

FRAZER

Melbourne.

(66)

Aug 15.04

My dear Frazer,

I hope your work goes on well. We have been so busy here that I have had little time for writing. A week or two ago I had a letter from Howitt in regard to the "all father" question, & this week he sends me a note which he is adding to his chapter. I had not the faintest idea when writing to you of throwing any doubt on Howitt's work & writing - very far from it - but what I do feel is that if we could investigate the tribes aperiod in their primitive state with our present knowledge we should I feel certain find that the ideas which have been held with regard to their belief in anything like an 'all-father', in

in sense of the term would be considerably modified. At most he is regarded as a kindly disposed superior human being and not as a deity. To say that the Aest. tribes have a belief in a single 'god' is to read into their belief our idea of a 'god'. When Hornitt witnessed the Keornai ceremony the tribe was practically, I think, civilized - in fact he himself enumerated the reasons for the purpose & though the younger than older men in charge of the affair told him that they did as their fathers had done yet inasmuch as they had for years discontinued the practice I cannot help feeling - knowing how rapidly old customs vanish & are forgotten - that it is at least open to doubt whether their ideas had not become hazy & inevitably modified by long intercourse with white men.

However you will have discussed the matter with Hornitt. I hope have come to some satisfactory conclusion.

Today I saw Roth & he was speaking of how Lang had taken hold of a statement of his & twisted it or expressed it so as to apparently make him (Roth) an adherent of the view that the natives with whom he was dealing had an idea of a single 'god' which Roth emphatically says they have not.

I see that Lang has since ^{July 9 & 10.} 'reviewed' us in the Athenaeum.

As I expected he simply makes it an occasion for putting forth his views on one or two points. Apparently he only wishes to evidence from the Urabuma to point out that it is of no value as the Urabuma are neighbours of the Drunta. He does not make the slightest attempt to give the public any idea of the content of the book. In fact it is not a review

at all but a very one-sided
criticism in which the sole object of
the writer is to uphold one or two
theories of his own with which we
do not happen to agree. His remarks
on pure marriage are puerile. I am
only sorry that the 'review' cannot be
signed by the author.

Kindest regards to Mrs Drager. I
hope that you have been able to see
something of Hornitt whom I am sure
you will like as much as I do. His
book ought to be out soon.

Yours very sincerely

W. Malden Spencer.