

Pitt Rivers Museum ms collections

Spencer papers Box 4 Balfour [*NB these have been placed in date order rather than the order in which they were catalogued*]

Balfour 1

A Aug 5th

[The University of Melbourne.]

May 10 1897

My dear Balfour,

I have just written to Dr Tylor about some anthropological work of my own & Mr F.J. Gillen whose work you may have seen in the Horn Exped. to Cent. Aust. – of which his contribution published in his own name together with many notes given to Stirling – formed the gist. When the Exped. was over he asked me to go on working with him – accordingly I did with the result that we have now got a goodly lot of information & have I fancy worked out the Aust. Tribe fairly completely & got the social organisation & various notes with regard to fire & others. We have also got a very large & valuable series of photos. and now comes the difficulty of publishing. I have written to Dr Tylor asking him if he could help us by looking through the ms. & writing a letter if he thinks it good enough which might be sent with the ms. to a publisher. It has struck me however that possibly he may not be in good enough health to be able to do so. It is most difficult to make any arrangements with a publisher at this distance & if Tylor cant help us I am venturing to ask if you would be good enough to. I have told Tylor that on hearing from him I will send the ms. type-written to hi.. If he be ill would you mind sending me a line & can you help us in the matter.

I think it is worth publishing as much of it is brand new & carries us further into the habits & customs of the Aust. natives than we have got before.

A few days ago Mr Partington of the Brit. Mus. whom I think you know was out here. He was present during the reading of a short account of part of our work before the R.S. of Victoria and would be able to tell you something about it.

We dont want to make money out of it in fact there is no chance of that but we dont want to be landed in deep debt – which means myself as my partner cant do anything.

I hope your own work goes on well & that you are in better health.

Oxford is, to me, a most depressing place to live in despite its great attractions. We go so accustomed to bright sunshine out here that we can scarcely do without it. I have recently had three months amongst the blacks working with them morning, noon & night & find the drudgery of elementary zoology lectures somewhat trying by way of a change. Can you tell me where on earth the Cent. Aust. native got his concentric circle ornamentation from. It pervades almost all his sacred objects just as the zig-zag line does that of West. Aust. natives. Dont you think that a voyage to Aust. would do you a lot of good; if so I should be only too glad to see you & put you up for as long as you like to stay & you might combine it with a little ethnological work.

Hoping you are well believe me

W. Baldwin Spencer.

Please give my kind regards to Thomson when you see him. I owe him a letter which shall come some time.

Balfour 2

A

Melbourne

Sept 20.97

My dear Balfour,

Many thanks for your letter & offer of help.

I am afraid that there will be a good deal of difficulty in persuading any publisher to take our work. Much of it is of such a detailed description that it will be of interest to anthropologists pure & simple only. There are of course parts of general interest & the photo. illustrations will, some of them, be rather striking.

I have read a good deal of anthrop. but really doubt if the customs & organisation of any one tribe or rather group of tribes has been dealt with before in such detail. It is hard to know what to leave out. With copious illustrations – without which we shall not publish [insert] it means [end insert] a book at least half as large again, & in the same type as [illegible]'s Introd. to the Hist. of Religion'. I have just been through this & like it very much in many ways more

especially till I came to the last chapter which some how or another doesn't seem to me to fit on to the rest of the book.

It is astonishing how, when once you have spent any time amongst savages you divide Anthropol. written up as you read them into those who understand savages & those who don't. Tylor pre-eminently does, so does Frazer, [illegible, same name as above] does to a large extent, Westermarck does not & though it sounds like heresy I don't think McLennan does. Lang is a mystery to me. His "Myths Ritual & Religion" strikes me as being really good so is 'Custom & Myths; though both are very sketchy & rather give me the idea of an able man who doesn't really take a deep interest in the work but has a wonderful knack of getting hold of the leading features. His 'Modern Mythology' though it smites Max Muller hip & thigh is disappointing.

Of all English works Tylor's 'Primitive Culture' stands out as a masterpiece.

