

Alice Springs

25th April 1896

My dear Spencer

I was glad indeed to
 learn from your letter that
 Mrs Spencer was about again
 & hope before this reaches
 you she will have quite
 recovered. Your wife of last
 night has disturbed me about
 letters & I shall be anxious
 to see what news mail
 brings forth. I have an
 idea that Stirling has got
 hold of Scott & probably
 extracted some information
 from him. I discussed the
 matter very freely with

I hope your wife was not willing to do with this

When he was ^{here} with a view
to interesting ^{him} in the
subject lest most bushmen he
knew nothing about. ^{That} ^{he}
not even that the Warramunga
had ^{successes} ^{while} ^{at} ^{old}
him. It never occurred to me
that Stirling might get hold
of him & get information
which I got your wire last
night & was puzzling over
what had happened to prompt
the wires. I thought of Scott
Stirling was writing me this
mail says he & Corle pare
that ^{what} ^{is} ^{to} ^{be} ^{made} ^{any} ^{thing}
of the ^{class} ^{system} ^{part} ^{of} ^{the}
West but they "will get it
in time" reading between the
lines of his letters I can

See that tre is ruled out not
 getting the information from
 me, in the letter he said
 he particularly wanted the
 information as it was the
 "one thing wanting to round
 off his work" Coule was here
 a fortnight ago he is fairly
 bogged in the 8 class system
 & cannot make head or tail
 tail of it you may be sure
 I did not spare him he
 wrote Stirling some time ago
 saying that he believed the
 system of the Swilcha was
 similar to that of the
 Warranonga but that I
 had called the idea and
 writing this letter without
 the instruments so you will

probably find it more than usually
usually disappointed. I am obliged to take on
his duties - Cowie has promised
me that he will not give
Stirling any information about
the classes so I think we are
safe in that quarter. Thanks
very much for your interesting
and encouraging letter. I
feel at all times to have
your letters always to spur me
on. I cannot write you the
development of life from
Protozoa through mollusca, fish, reptiles,
mollusca, vertebrates, fish, reptiles,
mammals up to man. But
I believe that I can't really get
to the bottom of this huge
question so far as the history

are concerned your steady encouragement
& scientific guidance from the
start has done more than all
else to fill me with enthusiasm
for the work. Without enthusiasm
one could accomplish little. I
am also sensible of a deep
feeling of deep gratitude
to Mr. Fison for that very
kind letter of his without knowing
me, he seemed to have faith
in me & I want above all
to justify that faith if
my researches result in
information which you
consider valuable. I shall be
more than content we are
daily getting deeper into the
mysteries of aboriginal life &
the deeper we get the clearer

I more easily will be to
 accomplish the work. I have
 undertaken this work seriously, as
 your investigation, & fully recognize
 that without your assistance &
 guidance I could not have
 accomplished half of what has
 been done. I doubt whether I
 should have gone further than
 what is contained in the Horn
 volume if it had not been.
 For your encouragement & assistance
 Our agreement in Melbourne was
 that I continue the work with
 your assistance & that the results
 were to be published in our
 joint names. I hold you to that
 agreement ~~of~~ old fellow, your
 generous offer of self-effacement
 & your belittling of your own

of the work is characteristic of
you it is the absence of selfishness
that makes men love you. I shall
hold it an honour to have my
name associated with yours, as
for your merely putting in your
armchair and asking questions that
is all moonshine. I cannot within
the scope of a letter say all
I should like to say but
I hope I shall ^{have} nothing more about
publishing in my own name
half the pleasure I take in the
work, would be gone, if I knew
that you were not to share the
authorship - As for your writing
the book & publishing in my
name I simply couldn't allow
you to do that it would be dishonest,
my notes are of the roughest, every

line will have to be rewritten
 so long as I conveyed in the
 information to you I have not
 been able about the manner of
 Concurrence - there is therefore a part
 from the assistance & guidance you
 have already rendered abundant
 scope for purely original work
 which I could not possibly do
 I shall only make one stipulation
 write the book in a manner
 which will make it intelligible
 to the general public & not only
 to those who are advanced students
 of anthropology - the fault of
 most scientific works - is that
 they are written for scientists
 only - By all means purchase the
 Chambers Polar Myth in your
 narrative of the Expedition

By this mail I am sending you
two boxes one containing a Cat skin
from which I have removed the
intestines, being out of spirits
I have preserved it in Whiskey.
upon receipt of your letter I sent
~~had~~ the whole box Cat hunting
the skull of this beast is broken
the foot of a Sucker bashed it
on the ground after it had
nearly taken the finger off him!
The other box contains Corn: Pedunc:
one small beast wrapped in paper
is new to me three bushels boxed
beats. I don't know their name - and
one Phas: dusticanda the fruit got
in the McDonald Range. In
small parcel you will find inkulla
worm by Suckers going into
bottle - these have been actually worn

