

Have you got an
album for those photos
yet?

(66) (52)

Alice Springs
5th June 1896

My dear Spencer,
Since my last letter poor
little Ben developed typhoid &
was confined to bed for over
a fortnight & delirious for some
days, he is now about again
looking very pale, thin, & weak.
We had a most anxious time
& I was afraid at one time that
we were going to lose him.
From the fact that you contemplate
sending Mrs Spencer home for a
trip I am afraid her illness has
left her in a weakened condition.
The trip home should be
up thoroughly & I hope it
will be a happy one.

(20) (22)

I presume go now here - You
could not do better than
leave mostly old Melbourne
during her absence & I was
heartily glad to learn that
you would be able to put
in at least a month with
us, now I have been thinking
a great deal about the proposed
trip & find of all I must
tell you that my going out
to the Geo Gal range is quite
out of the question, it is
entirely out of my beat being
so far ~~out~~ off the telegraph
line, had you proposed merely
a flying visit, I might have
managed it, but - of course
I realize that a trip of
that sort would not give

on the Horn expeditions
presuming that you would require
the Comets for insecten traps
that you would have to pay
10/- per head per week. This
is the highest figure charged,
the whole trip, including Talons
^{traps} would not cost you more
than £60. Recluse of collecting
material, this surely would
not be out of the way for
a three months jaunt. You
would be able to travel in
comfort, camp just where you
thought fit, have ample means
of carrying your collection,
& above all, be entirely
independent of seasons. If
you come by mail you could
not do any collecting en route.

You sufficient time for collecting,
 after careful consideration I
 think for & away the best plan
 would be for you to hire
 say four camels & packers &
 an Afghan, for the trip, the
 camels &c would cost you not
 more than 10/- per head each,
 including packing, & the man's wages
 would not be more than 1/-
 or 2/- per head, you could
 bring with you the collecting
 boxes, spirits &c, & there would
 be no need to bring or send
 on Mules as you could purchase
 everything of that sort in
 route, if you adopt this plan
 I would suggest that you
 borrow ~~the~~ a pair of the
 camel boxes which were used

The amount of material you could carry would be limited. Byne & I could of course manage to get you from the head of the line to here but on many grounds I think the Camel plan is the best, there would be no risk of buggies breaking down & you could depend upon a successful trip - if you decide to go for the camels I would suggest that you proceed first of all to the Gul Range & after finishing there come on here where you must spend at least a month. The net season begins in November & if you left soon by the mail train you

October 30th you would ^{be} at
the Gull Range before the end
of November, or if you came
on here by mail, you would
reach here on the 10th of
November, or if before I
brought you through, about
the 20th, I could of course
take you from here to
the Mission Station - I would
like you to go to the Gull
Range first because it will
give me more time to
pick up anthropological
bits & anything you learn
out there could be discussed
between us here - Think the
whole matter over & let me
know what you decide upon
be sure that I shall be only

too glad to help you in
 any way that I can - if
 you decide upon Councils
 you should get Wincedo
 to engage them some time
 before, two weeks I think
 Councils would be ample. I
 knew that you would be
 delighted to hear that the
 Cw marriage Customs extended
 so far north but why do
 you call it the Piranguara
 system? I don't think it
 has anything to do with
 Piranguara & the latter system
 certainly does not extend
 here though it really exists
 at Cw & Crown Point &
 at the latter place I have
 since discovered that it is

far more common than I
supposed. My trip to the
Mission Station brought forth
very little, I had several
Lutchka men on the guid
^{during my four days stay}
own, & they doubt as to the
existence of a class system
amongst them was strengthened
they have Totems just as
the Arunta have & they have
Churinga, both Stone & wood,
but all my questioning
failed to elicit a particle
of evidence as to the existence
of a class system & they
persisted in saying that
the Totems had nothing to
do with marriage. They
marry anyhow - those of the
Lutchka who live close to

Aranta & mix with them
adopt the class names
but the proper Luritcha
of Tempe (Doran & Westwood
have not even got a name
for them. ~~The~~ There, they appear
to me to live in small
groups & their weapons etc
are of a more primitive
type than those of the Aranta.
They are called Luritcha
by the Aranta but they
never speak of themselves
as belonging being Luritcha,
while the Aranta men always
describe themselves as Aranta.
The Missionary blacks many of
whom speak good English &
understand the Luritcha language
look upon their neighbours who