Nowadays we can hardly get anyone to record his experiences unbiased by a theory. Ellis in his Ewe-speaking & Omba & Tshi-people is simply talking the language of McLennan.

Of course I can only judge the latter as regards his Australian section but after having read & reread again several times I must confess to not being able to understand it though I think that I know the Australian pretty well. However as he deliberately declined to take any notice of recent work (which in the case of Australia would have upset his own theory) this is not perhaps to be wondered at. It need hardly be said that we owe a great deal to him but we should owe still more if he had not been so prejudicial against people whose theories did not accord with his own.

A short time ago I read through Miss Kingsley – it was just as much as I could do to get through it -- & after expecting much was greatly disappointed. It is simply waste of time for a woman to attempt to find anything out from men. What she should do is to work exclusively amongst the women. I am quite sure that there are many things pertaining to women which we men have no more chance of finding out than has a woman of discovering the things which are held sacred by men.

If an Australian black for example had the slightest idea that either Gillen or myself were attempting to get information from the women they would tell us nothing. There are secret customs amongst the women just as amongst the men but whilst [insert] (white) [end insert] men can find out 'sub-rosa' from the women, women cannot find out anything from the men & for this reason the information of a woman like Miss Kingsley is only of value in regard to secret or sacred ceremonies amongst the women. What the men tell her with regard to their sacred or secret ceremonies are just the same 'fairy-tales' as they tell to their own women. A man may, if he knows the savage tribe well enough, find out [insert] some of [end insert] the women's secrets but a woman will never find out the men's, whereupon from this point of view Miss Kingsley might as well stay at home.

In your letter you speak of certain 'schools' in regard to Australian 'art'. Such undoubtedly exists & when once Gillen & myself have got through our present work I will try & see if we can do anything with them. My present idea is that we have an Eastern, Central & Western 'school', but this idea may be upset. The first difficulty is that we have no good collection to work upon. In Melbourne we have nothing at all & in Western Australia less still. Sydney even is very poor in Australian things while Adelaide has a good deal the best Aust. Coll. & is especially well off in South & Central things. Still taking everything into account the remarkable feature of Aust. Collections is their poverty in Aust. things.

I have just been reading a small pamphlet by a man named Squires on the "Ritual, Myths & Customs of the Aust. Aborigines". The name & certain internal evidence suggests the influence of Lang & his information is not I fancy at first hand but he says distinctly that the consummation of the initiation rites consists in bleeding a man to death & then cooking [insert] & eating [end insert] their flesh. He says the man is "of high caste & without blemish" & this & one or two other things make me very suspicious indeed. I have written up to him asking for his evidence in as polite a way as I can [~~heavily crossed out illegible word~~] and hope from the tenour of his letter if he deigns a reply to be able to judge somewhat of his reliability for unfortunately we suffer much from odd statements being regarded as true & finding the way into a text book & then being copied ad lib. until people come to forget on what a slender basis of proof they really rest.

I hope that things go well with you in Oxford & before long I hope also to be able to send you a few odd things.

It was very kind of Horn to promise you the Anthropol. photos. but they don't belong to him but to Gillen who handed them over on the distinct understanding that copies were not to be

given away without his permission. However we can let you have some much better ones now.

Yours very sincerely

W. Baldwin Spencer

I hear that a "Dr" Roth" has been working amongst Queensland natives in the far north & that he has a work of 'very great value' concerning their customs in the press. I fancy it is the celebrated Roth of our times.

Balfour 3

Melbourne

Dec 2. 97

My dear Balfour,

The immediate purpose of this letter is to tell you that our old friend Roth has been at work amongst the natives of Queensland and has just published a book called "Ethnological studies among the North-West Central Queensland Aborigines". It is published by the Queensland Government & contains some valuable material. He has evidently worked in complete ignorance of what has been done by others which is certain respects makes his work all the more valuable. There are certain points on which it would have been a great advantage to him if he had known something of what had been done already by men such as Howitt.

