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Alice Springs

Dec 3rd 1897

My dear Spencer

When the mail arrived & there was no envelope bearing your familiar fist I nearly had a fit of apoplexy. I left what I believed to be French letters unopened until the last & it was indeed pleasant to find that it contained the usual budget from you. I knew that nothing short of serious illness would prevent you writing and as you were not feeling quite well when you wrote before I conjured up all sorts of horrors. Many thanks for the books which arrived safely & gave much delight to the rose thrums. Since I last

work we have had poor little
Balfour under the Doctors hands
& really seriously ill for a month
he is now regaining strength &
will soon be right again, influenza
is raging amongst the darkies
& my Wife & Bri are both
suffering from a mild attack
I have also to thank you for
the Oranges every one of which
arrived in splendid condition, they
must have been carefully chosen for
I have never been able to get
them up in anything like good
condition at this time of the
year - I was relieved to hear
that the Waninga had reached
you safely we took the greatest
possible care on packing it
but I thought the journey would
shake it to pieces, have you

sufficient nadatha? by this
mail I hoped to send you
a few things including two
sorts of ochencha luninna earuth &c
but I really shall not have
time we have an Operator
duplex expert, & an Electrician
here from the head office
initiating us into the working
of the duplex (of which I have
got a real good grip & of
Quadruplex also) & they take up
a good deal of my time.
they return to Adelaide by
mail tomorrow - we are now working
duplex with Adelaide & later on
the Northern end of the line
will be duplexed.
Last mail was almost destitute
of anthrop material & this mail
is entirely so. Jim Oroka has

grown grey in the Service &
poor Sambo, the best man
of the lot for our purposes,
is suffering from alarming
hemorrhages of the lungs which
will I am afraid land him
in an Early grave, I am
treating him, & of course fading
him but I am sorry to
say he does not improve - the
staff here attribute the premature
posting of Jim & Sambos hemorrhages
to my anthropological zeal
- You have a tube made of fibre
strong whitened with pipeclay, it
contains hair of a dead warrior
- used as a charm by the
Warramunga people - Apropos
of Warramunga Scott has been
making some enquiries for me
& while out some distance from

Demarts Creek the blacks showed him a rockhole supposed to be permanent, in which young men are dipped either before or after they pass through the initiatory rites, this looks like the beginning of our baptismal rite by immersion & feeling that it may lead to something important I have given him a flood of questions to work out – I am inclined to think Kempes reply re Urrapunna is correct it fits in with what my Urrapunna friend told me & I have so impressed Kempe with the importance of absolute accuracy that I dont think he would have replied without being sure, if you want further evidence ~~on~~ a

Native of that country has
offered to come up & see
me after Xmas & I can get
him up by Frith's Camels
So just say the word.
I am a little disturbed about
your Oxford friend, hang him,
a man with training such as
he has had, & with the assistance
he would get from Station people
could do a great deal in
two years, especially if he got
in with men who were on
especially friendly terms with
the Natives, there must be many
such men scattered over Australia,
men like myself - before I became
associated with you - possessing
the confidence of the Natives without
knowing much of their inner life.
I think it wise to publish that
paper dont forget to send
me a copy if it is printed
- the other paper which you
said you were posting has
not come to hand I suppose
you forgot to post it - Do you
know anything of a Mr Ling Roth
who is Author of a work on
the Tasmanian Natives? he wrote
Mr Fison asking for some information
about the cicatrices on Austn
Abgns Fison sent the letter on to
me & suggested that I should
reply to it this I have done
giving categorical replies to his
queries. Fison said "he is a man
of some note & it will not do
you any harm to get him under
an obligation to you" Mr Fison also
forwarded a letter to me from
Sir Jno Lubbock which was endorsed

in one to him this is what he says "I have read with interest in the Anthropological journal for last month an account of the observations made by you in conjunction with Prof Spencer. If you are publishing any more extended report I should be much obliged if you would let me have a reference to it. You will I hope continue your observations. It is so important to secure a record of all such customs & ideas before they die out" I was of course delighted to receive such a letter from so distinguished a man ~~but~~ but to what paper does he refer? Should I reply? & if so what shall I say – Fison wrote a characteristically kind little note he is evidently deeply

interested in our work, was
you say full of generosity
are they, that is Everett &,
aware that the book is to
be dedicated to them?
I was of course delighted to
hear about McClellans affair
but I have felt all along that
there would be no difficulty
about the publishing. As fact
that you Hewitt & Fiske thought
so highly of the material convinced
me long ago that the book
would find readers & I should
not be surprised if it goes
through half a dozen editions
I was surprised to learn from
your letter that the delays
in the book knocking ceremony
were closely with the rule
practiced in other parts