Danyon's Apprais

Send more Tins by return
 mail certain. It appears to me
 that I shall never get you
 anything new & I am doubtful
 whether it is worth your while
 sending Tins - You have got hold
 of the marriage systems splendidly
 I could only find two or
 three trifling errors it strikes
 me you know more about it now
 than I do I could not have constructed
 that table of pedigrees without
 getting bogged up to my ears
 You must have the table of
 Iroquois Class Systems it was
 the first table I sent you after
 returning, you acknowledged the
 receipt by return mail, it was
 headed in the first instance
 Class Systems of Chitchea Tribe

but I subsequently wrote you
saying that the name should
have been "Ispira" Chitchica
means foreigners generally. If
you look through my papers
you will see that the Kytica
class names are slightly different
their equivalent of Balthara being
Cabbidgee. I can find no reasons
for the difference in terms applied
to Elder & younger sister amongst
the Arunta but since the label
of relationship shows presumptive
evidence of the former state of
group marriage is it not possible
that these terms are a survival
of the old order of things when
they counted descent through the
mother? Any conclusions of mine
drawn from conjecture would I

know to be unsafe to base a theory
 upon but you with your trained
 scientific mind should be able
 to form a pretty correct idea
 Now with reference to message
 sticks you say "most undoubtedly
 message sticks are used in various
 parts of Australia" perhaps so, I
 have no reason to doubt it but
 I most emphatically assert that
 such a thing as a "message stick"
 pure & simple does not exist amongst
 these people that the ordinary
 traveller the non enquiring ^{barbarian}
 coast message sticks are ^{Wūta}
 I have proved this up to the hilt
 a hundred times - I have seen
 & examined the ^{Wūta} carried
 by Inūna - Corle is a ^{Wūta}
 in the message stick - I say patiently

listened to his account of message
 sticks when he was here but in
 view of my lately acquired want
 of reticence I did not say anything
 Stirling is also a believer in the
 message stick theory & I don't see
 shall see pages devoted to that
 myth in the Horn volume -
 No there is no question of their
 having ever used message sticks
 since the advent of the whaleman
 dropped them - Perhaps it is
 not altogether a misnomer to
 call the Eula a message stick
 since they are used by
 messengers - they are the credentials
 of a messenger - they serve to
 show his bonafides - Now more
 so much about Chuvings & their
 uses that I cannot overstate

have not as
quadrants arctic.

(14)

(81)

You having a vestige of belief
in the message stick business -
Now as to Magary's fire fact
I have never seen that the halves
do not use smoke signals what
I did say & still maintain after
years of exhaustive enquiry is
that they have no organized code
of smoke signals - they do arrange
to put up smoke signals on
certain occasions for instance
recently these people before going
on a war expedition arranged
to make smokes on the Itapray
Rangy when they were returning
these smokes were made - not in
any special form - the people here
knew two days before they returned
that the Expedition was on the
tray back - ~~If they~~ It never occurred

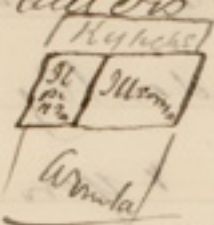
to them to let the smoke take
any special form or colour &
there was no arrangement whereby
the success or non success of the
Expedition could be signalled - In
my Horn notes I stated that
prearranged signals are often made
but coded smoke signals exist
only in the minds of doctrinaires
like Maguire & Morsnap Ma who
know so much more about the
natives than most Bushmen like myself -
it has for years been a source
of wonder to me that the natives
make such little use of smoke
signals, here sometimes one native
will be waiting day after day
for a party from Androya
Bonds Springs or the Bart
they never know where to expect

their visitors whereas if they
 had an organized signal system
 they would be saved a lot of
 trouble & suspense - No my dear
 Professor there's nothing in the
 message sticks or smoke signal for
 Conde spent one afternoon &
 evening with us & I enjoyed his
 visit immensely we sat up but
 about 1 am your character was
 pulled to pieces very thoroughly
 & on the whole you came out
 of the ordeal very well, from
 what he says & from what Martin
 of Dampo writes me I am
 still inclined to think that
 in the Switchea we have a
 people without classes - they have
 ochnamakula & I am now trying
 to discover if people of the