For the various terms of relationship he has invented a series of names which I think are inadvisable as they will tend to complicate matters without any compensating advantage. The tribal name he calls a Patronym, the mother's tribal division a Gamonym & the mother's child's name he calls a Paedomatronym & the terms of relationship are either Heteronyms or Genaeonyms.

As regards the customs concerned with initiation etc he has invented the term ethnopornographical which is most objectionable. Pornographical implies something almost deliberately 'dirty' & as it is merely a matter of scientific inquiry I am very sorry that he has used this term.

If you will write to the "Home Secretary, Queensland" I am sure that he will send you a copy of the work if he has not already done so.

He has a most valuable chapter on gesture language – the best yet published so far as Australia is concerned – and altogether he must have worked hard. I do not think that any one worker has, in Australia of course, got anything like the results. The one great drawback of Roth's work is that he has looked at their customs from what you might call a dirty point of view & the expressions he uses such as 'bucks' & 'gentry' make you feel wild to think that he should spoil such a valuable piece of work in that way. It is execrably written but despite all this it is the most valuable piece of work done for many years in Australia in this line & I never thought that Roth would have stuck to a thing in this way. At home you can hardly realize the immense difficulty of working in such a climate as that of N.W. Queensland. It is simply awful. Heat, flies, mosquitos, dust, bad water or none at all & smelling [?] natives.

I am hard at work trying to finish off Gillens & my own work but it takes a lot of time.

Tomorrow I go up to Sydney to a meeting of our Aust. Ass (= Brit. Ass out here) & on the whole it is decidedly an Ass. We have to listen to idiotic papers from individuals who can't otherwise discharge an overburdened soul or liver but on the other hand it serves as a point of which for many who would otherwise not meet as Australasia is rather a big place and scientists here are about as much isolated as if at home you had one man in London another in Constantinople, another in the Congo & so on.

Thanks to the very kindly intervention of Mr Frazer, Macmillans have offered to publish for us but I am a bit afraid that when he gets the ms. with a discussion of promiscuity etc. he may cry off.

I wish that you could see my collection of Cent. Aust. things. Some time or another it will find its way into our public collection, meanwhile it is hung round my walls with the moth-eatable things in a big glass case which contains such unique specimens that I go to bed each night in fear of fire.

Partington saw some of them while he was out here and I tried to persuade him to get the Brit. Mus. to offer Gillen £200 or £300 to secure a series for them. Gillen & myself are the only white men who have ever seen the most 'sacred' of these things & I have only got them through Gillen. In a few years they will not make them or if they do they will make them 'to

order' which means that the makers have never seen them used but that they have been told about them and are willing to manufacture them for a 'consideration'.

I see that Haddon has started out to New Guinea again. He will doubtless get a good deal of information but the more one knows of natives the more one sees that it is impossible to gain any real knowledge about them except by living amongst them for a long time. You can collect their weapons & implements but in regard to their customs & beliefs you must be thoroughly well known to & trusted by them before you get any reliable information. It is only the most sacred ceremonies which they will allow a white man whom they have known for long & thoroughly trust to see which are of real value and these I am quite sure that Haddon will not see. At home you hardly realize the fact that it is simply impossible for a man however good he may be as an observer to come out here and to get into the confidence of the natives. To do this he must live amongst them for years or else he must as in my own case be 'introduced' to them by a man like Gillen who has lived amongst them. Gillen told the Arunta blacks that I was his brother and after this they received me as one of themselves.

Jan. 28. 98

I find this epistle in my bag unfin [sic] and though it is now rather a matter of ancient history it is being sent. Since it was begun I have heard from Roth. In a critique in one of our papers I made some remarks concerning his having missed the totems but he tells me that as they did'nt [sic] fit in with those among N. Am. Indians he came to the conclusion that they were not totems in the strict sense of the word. He has been appointed medical officer or something in charge of the natives of N. Queensland & is evidently as yet keen on the work but I am much afraid that he will tire in a time though he has opportunities now such as no man has yet had out here.