of Australia in which it is the initiatory rite. I have not read a line on the subject so that in making my enquiries I approached it with an entirely open mind. ah yes if only we could go east & west & north we might do lots of things but the dream is fading and one year hence I shall probably be rusting in a country village sighing for the freedom of the bush – that Sestotem is a curious development I cant understand it atal, is the information reliable? A man who knew nothing of the totem system might easily ~~conclude that~~ draw erroneous conclusions by finding a local group all the men of which were of one totem & the women of another —

I have been making some enquiries about the Ullakupera & they adhere to the old statement about the conferring of classes, these classes were clearly in existence when the Erlia men came on the scene & they taught the people there true significance, these people say that at certain places the Ullakuppera divided the newly made men & women into two groups Bulthara & Panunga on one side & Kumara & Purula on the other. Probably this tradition points back to the origin of the class system when there were only two class – a primitive division into two halves. There are bound to be some things which will not fit in quite

but taken altogether I think our work follows in orderly sequence & hangs together splendidly —

Wherever a Chwinga was left a natural feature arose from which arumburinga sprung. Yes Arumburinga & Iruntwinga are interchangeable terms Each man & woman has an arumburinga a spirit representative who is one of the spirits collectively termed Iruntwinga I have not been able to do anything more about Undiara intitchiuma, the old men who were here from Henbury have returned there & with the exception of Lim Boka there are no Kangaroo men here, he will not have it that the Kangaroo spirits go into the Mothers but says that the spirits emerge from the stone scatter in

all directions & appear as fully grown animals. I am inclined to your idea but will make further enquiry -
Hablett returned a fortnight ago much chastened in spirit & lighter in pocket & with delicate white palms which are to him a never ending source of wonder mingled with disgust, he came to me the other day with blistered hands & said "fancy them their paws go in back on me like this Ill be billy blowed if I've had a blister for 40 years" he has still a little tenderness for the old woman, she had a tremendous spree in Town & he has had a lucky escape —
Coole turned up last week but

could only spare us a few
hours as he had to get
back to Illamurta in time
to write his mail he is
clean shaved & looks like a
variety actor. he seems to me
in better spirits than before
he went down & he limits his
nipping to three doses a
day so that ill the respect
he is improving — Byrnes silence
I cannot for the life of me
understand, has a queer fellow
& I think I told you that
he sometimes leaves his home
letters unanswered for a year
though they never miss a mail
I had a line from him this
mail he had evidently heard
from you about McMillans &
was pleased —

poor old Stirling appears to
be badly broken up over the
loss of his boy he says
that his one great incentive
to work, the chief pleasure of
his life has gone & nothing
remains but an acting void for
the rest of his life, he was
evidently very deeply attached
to the boy — Wm Stirling equally so
I feel very sorry for them
This time last year we were hard
at it & I often think of
you as we sit out between
the hammocks in the evening,
only the bare poles of the old
murley remains & there will soon be
nothing left to mark the spot
whereon was performed the last
of the great Engomera ceremonies.
The ranges are a veritable

Scene of desolation not a Shamrock
of feed anywhere so far our
rainfall for the present year is the
lowest on record only 4½ inches
Stock are in a deplorable condition
our Sheep are more Skin than bone
two are living upon the lean of
the land. Martin at Dimpe is in
a bad way he writes me that he
can do nothing but sit down at
the Station Yard for rain or ruin
It is not often that the interference
of a third party does any good in
a quarrel but I think I have
succeeded in healing or at any rate
partially the sore between he &
Cowle. They are both fine fellows &
I grieved me to see them at loggerheads
You will be glad to hear
that Queensland Merinos which I
bought at 30/- are now down
to 12/6 although paying 4 6d divs

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monthly I have not bought a share since you left but I have continued paying calls upon some informal wild cats which I am afraid to forfeit lest they should later on turn out equal to the Boulder – Cowle bought some Lake Views with borrowed money at £8/10 & they now stand at over £14.10 with a possibility of rising to £25 if I had bought some the lode would have promptly pinched out! Now I must stop I am all behind with my mine. Our best wishes for the Christmas season My kind regards to Mrs Spencer & love to the Riddies – Sleanthe

Yrs ever sincerely

J. S. J.

Dont forget to post the R Soc papers