* Mrs man who is
married to a woman
who is trivially speaking
Uma to him

with contempt, in reading these
inquiries I had the assistance of
the Rev. Mr. Stokton who speaks
the Aunta language of the fields
very well - The Mission Station is
not a good field for the
anthropologist, everything possible
has been, & is being done, to blot
out old customs, marriages are
not permitted in the locality
& the rising generation are not
permitted to attend them, marriages
between the forbidden degrees of
relationship are celebrated by
the clergyman & all classes
live close together ^(throughout the state) & men & women
Mura to each other are to be
seen hobnobbing - This is of course
only amongst the people who
have grown up upon the Station

* The one encampment but Bud & Paw dip to one end & Kuma
to the other

& who have for the last 18 or 19
 years been under missionary influence,
 there are a number of Christians
 there, & many - married couples - One
 greedy trade Christian volunteered the
 information that "my father 32
 lord Jesus dwells in my
 bosom" & I dropped him like a
 hot potato & - & them they
 don't know any thing about - Christianity
 they know less about their own
 habits & customs, many of the
 young men have never seen a
 Corroboree - if ever niggers in
 this world were being systematically
 degraded, that is hardly the word,
 I should say debauched, these people
 are, that our earth will become of
 them if the Mission Stations is
 ever closed, as in most than likely

(23)
if it does not become self supporting.
very few of the mission school
men could get their work being
into Spanish & becoming - The
missionaries feed about 100 people
regularly, flour & beef ad lib, whether
they work or not. I visited the
Glen of Palms & got some pictures
copies of which I am sending
you - if you think the Australasian
people would like to publish
the Palm tree picture ~~it~~ with leaf
let them have your copies & I
will send you another set -
I could not get any Australasian
pictures without offending the
missionaries sense of propriety
so I confined myself to the
"infinitely respectable" as opposed
to "the altogether" -

part in the Juapara are decorated
 much the same as in other
 Juapara & do not carry anything
 in their hands - Pictures made
 Antechantechantinnu, boys decorated.
 When boys arrive at a certain
 age - all hands, men & women,
 collect at the Corroboree ground.
 The boys are seized one after
 another & thrown in the air,
 being caught by the men, while
 this is being done the women
 sing & shout & the boys are
 then taken to the Unguaja
 & painted on by their Umbirna
 the men to whom their
 Mothers are Tualcha mura,
 a month or two after this
 the boys are told that they
 must no longer sleep in the

55

their mothers camps, they
must live principally with
the men at the Unganja
and they must not play
with women or girls. The
three bags shown in picture
are of different totems -
Am not sending Stealing any
of these pictures - by the way
he did not ride me last
mail. This is the first time he
has missed a mail since he
left here. I recd a wire from
him two or three weeks ago
asking for information about
some trivial matters & I conclude
from this that he is still
hammering away at his article
Of course I know that he wont
like you & I working together but

that doesn't matter. The Stars, there
 is no reason why I should work
 with him, none at all, & there are
 a thousand why I should work
 with you - one being that without
 you I couldn't get on at all!
 I certainly would not have worked
 with him under any circumstances
 although I like him personally, he is
 a real good fellow in heaps of
 ways, but his forte is not
 anthropology, at any rate, so far
 as the science applies to these
 Aborigines. I haven't the least idea
 what Huxley is doing with my
 notes, the understanding was that
 he would furnish me with proofs
 in writing, he simply said that
 he had written out my notes &
 with you would add anything

you think necessary & above all

I hope you would correct errors or at any rate tone them down so that they may not look too glaring, with the information now in your possession I think you could do this in your editorial capacity? If he had sent me the proofs as originally arranged I could have corrected the errors myself but now I would prefer your doing so, because you will know better than I how much to say & how much to leave unsaid his account of the Churinga is just what he learnt from me nothing more or less - Coule knows nothing about the Churinga as totems but there is no reason in the world why he should not learn if he wishes

