

12 November 1899. 8

My dear Spencer.

Your letter of 17<sup>th</sup> Sept. has only just reached me - I have been down through the Peninsula, and got it at Normanton, I being now on the Government steamer on my way to Thursday Island. Please excuse the note paper and the handwriting, but the ship's vibration is too much for me.

I have taken some careful scientific notes - ethnological - of the coast-blacks between Duyphen Point and Albatross Bay - and came across a very curious burial custom - the near relative, the one who eats portions of the deceased, remains dumb for some months after, his voice being ultimately restored to him at a special ceremony.

The history of the interview in the Brisbane Courier may be given shortly as follows. A good many people up here are envious of my billet and several questions have been publicly asked - the press & elsewhere - as to what work I was doing for the salary. Parliament was also to meet, and being interested in the passing of an amending Aboriginal Bill, I took the opportunity of being interviewed while at Brisbane. The reporter happened to be an old pupil of mine, so that accounts for all the "jam" - because I do not for a moment hold myself responsible for all that is stated there. I think you know me well enough to know that I would not make such invidious comparisons re having seen more interesting initiation ceremonies etc than yourself. [I have since been informed that it was this same young reporter who reviewed your book as well as my brother's on the Tasmanians in the Courier]. I am also sincerely sorry at the remarks re Professor Morris and the word Kangaroo, but you must remember that some few months ago (or perhaps last year) in the Queenslanders, there was a whole series of correspondence about the word in question, and hence the Professor's name again cropping up in connection with it.

~~Of course~~ All my scientific reports go down to the Home Secretary now - I keep a press copy of course - but