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Alice Springs.

Nov 21. 96.

My dear Nison

Just a line to say that after a most miserably uncomfortable time I reached Alice Springs a little more than a week ago & at once got into the middle of work. The Ngurwarra or Fire Ceremony was in full swing or rather the preliminary ceremonies attendant on it & Fillen had managed to persuade the old head man that I was his younger brother & under these circumstances they allowed me to come in & see everything. We are now seeing things which no white men have ever seen before or are likely to again for some time. How

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29-18 1908

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over full persuaded them to let me
 in I cant imagine but the first
 night I got here the old head man
 came up to me & of his own accord
 said "you Bultharra Uduirringita"
 which meant that I was a Bultharra
 man of the Uduirringita or large
 part of them the same as himself &
 then he called me "Weteey-aitcha"
 which means my younger brother.

After that I went in & out
 amongst them & they took no more
 notice of me than if I were one of
 themselves which in fact I was am.

Fullen they call the Opwira.
 bata" which means "great teacher"
 & they seem really anxious to let
 us know all about them.

This Engowora turns out to be
 a great gathering of representatives

of the tribe from far + near + at it are performed ceremonies of the most sacred character concerned with the different totems. These ceremonies deal with different incidents in the past history of the members of the totem. The whole ceremony is concerned with the latter + the distinctions concerned with the "Classes" *Balthiana Paungya* etc scarcely enters at all for the reason that no totem is restricted to any one of the Classes. It is difficult work but we are getting a great deal of information though as you might imagine just when we want to get further we are brought up dead against the 'alcheruiga' or dream-times.*

The thing that is interesting

* The natives say "It was as in the dream-times, just as a totem camp. 'Our fathers said, or did, so.' When the totem gets to that point, he need not try to pass through."

unimpressive is the way in which the blacks really reverently deal with their churinga (sacred sticks & stones).

This morning for example we had a new lot - there are hundreds of them piled up on a special erection in camp, carefully hidden from sight - brought in from one of the secret 'store-houses' & the chief old man of the group to which they belonged in dead silence opened them out & showed them. Each one represents some actual person & in handing them round the old men whisper to the younger ones telling them who they belonged to & all about their former possessors. Then they press them up against their stomachs (there is a definite order of precedence in doing this) & once this morning

in the case of the clwringa of an old man dead not long ago there was a dead silence for some minutes while the men most closely related to the dead man literally shed tears on his clwringa.

The whole thing is absolutely real to the blacks & though we get tied up in knots every hour we are gradually getting a good deal deeper & are carefully noting down on the spot everything that takes place.

Luckily now filled from the language doubly enough to understand most of what they say & we have one or two genuine blacks who can speak English enough to help us so that I don't think we miss much & there is no doubt but that the blacks have implicit faith in filled & trust me because I am

his younger brother.
It would take hours of papers to give you any idea of what we are seeing but if there be any points which have struck you, Horwitt that we ought to enquire into - though I think we are on the look out for most things - send me a line before the Adelaide mail leaves next Wednesday as the mail only comes here once in 6 weeks.

Filler sends his kind regards to you & Horwitt. It is simply mad with anthropologic enthusiasm.

Yours very sincerely
Walden Spencer.

performers are engaged in eating their own totems.
If only McLellan were here we could convince him in 10 minutes with regard to terms of address.

This Engworna ceremony lasts about 3 months - how long exactly depends on the old men who are simply superior & rule the younger men with a rod of iron.
The ceremony is a pretty but very boring affair. It consists of a long speech by the old men on the Engworna. The speech is full of names of totems & names of men. The young men listen with a sort of indifference. The ceremony is a very boring affair. It consists of a long speech by the old men on the Engworna. The speech is full of names of totems & names of men. The young men listen with a sort of indifference. The ceremony is a very boring affair. It consists of a long speech by the old men on the Engworna. The speech is full of names of totems & names of men. The young men listen with a sort of indifference.