In Sydney Howitt is president of the Ethnological Section of the Ass. & gave a simply masterful address on the origin of the Australian natives. He has a good grip of the requisite Anthropological, Geological & philosophical knowledge such as I think no one save himself has. Seeing that he is resident in the Colonies no one at home seems to take much notice of his were he in England he would be F.R.S. & goodness knows what.

We had some rare old philological cranks at the meetings & amidst some good work I never before heard such idiotic bosh as some of them propounded.

Old Fison was in the chair at times & the way in which he dealt with them was enough to bring down as it did the audience. I have come to the conclusion that if you have any capacity at all it is a good thing to be say 5' 10" high & proportionally broad. To see Howitt & Fison together the one whom I think you know & the other rather smaller than myself is a comic sight.

In about ten days or a fortnight I hope to have finished our ms.

There seems to be a kind of plethora just at present in the way of semi-anthropological – religious literature.

Grant & Allens ponderous tome on the 'Evolution of the Idea of God' seems to me to be made up of extracts from everybody except himself. One can imagine him saying when he peruses the volume 'where do I come in?'

Personally I prefer to read Frazer unadulterated.

Have you ever read a book called "Old New Zealand" by a "Pakeha Maori" (pub. in Auckland N.Z. 1863). If you have not you ought to. It is an account by an early visitor to N.Z. of his experiences & gives you a wonderfully bright idea of certain of their customs. This Pakeha was a man with a most remarkable sense of humour & also one who could see things from the natives point of view which as I have said before very few men out here can do.

What we want most in regard to Australian anthropology is a small committee to draw up an index expurgatorius. It is simply exasperating to see the statements which find their way into print & are accepted by European writers as gospel truths. You people at home can scarcely realize the fact that it is only about one man in a thousand who has the special ability of understanding a savage & most unfortunately he is the one man who cannot write what he knows.

A man may be really honest and well meaning but unless he can put himself into the position of a native & think as he does he will in all good faith write as some of them do the veryiest [sic] nonsense and yet because it is in black & white it is quoted & requoted until people think it is true.

I hope that things flourish with you in Oxford and would much like just now to have a look round your things in the Pitt Rivers. You have probably a better lot of Australian things there

than we have out here which is not saying very much for you I am sorry to say & now our chance has passed by.

Yours very sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer

Balfour 4
Melbourne
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 Mr 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 Australasian things. The immediate purpose of this note is to ask you about Tylor – is he well or ill? the reason is thus. Some time ago Howitt sent home 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 & Mr & Miss Howitt are evidently a little troubled about it & so I promised Howitt to write to you & ask if perchance you knew 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 Gillen's & my work proofs of which Macmillans send him but have not heard about it from him which is a little strange. Mr Frazer has been most kind to us – going through the first proof & is now undertaking the final revision. He is a splendid man. On the top of others work the correcting of proofs keeps me more than busy as I have a good deal of original zoological work on hand & it will be no little relief when the book is off my hands. Much of it 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 Gillen who will keep pegging 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 hopes that at all events our work will not contain any gross inaccuracies. Probably Roth 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 first of all imposing conditions on the younger & then the latter continuing to face the old men with a compromise is exactly what could never take place in a savage people. He will not hear of totems 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 them 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 cable saying that Oxford was vacant which I take to mean that Lankester has resigned. I suppose that the post will go to Bourne unless Sedgwick cares to apply. 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 one had done any amount of work it would not, and most naturally, be appreciated at home.

However when once one has been out of England for some years & has travelled at all one gets to 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 where there is so much that is new.

If only we were within a fortnight of Europe it would make a lot of difference.