I am going out to the Mission Station in a week or ten days ostensibly to make official inspection of the Niggers there but in reality in search of anthropol. material. I have written the Missionaries asking them to number as many Niggers as possible & yesterday I heard that they are already assembling & that they have a large amount of native implements &c for me. I shall take the two cameras & probably get a colonial picture or two - have some hopes of getting the honey and mt. tobacco. I have discovered that there are female Raitchana in that locality. This is something I've

never heard of before & I am
 most anxious to investigate it.
 I wish you could be with me.
 There is no possible chance of
 my getting to The Geo. Gul
 Range with you & Corle, & I
 don't see how it is possible
 for Byrne to get away either
 unless he sacrifices the loss
 of absence to which he is
 entitled. I shall be ~~of~~ awfully
 disappointed if you don't come
 here but of course I know that
 you must go where you expect
 to find the best results - they
 should not the Gort plain words
 of how to fiddle in new forms
 of life? it is practically
 unexplored in that respect, in
 fact not a single beast of any sort

has gone to you from that quarter
Note The Alpina have adjoin the
Arunta on the latter's Northern
boundary these



In addition to attending to these
instruments I have to maintain
a conversation with first Geologist
Brown who is here en route
for the gold fields where the first
contemplate erecting a public crushing
plant subject to the opinion
of Brown upon prospects of field
You will notice that I have left
some of your questions unanswered
I have been too busy this
mail to get through the lot
You will see that I have traced
the cut mavericks system right
through to Alice Springs & Mrs

established a connecting link
 between these people & the Jiramegoms
 system of the South. The
 Custom has evidently never been
 very popular & you will note
 that it is only performed
 with the consent or by request
 of the husband. I am inclined
 to think that the custom is in
 process of extinction. I cannot
 learn of an instance in which
 it has taken place in recent
 years - Would the adoption of
 a more comprehensive table of
 relationships & class systems ~~that~~
~~take~~ both descent through the
 father tend naturally to the
 extinction of such a custom?
 I am inclined to think it would.
 The fact that every man & woman

to whom I've spoken about the
subject appearing to be ashamed
of it has led me to to
this conclusion - Where the
Custom is ~~an~~ fully recognized,
in at Charlotte Waters for
instance, I never found that
there was any reluctance in
speaking about it - The old men
say the blacks never liked it -
I am not unable to find
a trace of exchange of names
& intend going into the thing
very fully out at the
Mission Station - if it exists
at all it cannot escape me -
How many of the pictures
Negatives do you want one
or the three? With reference
to the Quapara Ulpinoda

my accusatory role was hidden
 humorally at the last moment &
 I failed to express myself clearly.
 The Udmovingeta were the neighbours
 of the Ulpimuta who occupied
 a strip of country between here &
 Owen Springs - The Ceremony has
 nothing whatever to do with the
 returning of Cawinga & the
 Ulpimuta were not Udmovingeta
 at all but of the Plum tree
 Ochrochannaella. I am still working
 on the subject but have nothing
 new to report except that the
 Ceremony or Quapara is not confined
 to this group but is performed
 by groups who adjoined the
 Ulpimuta on the South - they were
 washed down upon by the Udmovingeta
 because of their refusal to undergo

The initiatory rites - There is no special time for performing the ceremony & on the occasion upon which I saw it, it was performed out of compliment to the visitors from the main country who had never seen it. Neither women or children are permitted to see it nor are they permitted to see the ~~the~~ *Murujis* - I was thinking of sending this to you but I was afraid it would not stand the knocking about in transit - by next mail I shall have gathered full particulars. I am now working on the paintings on rocks - I am not at all sure that you will find the *Urapanna* table complete. The time at my disposal was very limited & I have

not gone through it since - there
 is no necessity to make a
 fresh table for Kytiche &
 Narramunga the Arunta table
 applies to also to Ilpirra,
 Illeorra, Kytiche Narramunga
 Nalparie & other tribes
 I am now in communication
 with an old friend of mine
 Revd P. McKelep S.J. who is ~~the~~
 head of the Jesuit mission Sta
 on the Daly River etc, he
 is at present visiting P. Darwin
 & although he has been some
 years amongst the blacks there
 he knows nothing of their class
 & marriage system he has he
 tells me been for months struggling
 with the intricacies of the verb
 to be. I told him something of the

System here. He has promised to make enquiries. The Sub-Prot. at Pt Barrow is also communicating with me on the subject & I hope to have some interesting material shortly. I have an idea that the system of the Arunta & other Northern Tribes has gradually worked down from the North & I am very curious to find out the customs. There was McKelop says they don't permit marriage between blood relations but we know how misleading this is when applied to bands. Have you had any confabs with Horrett or Fison about our work lately. I must return some of Mr Fison's pamphlets next mail the one relating to the

