us double fare so we got mad & wouldn't pay it. When there is so much to see for less it wasn't worth it. In Cairo itself one never has any trouble for there is a tariff but apparently not @ Heliopolis. In the afternoon treated ourselves to tea @ Shepheards, where there is an orchestra, but were disappointed it played so little. I must say had I un-limited means & were visiting here in the proper season, I should much

prepare the Savoy? or Semiramis to Shepheards.
The situation of the Semiramis is simply perfect, right over-looking the Nile & surrounded by beautiful private residences.
To-day (Sat.) we again were extravagant & had a guide, our nice man, & decided to go alone for one can do things so much more quickly when several people have not to be consulted. We went first to Old Cairo, where we saw ~~a very~~ the oldest Mosque in Cairo, the wealthiest Synagogue, & an old Coptic Church now in the possession of the Greek Priests. At this latter church we were fortunate in running in when service was on. It seems hard to believe that their teaching is near ours than the R. C. Much will tell you about Old Cairo, its poverty & filth. I simply can't describe the abject poverty, families living in humble dam houses, where the sun has shone for hundreds of years, the floor mud, & the entire furniture one wooden bench, 1 bowl & ~~a~~ a water jug. Why they don't die I can't understand. I asked the guide how much sent one

particular old woman he spoke to would pay — & he said she had inherited it from her husband & so had neither taxes or rent. She was a Christian & like all members of the Coptic Church, had the Coptic cross branded on her wrist or I should say tatooed. From there we went into a very old Coptic Church, built over the spot where the Virgin, Joseph & Christ were supposed to have lived during the time they spent in Egypt. Just at present this Church is beginning renovated — the remaining bits of in-laid work are exquisite. Then we drove to the Tombs of the Mamelukes which didn't interest me particularly, though the endless heaps of rubbish are passed on the way makes one gasp. From here we visited another old Mosque Uncle may have seen it, ~~the blue~~ it is popularly known as the blue Mosque as it has such wonderful blue tiles. Here, since England has taken Egypt in hand, free schools have been established, as well as in many other old Mosque, & it is curious to see the

children squatting around in groups, a leacher sitting on a bench tailor-fashion, reading out something or other, the children repeating it with him. A few yards further on another group. The noise & confusion is immense & one can't help but wonder if any of them really learn anything. Well I feel had you spent all this time reading a guide book you would have a better idea of what I have seen than by what I have written. There was so much to tell I scarcely have been able to mention what I think of it all — that will have to keep, for my hand is too tired to write any more. Am afraid you will find many words missing but it is far too long to read over. Will not let another a whole week go by, for when one is seeing so much it is too long. I spend all my spare moments reading guide books. Each day I think it is more wonderful to be here, seeing & learning so much. There is still no news of what we are going to do — Au revoir for the present & heaps of love always from Lelie.