Howitt is at present at work on a kind of opus magnum dealing with the classificatory system of Australian tribes 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 lee-way 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

Balfour 5
[Ethnographical Department
(Pitt Rivers Collection)
University Museum,
Oxford.]
23.9.98

My dear Spencer

You are quite right, I ought to have written long ere this. I think my last to you was written in December last or January. I seem to have had a very busy year, & have been abroad a bit & hence my correspondence has I fear got a bit disorganized. Pray forgive. Things here are much as heretofore, the chief excitement is caused by Lankester's translation to a higher sphere & of course the question of his successor. Now I am very sorry that you don't mean to go in for it. There are so many who would welcome you back here, and you have been gaining so much experience of the A.K. [sic, 'Animal Kingdom?'] at large. The difficulty, to my mind, about the post is that nearly everyone is a complete specialist, almost a one-group man, and for the purpose of the Honour School it is surely desirable to have as much of a generalist as possible, not too much biased by ideas as to the special & overwhelming claims of any one group. I don't mind saying this to you as I know that you can teach the subject from a general standpoint. I suppose that Weldon with his experience of teaching can do so to some extent, & he seems from what I hear to be a candidate. Of course Bourne has acquired a good deal of local influence & he is also a very estimable man & an able one, I imagine that his chance is distinctly good. All the same I am sorry that you don't put in, I always hoped that you would come back to England, here if possible, but I can well understand that Australia has its fascinations, & the fact that you have included homo in the Zoologist's fauna must make it hard to leave a part of the world where so much Anthropological research remains to be done, & must to [sic] done quickly. Your work & Gillen's will prove of very great value & we all look forward to it's [sic] publication. Your preliminary papers have interested me greatly. What a capital chap Gillen must be, he seems to have used his opportunities. I was very pleased with "Tommy" Roth's book, which came as a surprise to me as I had no idea what he was doing or exactly where he was. The information is most valuable & well collected & illustrated, the deductions must be taken cum grano, the terminology in many instances fairly "gives one the blight"! I wonder if he would collect a few specimens for my museum. There are so many things I want. I was of course delighted with the Horn exped. specimens which are a grand addition to the Museum. I have just received a lot of things from a certain E. Clement who travelled in W. and N.W. Australia up country. He brought back a large collection. Do you know of him? What is your opinion of Louis de Rougemont, we are having a dose of him in England. He appears to have been in Australia all right & some of his information seems good, but he is being so exploited by the magazine people & has to exaggerate so stupendously to see the magazine that one doesn't know how much to believe. Is any thing known of him in Australia. From his account he lived no very huge distance west of the McDonnell Range, & it seems odd that the Horn Exped. should not have heard rumours at least of him. I should like to get hold of him quietly over a pipe & pump him a bit. We had him at the Brit. Assoc. I almost envy a man who has seen a sperm whale 150 ft long, or rather a man who has the pluck (or is it cheek) to say he saw one (& caught it)! Tylor is quite well, getting rather old perhaps & he may forget things a bit. He will be back here I fancy about the 10th Oct. I will ask him about Miss Howitt's ms. of which I had not heard, I will ask him to let me see it, & if I can help in the matter I shall be very pleased. I don't quite know what he has done about your own proofs, I thought they were entirely in Frazer's hands. The latter is a capital man & I am very glad that he is helping. I hope however that he will abstain from editing your paper & will merely revise it in so far as its form may be concerned from the publishing point of view. I hope the work will soon see the light of day, & that illustrations have not been stinted at all by Macmillan. I wrote to Gillen some good time ago asking him if he could very kindly let me have photographs of his natives especially such as deal with arts, customs etc. I have not heard from him & I daresay he is far too busy to attend to "begging letters", so I haven't worried him again. Photos I find are so important an adjunct to a Museum

