

Langley Lodge, Headington Hill, Oxford

Aug. 30.

(22)

My dear Spencer

I have been owing you a letter for ages & beg forgiveness for the long delay. The fact is I was in India when your last letter came & ever since I got back I have been in a state of rush - trying to cope with work which accumulated while I was away & at the same time to deal with current work which has been exceptionally heavy. Correspondence has gone to pot in consequence. I was awfully glad to get your letter & news. It is sad to think of your having retired from Melbourne University, especially as you are still full of go & have so much knowledge to disseminate around. Still you have earned your rest. I am very glad that you are doing a general account of Australian aborigines. It will be very welcome

to all of an ethnologist, but it is a big piece of work. It certainly wants doing, the local differentiations are very important & I hope you will deal with the distribution of particular types of appliances, as that will be of great value to museum curators and others. You mention having sent some things per C. T. Rice, a Rhodes Scholar, but I do not think that he has turned up at the museum. I will make enquiries & try to get into touch with him & also ask for the specimens - for which, in any case, heartiest thanks. Things have been coming in to the Museum apace & I want another building badly. I brought back a collection from the Naga Hills, Assam. I spent three months among the Nagas,

visiting most of the tribes & covering about 800 miles (including a run down into Manipur, to Imphal, the Capital). In the Naga Hills proper there are no roads, & only jungle paths & it is all walking or riding. I found it very strenuous work, averaging 10 miles a day in great heat, especially as my heart had gone to bits at the end of the war. Through my having overcome it a bit doing Red X work abroad. However I got through fairly well, with only one bad heart attack. I got malaria all right, but that is inevitable & I don't see how it can be avoided. I was immensely interested in the Nagas. They are excellent savages, some of them quite intelligent. Nearly all the time I was either with Mutton or Mills, both very keen on the Natives whose affairs they administer as I.C.S. men. They have written excellent books on the

of the tribes. The Eastern Nagas are still
inveterate head-hunters & hardly touched
by civilized contact. I must say that those
who still carry on the practice are far
more interesting than those that don't.
They are more virile & alert & of course
preserve the old time culture — and
they didn't seem to want my head.
The motto in the Hills should be "Memento
rebus in arduis servare — capitem"
otherwise you lose your capitem & the
Nagas get the 'memento'. From a
technological point of view they are
most interesting & I managed to
discover some new points, one of
which (a peculiar type of fishing trap)
helps to link their culture with
that of peoples as far East as Santa Cruz
Is. & the Solomonous. I can now trace
this trap through Burma, the Malay
Peninsula, Borneo to New Guinea
& Melanesia. It is the same with
their fire-making method which

carries as far as The Philippines & 22
New Guinea, & there are plenty of other
links with the East. I wish I could
get back to the Naga Hills & go on with
the work, but I doubt if my doctor
would allow it even if I could afford
another trip. I wrote to George Pitt
Rivers, whom I knew in Oxford, saying
how glad I would be to have his
collection. He sent me photos of some
of the things & he evidently did very
well as a collector. Malinowski's
book is very fascinating & he
has brought out much that is
new. His collection from the Trobriands
is a very good one & I hope to get
a proportion of it. He is, as you say,
inclined to think that no one else
can do decent work, but he may
grow out of that. I was lecturing
in Manchester a little while ago
& saw Hickson who seemed very

flourishing & unchanged.
do let me hear from you again
some time. I wish there were a
chance of your coming over.
I wish so much that I had had a
chance of seeing Lady Spencer when
she was home.

Kindest regards from my wife
& self to you & yours &
good luck to you

J. C. van
Newry Waterford.