The trouble, what I have learnt has
 been gained, by sheer hard graft
 & the exercise of a patience which
 no man who knows me would
 believe me capable of - You need not
 fear that I shall say too much
 upon this subject to anyone, I am
 as good as almost as dumb as an
 oyster on the higher matters - My
 German friend is now patterning
 about Tenants' Covenants, he is very
 favourable & impressed with the facts
 in that locality - I will bear in
 mind what you say about historic
 titles - to revert to the solemn question
 I agree with you that we have not
 got to the bottom of it yet but
 every month adds something to our
 knowledge - by the time you get
 here I think there will be very little

to learn how that subject - will all
you have on that ground, for a week
month, we can I think, eliminate
all errors, clear up many mysteries,
& add much to our store of knowledge.
Your idea of dedicating the book
to Horrett & Jason is splendid; by
all means do so. You speak of
going over my notes with them -
let me know what they think of
the information contained therein -
I am not such an ass as to treat
lightly any opinion of yours with
regard to aboriginal matters, you
seem to have an intuitive idea of
what they should do, & what they should not do,
but - if it turns out that any of these
have in me a message which in the
sense in which you interpret the form
then you can write me down an ass

I will go further than this & say
 once for all that I don't believe
 in the message sticks in any
 of the Australian Tribes - it is a
 in my opinion purely a travelers
 tale arising from want of knowledge,
 although holding such strong
 opinions I shall not cease hunting
 for the mythical stick, & if I
 should discover it, here or elsewhere,
 you can bet your professional boots
 that I shall own up without a
 moments hesitation, I fully recognize
 the importance of absolute exactness
 in these matters & I am not
 ashamed to own up where I fall
 into error (even politically which
 rarely if ever happens!) Not that
 I think of it the messenger conveying
 messages to see Quapond carries in addition

to the tāaro (some feathers) a hollow nose
bone *calhira* in the end of which is
black ^{topped} some feathers *cacatua* rosy *lapinot*
don't their scientific name - *Mitā*
reference to the quotation from
your narrative. I think it is right
except in one or two trifling instances
I would strike out the word *ilpina*
as these people are not generally
spoken of as *ilpina* which in my
opinion only signifies a slight
difference in language. *ilpina* or *alpina*
they say applies to other groups
whose language is not quite like that
of the majority of *Quanta*. you
say a man going from here to
Charlotte waters is looked upon as a
guest for such is allowed certain
privileges what do you mean by
the concluding words? I don't mean

of any and every kind of evidence
 hunting for the leading edge of the
 of so I think upon space parting all
 there is not a particle of evidence
 to show that any such case (!)
 has ever been established to men
 from this country though it
 would occur when a Crown
 visited there, during a
 ceremony for instance - the King
 from here would be regarded
 either a guest or a trespasser.
 There is no doubt in my mind
 about these people having a
 idea of the ownership of
 tracts of land - about the
 I cannot express any opinion
 but this like other things
 be cleared up ere long -
 could not get a shot at the

only woman doctor, I know of in
the country, she was away at
the sheep camp when I was at
the Mission Station. I did not
find her out until it was too
late to visit there - this woman,
when here about 18 months ago,
was called upon to attend my
old things brother who was then
very ill & since dead (I am waiting
anxiously to photograph his corpse in China)
I have since learned that there was
a woman doctor amongst these people
many years ago & she is long since
dead - I think it happens occasionally,
perhaps at long intervals, that a woman
of the tribe more quiet than the
general run of her race has the courage
to proclaim herself a Raitchana & the
others are so superstitious that they

dare without a doubt, these women are present
 supposed to be the *ovum* (young) though
~~but~~ this privilege is not extended to
 them so often as to the men and
 6^m Martin arrived from Tempe (Douro)
 this morning on a visit. I have had
 him hunting for a class system
 amongst the *Jurichap* since before last
 Christmas. I have bombarded him with
 letters by every opportunity, but
 can find no trace of a system
 & everything he tells me bears out what
 I learnt from *Juricha* at the Mission
 Station, he tells me the *Huggan* all
 mix together there, there is no
 churning of particular women such
 as he has noticed here and elsewhere.
 When *Coote* was here last I asked
 him particularly to enquire as to
 whether two of the *ovum* totem could

many of his notes on the
lottery (corroboree he calls it!) has nothing
to do with marriage he will be
here on Thursday to attend the
Court on a case in which he is
officially interested, when I hope to
get further information. If these
people have any system of any sort
I can for the sake of the understand
why they should take such pains
to conceal the fact that Martin has
verified one case - which I mentioned in
a previous letter - of a brother & sister
in blood living together & so far
as he can learn nothing was done
to punish them - four Latchapim
questioned separately at the Mission on
Station said they could take any
woman as wife so long as she did
not belong to another man - I can

are strongly tempted to make a
 flying visit to Tempe myself, and
 the prints that you sent me are
 splendidly done & those done in
 Melbourne appear to me to be as good
 as the English. I have had the
 picture of the Corroboree heads
 framed, the Niggos here are delighted
 with them. I see by the papers
 that the Chief Secretary informed
 the Geographical Society that Mannie's
 map & journal would be published
 as a Parliamentary paper. I don't
 think there is the least fear of
 his publishing your picture, he is
 as creditably as the devil but as
 shrewd as a gimbarrell. I am
 glad your scenery pictures are
 turning out well & think the
 flow of Palmer's picture is the most

