

FRAZER  
Melbourne. (44)  
June 7. 02.

My dear Meyer,

I scarcely know when last I wrote to you but am sure that I ought to have done so before now. Since returning my time has been so fully occupied that I seem to have done nothing except routine work. Four days after reaching Melbourne lectures began and after a year's absence in the wilds of Australia it was rather a serious matter to have to face 80 first year medical students & a few advanced ones & to deliver two sets of lectures with laboratory work which between the junior & senior students occupies most of my time from 9 am. to 5 pm daily. In addition to this I have to superintend matters in the Nat. Hist. Museum so that I hope you will understand that the amount of time which I can devote to ethnologic work is very limited.

I would like to know what you

think about Crasby's 'Mythic Race'. It seems true that he has 'run amok' in fact and that he understands nothing whatever about the feelings of the real savage.

So far as I know the latter is the person of his Australian representative he has no such idea as Mr Crasby states that he has in regard to any danger accruing to himself as the result of intercommunion with an individual of the opposite sex.

As a matter of fact the first idea of an Australian native when he meets with a woman out in the bush is most certainly to have intercommunion with her. He has known been brought up under the idea that there are only certain women with whom he may lawfully do so & to a certain extent this guides his conduct but apart from this he has no idea whatever that there is any actual danger attendant upon intercommunion.

Mr Crasby seems to have no real knowledge of savages & to be a person who has got 'fabri' or the brain with the result that he

gathers together every is stated fact which is in favour of his theory & ignores every thing else.

He makes a statement & repeats it so often that he persuades himself that it is true. His idea of what I think he calls the 'wise Providence' of savages in connection with an other better managed as slides in to so that the latter shall be sure to be married made me smile & shows a total lack of understanding this aspect at least of savage life.

There is no such thing as a permanent intercommunion at any rate Australian savages.

From what you say of Mr Roscoe the work of the latter promises to be most important and of the deepest interest in view of Australian work. That Turin business is really good & a delightful bit of savage logic. We could find no trace of anything like sexual intercommunion in connection with the intercommunion such as Mr Roscoe has in the paper locust totem.

Altogether our workmen take for the

July coast) we found traces of  
iukichiuma but they have not in  
giving up their ceremonies adopted any such  
plan of praying to or propitiating their  
ancestors. We could find nothing of  
this kind amongst them.

I trust that you will not be  
disappointed with our work. We have  
nothing so new as in the last work: it  
is all a kind of elaboration of this. So  
far as the totems are concerned the most  
important part of it is that it shows  
more clearly than before the fact that  
the members of a totemic group are  
held responsible by the other groups for the  
continuance or supply of the totemic animal  
or plant.

I am writing it up as hard as I  
can but my time is very limited +  
the last vacation which I hoped to  
devote to writing has been occupied with  
a removal which affects not only  
our trend of thought but books +  
papers and after spending about a  
fortnight at the top of a ladder arranging

June 7. 02.

curtain poles + pictures I have just settled down to a fresh term's work.

I have during the past few nights been endeavoring to write the chapter on Totem + Churinga.

I am persuaded that the most primitive beliefs in Australia are to be found amongst the Central natives - and I think that we met with the really most primitive during our recent work in the Kaitish tribe which commonly inhabits the country right in the very centre of the Continent.

In this tribe a stranger coming into ~~any~~ the locality occupied by men of a totem other than his own must first of all ask the permission of the head man of the totem to eat the latter. The men of the totem are responsible for the production of the latter, they themselves, except at Intichiuma, do not eat it but they give it to the other people.

So far as I can see there is no idea

amongst our Central Australian tribes  
of Totems into useful & harmful.

I have been wondering why a certain  
then people perform witchcraft ceremonies  
for fire & Wollungwa & such things  
as "Laughing boys". They certainly do

so. The Wollungwa ceremony stands  
by itself & is the only example of anything  
like a propitiatory ceremony which we  
have come across. It is however something  
more than propitiatory as the natives  
believe that they can force the snake to  
keep quiet and do them no harm.

In the case of the fire the matter is  
rather different: fire is associated  
with hot weather and cannot come  
unless the rain falls & therefore in  
propitiatory ceremonies to increase these the  
native is really endeavouring to secure  
a good season.

I am inclined to think that in the  
early days the witchcraft ceremonies  
were concerned only with material objects  
which were of service to the natives but  
that with the development of the

Totemic idea this gradually spread  
until it embraced a variety of objects  
many of which were of no actual  
service to the natives. It is a common  
feature amongst these tribes that the names  
of Totems named after material objects  
which are of use or food to the natives  
are very much more numerous than in  
the case of Totems such as fire or  
stones or "Laughing boys".

So far as I can see there is not  
amongst our Australian tribes anything  
which could lead to the 'food' Totem  
being endogamous & the 'bad' or 'harmful'  
exogamous. The majority of our

Totems are 'food' & in the tribes  
where exogamy is concerned with  
Totemism we find of course that a  
man of one totem may not marry a  
woman of the same & in tribes such  
as the Aranda & Hantick where a

man may marry a woman of any  
Totem there is no idea that a man  
of a 'food' Totem should marry a  
woman of the same.

Two days ago I saw Atchitt: he  
has now retired from the public service

+ is at work upon his book. I hope that in the course of the next few months he will complete it. He has a really wonderful amount of material + knows more of general Australian ethnology than any of us. I am surprised to find that Stirling + myself are Hon. Members of your institute + that Howitt who is the father of real anthropology in Australia is merely a Corr. Member. Howitt is a splendid man + has done more towards the elucidation of anthropologic problems in Australia than any other man + if your Anthropol. Institute can award him a medal (and he is now a very old man) you really ought to do so.

Please give my kindest regards to Mrs. Frazer. I hope that you are feeling able to do any amount of hard work + very much wish that you + Mrs. Frazer would come + see us out here. It is very hard lines that we poor exiles should have to journey so far to see our friends.

Yours very sincerely

Walden Spencer.