

X,  
✓

Melbourne.

(4)  
Aug 18. 98

My dear Balfour,

It is ages since  
I heard from you & when you  
have time you might send me  
a line giving me some news of  
how things are going on in Oxford.

Last mail I had a note from  
W Partington telling me that he  
was just bringing out a new part  
of his album which we shall be  
very glad to see as it ought to  
contain many Australian things.

The immediate purpose of this  
note is to ask you about Tylor: is he  
well or ill? the reason is thus. Some

little time ago. Howitt sent some  
to him a ms. written by Miss Howitt  
dealing with the folk lore etc of  
Victorian tribes & containing some valuable  
& interesting matter - asking his help  
& advice with regard to publishing - A  
post card in reference to it has just  
come from Tylor the manner of which  
makes me fancy that he may be  
ill & that Miss Howitt are evidently  
a little troubled about it - so I  
promised Howitt to write to you & ask  
if perchance you know anything of the  
ms. as it is likely that Tylor would  
show it to you. I have written

to him two or three times about filling  
my work of which Macmillan  
send him but have not heard about

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it from him which is a little  
strange. Mr. Frazer has been  
most kind to us - going through  
the first proofs & is now undertaking  
the final revision. He is a splendid  
man. On the top of other

work the courtesy of proofs speaks  
are more than true as I have a  
good deal of original post logical work  
on hand & it will be no little  
relief when the book is off my hands.

Trust if you will find of some  
interest to you & we are hoping that it  
will prove to be of value as, I think  
it is the most complete account of  
an Australian tribe yet published.

It is wonderful, when once you get  
beneath the surface, what a lot there

is to be found out; the difficulty is to get beneath the surface & there are very few men like Fuller who will keep peeping away and refuse to be beaten.

Until one has actually worked amongst savages it is hard to realize how difficult it is to get at the truth but I am in hope that at all events our work will not contain any gross inaccuracies.

Probably Rotté will by now have sent you a copy of his last paper in which is put forth his idea with regard to Totems. It seems to me to be simply & entirely wrong. The idea of the old men part of all inferior condition on the younger & then the latter combining to force the old men into a compromise is exactly what could never take place

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in a savage people. He will  
 not hear of Potem in his tribes  
 having, a priori, made up his mind  
 that such do not exist. I am  
 very sorry that he is starting his  
 work with a theory of this kind  
 as he will read it into all the  
 facts which he discovers & is bound  
 to distort these in accordance with  
 it. The terms which he has  
 invented are simply hideous & he  
 writes as if Howitt & Fison & others  
 had never done any work on  
 classificatory systems in Australia.  
 However he is still hard at work &  
 has wonderful chances - better far  
 than any one else out here.

A few days ago I had a cattle  
rag in that Oxford was vacant  
which I take to mean that Langford  
has resigned. I suppose that  
the post will go to Bourne under  
Ledgwick care to abby. In many  
ways Bourne will make a good  
man for the place but I wish that  
he would do a little more work.

I had thoughts of applying but with  
Bourne in the field it is hardly  
worth while + at this distance  
even if we had done any amount  
of work it would not, and most  
naturally, be appreciated at home.

However when one one has been  
out of England for some years +  
has travelled at all one gets to

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feel that after all England is  
not the only country in the  
world and that it is quite  
possible to work contentedly elsewhere -  
especially in a place like Australia  
when there is so much that is new.

If only we were with in a fortnight  
of Eureka it would make a lot of  
difference.

Howitt is at present at work  
on a kind of Geo magazine dealing  
with the classificatory system of

Australian Fishes generally: he has been  
at it for two or three years past, so  
that in course of time we may hope  
to really know something about the  
Australian aborigines though we can  
never make up the loss of the

lost early years of colonization - for  
it was in many respects the abnormal  
coast tribes which most wanted  
studying - now they are practically  
all extinct. In Victoria there is not  
a single native who really knows  
anything of tribal customs.

Let me have a line from you before  
long - you can hardly realize how  
refreshing it is to hear about what is  
going on at home.

Yours very sincerely  
W. Baldwin Spencer.