(35) (P)

beautiful photograph. I have never seen that big camera of yours is a beauty. Now that the foot are undertaking the publication of the necessities of journal I don't think there is much fear of his indulging in personalities, they would hardly permit anything of that sort. I do hope that old Savage will get his F.R.S. He is an old man & if he misses now may never have another opportunity your turn should come when the whole of the Horn volumes are issued I hope it will, I should feel a considerable amount of reflected glory in being associated with an F.R.S. I hope you will not be disappointed with this mail badge but little as it appears it represents

a great deal of solid hard work & graft
 Your questions are invariably about the
 fresh matter. You will see, that what
 I have, as usual, to correct a
 number of errors. Thoniet referred
 in their book mention "Wilyaru"
 as "the blood letting after circumcision"
 amongst the Divi. I have
 been on the trail of "Wilyaru"
 for the last twelve months. The
 Custom extends as far north as
 Dalhousie & there was apparently stops,
 it has nothing whatever to do with
 Circumcision amongst the people of
 Arunta or Wora-purna but is
 a ceremony which makes those
 who are initiated capable of
 travelling by night in spirit
 form & also endows them with
 other magical powers. I have a plan

59

a description of the ceremony part
of which I witnessed at Macumbó
years ago, but I have not as yet
quite worked the thing out, yet I
think are generally ~~consecrated~~ middle
aged before they are made Wiljara
I fancy this custom is the same
as that mentioned by Forrest
& Dixon? but precise information on
the subject has been scanty -
Wiljara are debarred from eating
certain food, I think at Macumbó
and in Angaróo & in most spirit
forms they are supposed to possess
the swiftness of the eagle hawk -
I note what you say about the
old women I have already begun
the attacks in diplomatic style. I
doubt very much whether they know
anything about the Churinga names

although your opinion to the
 contrary in process we - and am
 looking forward very much to
 your visit there are a thousand
 things that we can clear
 up when we get together but
 you must continue the questions
 without them. I should be glad
 this is going to be a great book
 of ours, there is not the slightest
 doubt about it!! Many thanks for
 the Botany & geology volume I intend
 to read the geology after the marble
 leaves - do you ever hear from Wath
 there is but if you are writing
 him please convey my remembrances
 that wishes all him we shall
 be delighted to see him again when
 he returns to the Colonies how that
 Sterling is free from the hospital work

It would not surprise me to
hear of his coming up here
for a trip some days. I know
he would much like to come
again. He told me about Mr. Lofly
that he would do so if he
got a chance. Scott returned
from India & Melbourne today
after a long holiday, he did not
see anything of Sterling in Dorset.
Mrs. W. is fortunate as she had
with him an intelligent boy from
whom she might have extracted
a lot of information. I am
eagerly waiting to see the Anthrop.
volume & am particularly anxious
to see what Sterling has made
of the subject. I am also anxious to
know how he has treated my
notes - I have tried my hand at

Lantern slide making with fair
 success The mistake I made was
 in overdeveloping thereby making the
 pictures too dark My lantern
 entertainments are greatly appreciated
 by the Niggers some of the heads
 come out splendidly - how I
 must stop & snap a line to one or
 two others My very kind regards
 to Mr Spencer Move to the little ones
 don't graft too hard. Clean the

Yours sincerely
 J. J. Fisher

As
 I should write to Mr Spencer this mail if
 you see him tell him that I am trying
 to get the bird which is supposed
 to have laid the egg he returned to me
 J. J. F.

