

Cooktown  
6th October 1902

My dear Spruce:

I have just returned from the very heart of the Peninsula where, in conjunction with the Commissioner of Police, I have been holding a magisterial inquiry into some murder cases: we have been a month away, and hence a large amount of official correspondence has ~~accumulated~~ accumulated, and unfortunately this must be answered! Hence pray excuse my not writing to you now as fully as I could have wished.

In our news got across to the Pelicans, and I must candidly admit that I have never come across any "myall" natives of the Mitchell: they are still a very wild lot, and only a couple of months ago surrounded at night a mounted police party consisting of eight or ten people fully armed - fortunately, no lives were lost on either side. On the other hand, it is on the mouth of this river, or somewhere in its immediate neighbourhood, that I hope Bishop White will see his way to making a missionary settlement.

I spent a good deal of my time <sup>amongst</sup> the Batavian and Penepather R. blacks (Gulf coast), and came across some extraordinary beliefs compared

in a certain way with those described by you from Central Australia - e.g. the bringing of the "souls" etc from holes etc in the rocks where they had been placed by various Brings. Similar things were met with on the Eastern Coast. However, in the short ~~shape~~<sup>space</sup> of a letter, <sup>such as this</sup> there is no scope to describe all their curiosities; and hence, so soon as my MSS is completed, I will send you a type-written copy and shall be glad of any foot-notes or suggestions that you may care to make. I have already made reference to you in one or two places, but very incompletely.

I quite agree with you as to Andrew Lang drawing conclusions ~~rather~~ <sup>rather</sup> ~~drawn~~ <sup>drawn</sup> from writings other than those ~~those~~ intended by their authors. To my great surprise, in my own particular case, because of my having (just for the sake of explaining matters a little) ~~described~~ <sup>described</sup> Malkari (amongst the Bouli blacks) as being a supernatural power who makes everything etc - Lang, in the course of an address which was sent to me, brought this statement forward as tantamount to proof that these natives believed in a Supreme God!

I see that there must be an interesting discussion going on now concerning the question of Totemism (led off by Haddon) before the Association meeting in the old Country. Durkheim, in L'Année Sociologique (so I am informed) has been fighting the theory that the Arunta are primitive - as regards their totemic superstitions. So far as I am personally concerned, I doubt

if we shall ever arrive at the true origin of  
totemism, or, <sup>rather</sup> what power for it, out here in Australia.

But to return. I cannot help smiling  
at your views of missionary work in <sup>North</sup> Queensland.

~~It~~ I would appear equally ridiculous in your  
eyes were I to <sup>similarly</sup> express an opinion <sup>upon</sup> of a subject of  
~~upon~~ which I know nothing! In North Queensland

- and I speak from personal knowledge (and am <sup>admittedly</sup> ignorant  
of what goes on in the southern portion of the State) -

the primary object has not been that of inculcating  
"amongst the blacks a knowledge of so-called X<sup>ristian</sup>

"idea, which they cannot understand, and only a  
"very secondary idea has been that of teaching them

"under altered ~~conditions~~ ~~to~~ ~~live~~ their own living."

A perusal of my Annual Report which I am for-  
warding by this mail, may perhaps interest you, dealing

as it does with the results of my inspections of the  
different Missions. I look upon these stations rather

as workhouses ~~no work, no food!~~ - and am always  
~~expressing~~ <sup>impressing</sup> upon the superintendants the danger of  
over-educating the blacks under their charge. I am

basing and regarding all my work up here on  
the ~~foundation~~ <sup>belief</sup> that  
(a) in the struggle for existence, the black cannot  
compete with the white.  
(b) it is not desirable that he should mix with the  
white.

(3) With advancing civilization, the black will die out.

(4) while he lives, the black should be protected from the abuses to which he is subjected by the whites. [Of course you must remember that the Protector's duties up here are very different from what they are in other states: they are not the issues of rations, or blankets (which are ~~given~~ <sup>distributed</sup> by the Police)]

Then again, you appear to be labouring under a woeful misconception as to the status &c of the missionaries [I am only speaking of N. Queensland]

Certainly 4 out of the 5 superintendents are men of intellectual ability, and ~~all~~ all have gone through a special course of training before having been appointed to their billets. There is no 'pauper<sup>ing</sup>' ~~by~~ or "pauperising" of the blacks going on by these men. I can assure you much less is there anything <sup>of the sort</sup> going on by the Government. As compared with Victoria, our Executive spends (approximately) £7,000 on 25,000 blacks; ~~and with~~ £5,000 is spent by you on about 400!

My experience of the Roman Catholic Church out here is a very different one to yours. Noticing that our stations up here were run only by Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Lutherans, I made a point of approaching

the then head of the R.C. Church out here -  
 the Coadjutor Bishop (I think he called himself -  
 and asking whether that denomination could  
 not see <sup>its</sup> way to opening a <sup>Mission</sup> Station like  
 all the others. The reply I got was something  
 to this effect "... We have gone into the matter  
 " thoroughly, but are of opinion that the spiritual  
 " and temporal benefits derivable therefrom, do  
 " not warrant the initial expenditure? It  
 wasn't bad, was it?

Yes, I have been retrenched 15% off my  
 screw: I could make much more in private  
 practice, but I love my scientific work  
 too much to chuck it now. I sincerely  
 trust that these bad times have made no  
 difference with you and yours.

By the by, did you ever get a sketch-  
 map from me concerning the geographical  
 boundaries of the N.T and Queensland border  
 tribes?

I am longing to have a good old chat with  
 you - I wonder when that will be though!  
 At any rate let me congratulate you already  
 on your book - and don't you forget to send  
 me a copy.

The wife has just come in, and sees that I

am writing to you. She wants me to say  
that she cannot understand whether any  
thing has gone wrong with her letters to  
Mrs. Spences and sends love to her and  
the children. With kind remembrances  
to you and all of yours from me.

Believe me

Always sincerely yours

Walter & Rotty

I hope I shall succeed in removing your  
bias re our Missions: for the sake of  
old friendship's sake, I know you won't  
hesitate to talk as straight to me as I  
have to you! Besides, if we can't have  
disputes or any little differences of opinion,  
what's the good of being pals? Doesn't  
Terence somewhere say

"Querelae amatorum amoris renovitiae"?