that I try to beg all I can for a series I am making for the Museum. My funds don't allow of my buying many in the open market, & the trade ones are apt to be unsatisfactory & made up. I am very glad that Howitt is still working away & has a book on the stocks, his work is so excellent & careful. I envied Partington his cruise around, I greatly wish I could get to Australia & see the Museums, but I don't just yet see my way to being away long enough I have no understudy who can do my work in the Museum & I have some papers I want to get off my hands. Can you or anyone trace out & map the native trade routes in Australia generally, I wish one could feel a bit clearer on this point, the general lines of dispersal of ideas from one part to another, & the extent to which the fragments of New Guinea & Malayan Culture have penetrated along trade routes (or long standing lines of communication) from the North into the remoter parts of Australia. I am busy with a monograph (to give it so dignified a title) on the Musical bow, & have a very wide distribution for it over the world. So far as I can see one or at most two centres, dispersal in early times, but I don't want to theorize & shall stick to description as far as possible. The more I go on the more I see that it is still dangerous to form theories, & I prefer to collect & collate & leave the theories to fit themselves onto masses of facts not small groups of indifferently connected examples. I wish that men like Howitt & Fison, Gillen & the "Pakeha Maori" would appear in England & come & chat over pipes now & then. I was of course delighted to see Fison when he was over, but had very little opportunity for quiet talk with him. I see you refer to "Old New Zealand" in a former letter, it is one of the best of books & simply excruciatingly funny, a talk with the Pakeha Maori would do one no end of good. My work lies amongst the arts & appliances of Man & my main object is to trace the histories of things back as far as possible using modern 'survivals' to fill the gaps in the Archaeological record. Customs myths etc. I hardly dare write about as the difficulty of getting hold of them completely is so great, & it is hard at home to sort the facts from the lies in the ordinary published accounts of more or less inaccurate observers. Moreover Tylor has a natural aptitude for this line of research & I can be relieved of the responsibility which he can so well tackle. He really is wonderful in a way, & is one of the very few stay-at-homes who can make much of the subject. He is at present ramming his head against Totems, & is somewhat fogged just now, but I fancy that your work has clear matters [sic] for him, though it is the N. American side of things with which he has been dealing.

Anson of All Souls is to be our next Vice Chancellor, I hope that he will view the Museum with a kindly eye, though I have my doubts. Science I fancy does not mean very much to him. Carfax Church has been pulled down leaving the tower only, to the great improvement of the traffic arrangements & also the appearance of that part. The Brit. Assoc. at Bristol was pretty successful, the heat was awful however. We had a few No. 1 size cranks around offering papers, & it is amusing booming them off. There were some very good papers too. I was up the Norwegian coast this summer, mostly north of the circle, with my wife & boy. We had a jolly time in the Lofoten Ids. & Tromsö, but the weather was bad & spoilt a lot of small trips I wished to make. Now I must dry up, or I shall weary you. I hope that you and yours are in the best of health. It is very jolly hearing from you now & again. When do you next come this way? Remember me to Fison & Stirling if ever you come across them –

With kindest regards

Very sincerely yours

Henry Balfour

Balfour 28

[dated from contents between December 1900 and March 1901]

[Telegrams "Aquilae London"

Telephone No. 2389 Gerrard.]

~~ROYAL SOCIETIES CLUB,~~

~~ST. JAMES'S STREET,~~

~~S.W.~~

University Museum

Oxford

My dear Spencer

I was delighted to get your letter, forwarded on to me as I was away. I was very glad that the memorial was successful, & that you and Gillen are going to continue the grand work you have begun. You will have a splendid field over the line of route you propose to follow, & it will be very interesting to trace out the connections between the art & culture of the McDonnells