I am going to visit & photograph
 the spot 15 miles South West of
 here where the ceremonies used to
 be performed. I hope to collect some
 interesting information before next
 mail. Somewhere in the Bura district
 there is an Aracouta totem to
 which a ~~number~~ ^{few} of men whom
 I saw recently belong. There are
 simply hundreds of totems in this
 tribe & I doubt whether any one
 of them numbers more than 50
 men ^(in one locality) & some not half a dozen.
 The five (00ra) totem East of
 Uadoolya is confined to one small
 boy the son of an Ueivringese
 all the people of that totem
 in that district having died.
 Where a totem circle is situated
 in good well watered country etc

numbers are correspondingly large
- but next there is a powerful
fire group & in our net nights
fire can be seen springing from
the Churinga in their Etinatulinga
it was I fancy a garbled account
of this fire totem that led
Wellshier & Gonsou the Explorer
to dazzle people with an account
of the existence of a volcano
in the Western McDonnells!
All these totems have their
peculiar ceremonies - by the way
in the Eastern McDonnells there
is a fly (Amoonga ordinary fly)
totem the Churinga of which is
said to cure bunged eyes -
I am sending the usual collection
of vermin, the lizards are I
think the first of the sort you

have had from this country & they were got about 30 miles East. I hope they will prove to be new. I told you about these lizards when you were here & I tried very hard to get some. When the mail arrived I had 3 whole cats in spirits & after learning from your letter that the species was known I threw them out, in five minutes the whole stuff went up in arms, I diverted their attention from the front of my office by suggesting Limburger cheese in Squires room & got the ruggers to smuggle them away, those awful cats! I shall never forget them, they seemed quite happy until I shoved them up, but the nose of a biologist must be of especially small proportions - the collecting tin & 2 spirits arrived safely. Love

to return the former in a few
months felled to the train near
Barroon & Penman's Creek beards. I
shall leave here for the north
shortly after the departure of the
next mail for Adelaide. It will be
away about five or six weeks -
In addition to the ceremonial
Achilpa pictures you will find
some prints marked Indrochetta
Quapara. This is a new Quapara
& is remarkable in that it is
the only dancing Quapara in
which I have ever noticed
anything unbecoming. The two men
shown in photographs carrying
imitation John Thomas's dance
before their mixed audience in
the attitude in which they are
photographed - the other men taking

old habits & customs of the natives
they are too busily engaged in
stamping out what remains of the
old customs, but they have promised
me that they will not give any
information they may get hold of
to any one else. I am on excellent
terms with them & they promised
me very readily. Probably I shall
make a flying visit there in a
week or two. There are one or two
things I neglected to enquire about
particularly about the Umbaquin
but is Baby Totem when exists
there, there is also here a ^{similar} Totem or rather
was many years ago, but all
who belonged to it are dead &
the ceremonies attached to it viz
making the Babies enter into the
women clan was by performed by
any man who is conversant with the ceremony

decided to get up a man. I
 am now in a position to state
 positively that a widow belongs
 right to the Witeya of a dead
 man if he chooses to take her,
 if not he has the disposal
 of her. There seems to be a
 divide to taking the wife of a
 dead Othilya (in blood) unless
 she has children, if she has
 a long time to get at the
 truth in this very simple matter
 Chastity is chiefly imposed upon
 the woman under after the
 performance of Wepmelchima, they
 say widows very frequently run
 away to avoid marriage with
 their husbands brother. The
 missionaries are not likely to find
 out much with regard to the

† But I am a little doubtful about it. I think we shall find
everywhere one class - there is certainly the Bullhana & Surung, as one -
predominating in every totem though not to the same extent as here -
No apparent relation to the former +
- There must have ^{been} a time when the
totems influenced the marriage laws
but I cannot discover, so far, a
vestige of the existence of anything
of the sort now, it is quite
probably as you say that we shall
find some totem restrictions only
regard to marriage amongst the
Southern people & for that & (1)
other reasons I am getting up (2)
a man from the Charlotte who
has had a lot of friendly intercourse
with the Urapunnia - I am also
trying to arrange to get an
Urapunnia man from Pdaadatta (3)
There is certainly a screw loose somewhere
in the table of relationships of
that tribe I have tried unsuccessfully
to clear it up by telegraph so (4)

22

4

+ This is a list of the names of the classes of the ...

In my last mails notes when I wrote "out next where the Totems are common to all classes" I was referring to the Western District & not to the Luricha as you appear to think - by the way I found *Coomora unovirgata* at the Mission Station. I think your gradations

are not proved to be correct viz

- (1) Luricha no classes but Totems
- (2) Classes to which contain Totems

are restricted - in the Southern District

(This needs enquiring into & I hope by next mail to be in a position to settle the matter definitely)

- (3) Classes & Totems but the latter as a whole but with numerous exceptions confined to certain classes as now in reality exists in the McDonnells

- (4) Classes & Totems with the latter having