

Melbourne.

(36)

Feb 4. 1901.

My dear Frazer

Many thanks
for your letter. I hope that
your Italian trip will do
Mrs Frazer all the good that
you desire it may and that
you are both very much enjoying
it.

Shortly after your letter came
the second edition of the G. B. It
is simply splendid: very many
thanks for your kindness in
sending me a copy. I have
had three solid days at it and
have been through it rather
rapidly but will shortly have
another go at it. The
more general parts when you

summarize matters - such as the page dealing with magic & religion & the debt we owe to savages - are delightful as is especially the closing paragraph which, despite the criticism of some accurate minded geographers, I am very glad that you have allowed to stand.

The part dealing with Esther & Mordecai & with Jean & Barabas is intensely interesting.

The knowledge that there is some one like you who can piece together the odd fragments of information which scattered workers can acquire is a great stimulant. You may rest assured that at least Jilleu & myself will do

our best & will not disregard the smallest trifles.

Amongst other things that I want to investigate further is the question of magic connected with the Hstens such as the giving a man of another Hstem a chewing stick to help him to kill your Hstemic animal. In addition to this kind of thing there are I believe special forms of magic associated with Hstens - pointing sticks & bones etc endowed with special properties according to the Hstem of the man by whom they are made and charmed.

So far as I can see in Australia the personal Hstem is anything but primitive: it is only met with and that most rarely amongst our most modified coral tribes & is with

us a late invention. In early days the group is everything, the individual nothing & I can hardly realize a genuine ^{early} savage thinking that he had a personal totem - a something which did not belong to the group. On the other hand when the group totem was established then it is not so difficult to understand how in later days the idea of a personal totem might arise though as I said before it is only very rarely met with in Australia & never so far as I know amongst our thorough going totemistic tribes.

However this is one of the many points which only those who like yourself have a knowledge of the evidence from various quarters of the world decide upon. So far as

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I can see the Australian evidence is dead against the American theory.

Roth in Queensland is hard at work: he tells me that he has a very large amount of material - enough to make a bigger book than the "Native Tribes".

Jillien & myself are hoping to work across into Queensland so as to link on the Central tribes with those amongst whom Roth has been working. Most unfortunately the present season is a terribly bad one in Central Australia and for more than a thousand miles there is not a drop of water or a blade of grass.

It would be simply foolhardy

for us to set out under the present conditions. Our horses could only live for a few days - even camels are out of the question - & so we have decided to wait for a time in the hope that rains will fall during the next month. If they do not then we shall go north by steamer to Port Darwin & work southwards. This means of course that instead of working from the known to the unknown we are doing the opposite which will be a most serious handicap but as this year is the only one during which I can well be absent from the University & Museum we shall adopt this course rather than not

go at all. At present Filler & myself spend our days in thinking about & our nights in dreaming of droughts & floods & we are both more or less depressed.

Mr Syme has given us £1000 but under present conditions we shall want more. A year in a wild drought-stricken country is rather a serious undertaking. Mr S. does not see his way to give us more and of course as he has provided the main expenses of our trip we are else will now step in - that is we are else but here. Filler & I had a serious consultation about expenses last week & I think that it will be all right.

Please excuse so much about ourselves & our work but G. & I

have set our hearts upon doing
this bit of work + the horrible
drought + lack of funds have
been giving us 'fits of the blues'.

However we are going + before
this reaches you I have no
doubt but that the financial
difficulty will be overcome.

After this please write me to
the P.O. Port Darwin. When
opportunity offers, which will be
seldom, I will write and let
you know how we are getting on.

Meanwhile I feel equal to
the slaying of half a dozen Priests
of Nemi if only this would ensure
rain in Central Australia.

Kindest regards to Mrs Fraser
for whom father + myself will try
+ photograph a good dance but
whether it will be fit to reproduce
I am rather doubtful.

Yours very sincerely

Walden Spencer.