

A

Melbourne.

(2)

Sept 20. 97

My dear Balfour,

Many thanks

for your letter & offer of help.

I am afraid that there will be a good deal of difficulty in persuading any publisher to take our work. Much of

it is of such a detailed description that it will be of interest to anthropologists pure & simple only. There are of

course parts of general interest & the photo. illustrations will, some of them, be rather striking.

I have read a good deal of anthrop. but really doubt if the

customs & organization of any one
tribe or nation. Pump of tubes has
been dealt with before in such
detail.

It is hard to guess
what to leave out.
Especially illustration showing
shall not publish a book at least
half as large again & in the same
type as I am. I have just been
through this & life it very much
more especially till

in many ways
I came to the last chapter which came
how or another doesn't seem to me
to fit in to the rest of the book.

This astonishing how, when once
you have spent any time amongst
savages you divide Anthrop. into
up or you read them into those
who understand savages & those who
don't. Taylor presumably does,
so does Frazer,

large extent, Westerners does not²
though it sounds like being I don't
think McLennan does. Lang is a
my story to me. His 'Myths & Rituals'
Religion, strikes me as being really good
So in 'Custom & Myth' though both are
very sketchy & rather fine on the idea of
an able man who doesn't really take
a deep interest in the work but has
a wonderful grasp of other sides of the
leading features.

His 'modern
Mythology' though it suits Max
Müller's hypothesis is disappointing. Primitive
of all English works by Max
Müller stands out as a masterpiece.

Nowadays we can hardly get
any one to record his experience
unbiasedly & truly. Ellis is in

ever speaking of Dutka. Kili-people is
simply holding the language of McLennan,

of course I can only judge the
latter as regards his Australian section
but after having read & re-read & again
re-read this I must confess to not being
able to understand it though I think

that I know the Australian pretty well. However as he deliberately declined to take any notice of recent work (which in the case of Australia would have upset his own theory) this is not perhaps to be wondered at. It need hardly be said that we owe a great deal to him but we should owe still more if he had not been so prejudiced against people whose theories did not accord with his own.

A short time ago I read through Miss Riggsby - it was just as much as I could do to get through it - + after expecting much was greatly disappointed. It is simply waste

of time for a woman to attempt to find anything out for men. What she should do is to work exclusively amongst the women. I am quite sure that there are many things pertaining to women which women have no more chance of finding out than has a woman of discovering the things which are held sacred by men.

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If an Australian black for
example had the slightest idea
that either Giller or myself were
attempting to get information from
the women they would tell us
nothing. There are secret
customs amongst the women just
as amongst the men but whilst
(white) men can find out 'sub rosa' from
the women, women cannot find
out anything from the men & for
this reason the information of
a woman like Miss Kingley is
only of value in regard to secret
or sacred ceremonies amongst the
women. What the men tell
her with regard to their sacred
or secret ceremonies are just the
same 'fairy-tales' as they tell to
their own women. A man
may, if he knows the savage tribe
well enough, find out some of the women's

secrets but a woman will never
find out the man's, whereas for
this point of view Miss Templey
might as well stay at home.

In your letter you speak of certain
'schools' in regard to Australian
'art'. Such undoubtedly exist
& when one fills & empties, have
got through our present work I
will try & see if we can do
anything with them. My parent
idea is that we have an Eastern,
Central & Western 'school', but
this idea may be upset. The
great difficulty is that we have
no good collection to work upon.
In Melbourne we have nothing at
all & in Western Australia less
still. Sydney even is very poor in
Australian things while Adelaide has
a good deal the best Aust. Coll. & is

especially well off in South & Central
things.

Still taking everything into
account the remarkable feature of Aust.

Collection is their poverty in Aust.
things.

I have just been reading a

small pamphlet by a man named

Squires on the "Retail, Big Game &
Custom of the Aust. Aborigines". The

name & certain internal evidence

suggest the influence of Long & his
information is not I judge at first hand

but he says distinctly that the

consumption of the initiation into

ceremony in Madani a man to death

& then ^{eat} ~~the~~ flesh. He

says the man is "of high caste &

without bluish" & then some & two

Other things make me very suspicious
indeed. I have written up to begin

I hear that a "D. v. Roth" has been working amongst Queensland natives in the far north & that he has a work of "very great value" concerning their customs in the press. I fancy it is the celebrated Roth of my times.

asking for his evidence in as polite a way as I can ~~write~~ and hope from the tenor of his letter if he deigns a reply to be able to judge somewhat of his reliability for unfortunately we suffer much from odd statements being regarded as true & finding their way into a text book & then being copied ad. lib. until people come to forget on what a slender basis of proof they really rest.

I hope that things go well with you in Oxford & hope to be able to send you a few odd things.

It was very kind of Horn to promise you the Anthrop. photos. but they don't belong to him but to Pillen who handed them over on the distinct understanding that copies were not to be given away without his permission. However we can let you have some much better ones now.

Yours very sincerely

W. Baldwin Spencer.