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The sacred stone enclosure of
Fiji is very interesting. I will
try to get good photo of
Medicine man. Womens tongues
also of Suvaok porcupine in time
for next mail. I have half a ton!
of photographic material or
Canned expected daily. My gardeners
knew a *Hyla gilleni* away yesterday
I - in him has a temporary
hand ~~being~~ being away on sick leave
You shall have a sketch of the
frog from lips as soon as we
can procure one to possess your
soul in patience - If there is
anything more about infanticide that
you want to know send along questions
I shall if possible bind the
Missionaries over to words for as
if possible but they are not the

sort of people to get much
information their policy is to
tear the blacks from their native
customs & they do all they can to
stamp them out. I dare say some
of my Enquiries will shock the
Rev^d gentlemen but I shall not
let that stop me in any way. I
intend to go on & photograph the
palms - So Horn is going to exclude
one of my initiatory pictures, his
publishing the whole series was one
of the conditions upon which the
plates were sent to him, by the
way he or someone else in London
sent me the Journal of the Col
Institute containing his lecture. I
dare say you have seen it - I don't
think you need ~~have~~ fear that
I need not use any of your

photos without permission, he is not
 that sort of a man at all, he is
 using some of Govt Geologists
 Browns pictures & some of mine
 including that one of the Horn
 Expedition taken at Armitage Gap -
 I mean he is probably going to
 the Northern Territory shortly to
 explore 50,000 miles of country ^{recently}
 taken up by an English Coy
 for Pastoral & mining purposes
 Does Horn clearly understand
 that he does not possess copyright
 of my notes? I sympathize with
 you in the anxiety & difficulties
 which you have to go through &
 I cannot but envy you the possession
 of a placid temperament & a dogged
 perseverance which seems to overcome
 all obstacles - without you there would

has been no Horn volume I
fancy Spilarg would be glad
even now to withdraw his
contribution he fully recognizes that
the great bulk & responsibility of
the work has been thrown on your
shoulders & wonders that you have been
able to put up with Horn - By the
way Geology Brown tells me
that he believes Horn has not yet
settled up with Kennede. Can this
be fact? I don't want anything
from Horn & would much sooner
be without his album - I have
been reading your letter again, -
about the publishing do whatever
you think best short of involving
my expense I do not feel to run
any risks in that respect. I feel
sure if the worst come upon the worst

that the South Austr Govt would
 gladly undertake the publication
 in the Govt printing establishment
 Adelaide but in this case the
 books would become Govt property &
 perhaps not circulate much outside
 the Colonies - He has had a visit
 from a German Scientist M.D & Ph.D
 a geologist &c he has gone
 on to Barrow Creek & will stay
 a week or two with me on his
 return he has greatly interested
 in my Anthro photos & never
 tired of looking at them he
 also evinced a curiosity ~~as~~ as
 to Native habits & Customs which
 I did not encourage, he mentioned
 the name of some great German
 anthropologist I fancy it was Haeckel
 & the ^{Geographical} Society of Berlin

as being anxious to learn something
 of the habits & Customs of these
 blacks - A most interesting man
 Mr. Gorman, undoubtedly a gentleman
 he has been a great deal in
 Egypt & the Sudan & is altogether
 an Emu Pasha like individual he
 discovered a perfect trilobite fossil
 in Selima Sandstone at ~~Terminum~~
 Iredon this discovery would
 interest the old Savage - Wonder
 will the old chap get his JRS
 while in England - Drops so -
 Conle was disgusted with my textual
 fad & says it is engendered by
 meanness! I confess I felt a bit
 lonely while he was attacking my
 solitary bottle of Whiskey & I shall
 certainly not allow you to drink
 alone when you come up - Something

very special in the way of very
 old & mature snakejuice will be laid
 in for your benefit - I don't like
 this Geo. Gee scheme at all it looks
 as if we are never to see you
 here again - Now I must conclude
 I am sure you will find this
 a stupid letter put it down
 to these instruments & to old
 geology whom I make you receive
 my kindest regards to Mrs Spencer
 & hers to the kiddies - Oh tell
 Mrs Spencer that much to my disgust
 I notice that my wife shows no inclination
 to don the historic blouse, she has always
 been putting it off for one excuse & then
 another & on the last occasion upon which I
 ventured to mention the subject I noticed
 a fleeting half suppressed smile about
 her lips which didn't seem to be

altogether appreciative - Another
 injustice to Ireland - By the
 way what do you think of
 your blustering demagog Salisbury
 now he has made England ridiculous
 in the eyes of Europe - bah
 you cant seriously believe in
 the man read marks, I mentally
 digest the enclosed letter there is
 not a line of it which cannot
 be justified if you will only
 cast aside your jingo goggles -
 Good night think the Lord be
 at a safe distance

Yours ever faithfully

J. Fisher