

We are in "just" rate health - I have gained nearly a stone since  
leaving Melbourne + its worries + we are hopeful of doing some really  
good work. Kind regards to Honitt as I shall probably have  
time to write to him this mail. I hope you keep well.

Yours  
sincerely,  
Maldwin  
Spencer.

Mie Springs.  
Apr 26. 1901

My dear Fran

Just a line to say that we are now home back again in our old hunting ground. After a journey made somewhat tedious by flies, heat, sand and other discomforts - the first being preeminently the chief - we reached here last Monday evening. If my recollections of childhood serve me aright the Egyptians of old were treated to a plague of flies and many a time + it during the past month have those ancient sinners had my sincere sympathy. Possibly they deserved the infliction but what two simple minded ethnologists - let alone their poor horses - should be treated in this way is more than I can realize.

Anyhow I have had a severe  
& possibly a wholesome chastening  
together with four heavy snows. The  
only relief we have is that in this  
part of the world language does not  
count - there is no one whom you  
can possibly demoralize in that  
respect and for days we travelled  
unmolested & free by a bluish haze.

However here we are in the heart  
of the Macdonnell where the cold  
night - it was down to  $32^{\circ}$  in  
camp last night - are killing off the  
water in millions.

We have had all of our time  
fully occupied working at one thing  
and another from before sunrise to  
late at night.

So far I am most intent on getting  
photographs & cinematograph records.

The former we finished off at the  
Challenger & sent back to Adelaide for  
safe keeping. The latter I did

some of here and say am starting  
to work at it here today when we  
want me to have a conference. I dare

not take the instrument further north  
& after all the records we can get  
amount these natives will answer  
our purpose very well as all

ceremonies are much alike in  
principle. Unfortunately the  
sacred one which are the best one  
the best showing.

Last night after dark the natives  
came to us and told us that they  
were going to invite two young men  
& wanted us to come. Accordingly

we rolled up our rugs and went  
off. It was a mysterious kind  
of proceeding as we walked in

single file + silence through the hills  
to their camp. The night was spent  
by them dancing + yelling + singing  
round their fire and performing  
sacred ceremonies for the benefit of  
the novices. Just before sunrise

they performed one and then at  
the base of the Murtunja (which will  
henceforth reside in the Museum) they  
performed the operation of subincision.

It was a ghastly sight which I  
shall not trouble to see again. If only  
one could get to the bottom of the meaning  
of this initiation one would find the  
key to a good deal but it seems hopeless  
for us to do so + I am afraid that it  
is buried in the far away misty days  
of the Alcheringa.

If you should feel 'so disposed'  
write me a line here as it will reach  
me sooner or later + letters are welcome.