

FRAZER

Melbourne

July 6.03

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My dear Storer,

To my surprise the
first proof of the book came this
evening in the form of your corrected
slips - probably that from Macmillans
will come in a day or two. Anyhow
it is a relief to see proof and the
sooner it is through the press the better
pleased shall I be. Meanwhile
I shall be really deeply grateful for
any corrections as to style or anything
else. As to style you know well
what I think of yours and how
much I envy you: - after receiving
your letter today I just went &
read the ending of the 'Golden
Bough' once more & thought that if
ever I could write in that way I
should 'die happy'. It is quite
true as you say that I 'reel off'
but then it is such second rate stuff
when it is 'reel off' that I often
feel annoyed & yet I have not the
capacity to make it better. In the

whole typescript sent home I don't think there are more than a few hundred words added from the original rough ms. as scribbled out as hard as I could for when one had gone over the field notes and thought the matter out. It is the latter which takes the time & the arrangement of material beyond hand.

My writing always strikes me as colorless & unadorned & the utmost that I can hope to do is to make the meaning clear. I am always expecting to find some literary critic saying that 'it is a pity the writer does not take the trouble to go carefully over his ms. & polish up the style.' However your previous comments have made me feel that at least matters might have been worse. Most English scientific people write abominably - save a few distinguished exceptions like Huxley and Foster - and I think that it is just as important for scientific matter to be well written as it is for literary matter. When I have written a sentence 'it gets into my head' if you understand what

I mean & even when I feel that it could be altered with advantage I cannot see how to do it.

As to your writing I cannot understand where the 'stiffness & archaic quality' is. No one would suspect that you did much scratching & blotting - the apparent ease with which you deal with an enormous amount of detail and fit each thing into its proper place is astounding. The difficulty which I have had in pieces together facts derived from different trials on a very small scale enables me to form some idea of what your difficulties must have been in writing the 'Olden Days'.

Since writing last to you I have decided to make a hasty visit to the Urubomba tribe. As I must be dealing with the more southern tribes especially the Dieri we have not troubled much about them but I can see that it is of great importance to settle on a few points amongst a tribe such as the Urubomba

where descent is counted in the female line. Lang keeps 'harping' on the point that it is only the 'Aranta spot' in which we meet with intichiuma - that for anything like 'original' evidence we must go to tribes like the Dieri where the descent is maternal.

I have also rather avoided the latter - the Uratuma because they have been so long in contact with white men. In some parts however we can still get hold of the old men & during the last week I have made arrangements with fillies to pay a flying visit to the Uratuma in the neighbourhood of Lake Eyre.

I just want to settle the point as to whether these 'maternal' tribes have intichiuma etc. or not. We have arranged through a friend - the owner of a cattle run - to have a number of old men brought together for a few days in a secluded spot. fillies, & myself will camp with them & if we do not succeed in finding out a good deal about ceremonies such as intichiuma I shall be much surprised. It will be something if we can show that

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such ceremonies of fundamental importance exist in what Lang regards as primitive tribes. We shall also enquire into other points such as the re-incarnation of ancestors - though in regard to this I am a little doubtful. This may mean a little delay in the sending back of proofs but I think that if we can show in the Uratunna, which is practically identical in all important parts with the Dieri, the existence of ceremonies similar to those of the male-descent tribes like the Arunta we shall have done something.

I leave Melbourne on July 29th, all being well, shall be back again on Aug 23rd.

I have serious thoughts of holding back the proof dealing with intricate totemic ceremonies etc. until after our return as I feel sure that we may be able to add a few bits of material importance. The other alternative is to put what we get of worth anything into an appendix

to draw attention to this in
postures. If you would be able
to spare time and be so good as
to glance over the paper for it
would save at least three months time
and I could send you immediately
after my return a number of postures
which would surely read "see
appendix for further information" with
regard to the "Auchina tribe" in the
paper I could draw attention to this.

Lang's last work has 'riled' me.
It has a marvellous aptitude for
getting hold of facts which will support
any theory which for the time being
he is supporting & utterly ignoring all
others & it would give me the
greatest pleasure to be able to prove
the existence of *Uchiclinna* in one of
his beloved ancestral descent tubes.

It might rather disconcert him.
Surely when he finds *Uchiclinna*
& *Uchiclinna* scattered broadcast over
the central area he will realize
that the *Armita* is not a mere sport.

I am just writing a preface &
am drawing attention to the fact as
you suggested we should do, that it
is only because our knowledge of the
Armita etc. is more detailed than
in the case of other tubes that it
seems to stand out as a 'sport'.

Lang of course will fall back upon
Humboldt but the fact is that the
lector never had the chance of
studying the central tube personally
save in ^{some of the} ~~the~~ ^{most} suspicious way
& that all of his recent knowledge
of them is derived from a reasoning
subject who is a German & a most
so-far-farable man but I do not believe
that he has got at the bottom of
things.

Very many thanks for your
suggestion in regard to the name of
the book. Certainly enough
the title at the head of the
proof sheets is the one which you
suggest. I sent home to
Macmillan tentatively the longer
title of "The Uchiclinna tube of the

Northern Territory of Australia! The
printer has reduced this most
wisely to exactly your title of
'The Native Tribes of Northern Australia'
and at that it shall remain.

It is not exactly correct but it is
much preferable to the longer one &
I must explain matters in the
preface.

With the great amount of work which
you have to do I feel rather ashamed
of troubling you but you can hardly
realize what your most generous help
& appreciation means to a man working
in these remote parts.

I trust that your eyes are not
giving you any further trouble &
that both you & Mrs Frazer are able
to continue your work with ease. What
about Mrs Frazer's book on 'dances'?

Any information or illustrations in
regard to Australian natives we shall of
course be only too glad to supply as
far as we can.

Yours very sincerely

W. Baldwin Spencer.