Range region & of Northern Australia, & perhaps you may be able to map out the migration lines of culture & old native trade routes for the region. I do hope that you will have long enough in Tommy Roth's domain, or on the edge of it, to clear up there the question of totemism, which, as you say, one feels must exist there, at least as a remnant. Shall you be able to make large collections, or will transport be too great a difficulty. Find out all you can in regard to details of belief & practices in "Sympathetic Magic", & ideas which lie at the root of it. Shall you be able to explore the country between the upper waters of the Roper R, & the Alligator R – district. It should be interesting. I suppose that Parkes saw some of it. Try and get examples as you go along of the best efforts at realistic representations of men & animals, & ask the natives to draw profile faces, & to make the best they can of portraiture. It is rather a chance with quite untaught savages to see how their ideas run. We all here shall feel quite certain that it will be no fault of yours if your results are not splendid. We have great faith in you & know how keen you are. Naturally we shall look forward with great eagerness to the first news of you, so get something through to us as soon as opportunity offers. I suppose you will hunt for "new-mammals" amongst other things! You will have heard of the death of Sir Henry Acland, Max Müller, & Sir John Conroy at Oxford, all great losses. Acland was certainly very decrepit, but I was very fond of him & his work in getting the Museum founded & the deep interest he took in it to the end, make one miss him as a founder of science in Oxford. Hatchett Jackson is Radcliffe Librarian now, & the Museum is throwing out pseudopodia in all directions A new Pathological laboratory, a new Morphological ditto, & a new library are all large additions, & [insert] as they are [end insert] being all built in different styles (none of which are anything definite) the Museum is becoming the most heterogeneous medley of architectural horrors that can be imagined. However inside is better than out. The Pitt Rivers jogs along gaily, & I have had a fine year for accessions. With the Hardy collection I got a large number of good Australian things. Amongst them two of the "strangling cords" which B. Smyth describes. I believe there are but three or so known, though I may be wrong. Also I have a beaked boomerang made in two pieces, somewhat thus; a new type to me [Drawing] Also many other interesting things which are very good additions.

Now I must wish you & Gillen all prosperity, the best of luck & a safe return with heaps of information. I wish it most heartily, & I shall be quite anxious for the year to pass quickly in order that news may come of you. Tylor & Thomson would send greetings if they were here. Yours very sincerely

Henry Balfour

Thanks, I got over my typhoid fever in time, it took 6 months but I put in a trip to S. Africa for the sea voyage, & that was something. The rest was sheer waste

Balfour 6
[11 Norham Gardens,
Oxford]
30, May, 1902
My dear Spencer

I was very glad to learn that you had got safely back from your trans-Australian journey, & I congratulate you heartily on a noteworthy achievement. The undertaking must have been a very difficult one & its execution must have called for all your pluck & grit. I hear that for part of the time you were having a very bad time of it, & I'm awfully sorry to hear it. We are all looking forward to publication of some details of the trip, & later on to another epoch-making work on the natives. Did you succeed in bringing all your collections through? They must be of immense value. The collecting possibilities mentioned in one of your early letters sent down from Central Australia, fairly made one's mouth run. You must have revelled in stone knives. Amongst other things, I am eager to know if you met with any kinds of wind instruments of music (noise), also what forms of spear throwers ("womera") you met & in what districts, also what methods of fire marking, & to what districts they belong. I greatly wonder what forms of totemism you came across & whether you have managed to upset Roth's views in his own territory.

I hope that there is a chance of our seeing you over here before very long. I badly want a talk with you.

The Pitt Rivers Museum progresses favourably in spite of its meagre funds, but one badly wants information at first hand, & that is a commodity with which you must be fairly bubbling over. Do contrive to come over before very long. I hope you got a letter from me at Port

Darwin. I sent a short one there to welcome you on your arrival. I daresay you found a goodly bundle of correspondence awaiting you at the P. restante. I expect you will be far too busy to send me a line for some time, but I hope I shall hear, at any rate indirectly, that you are none the worse for the arduous journey & that Gillen too is flourishing.

Things here jog along much as usual Tylor is resigning the keepership of the museum, & that office will probably be abolished & a "Secretary to the Delegates" appointed. A general statement of University needs is in preparation. Science naturally has very extensive needs to announce. It is to be hoped that some pious donor or donors will provide the University with a really substantial sum to set it on its legs again, as we are awfully pinched for lack of funds. At any rate a statement of pressing needs should draw attention to our poverty as well as to our more laudable aims. I could just do with £20,000 to £25,000 for the Pitt Rivers partly for building & equipment, partly for income. Well, I am looking forward to seeing an account of your great doings, & I send my heartiest congratulations to you & to Gillen (who, however, wont know who I am) It is a great relief to know that you are safely through –

With kindest regards & all good wishes

I am

Yrs very sincerely

Henry Balfour

Balfour 7

Melbourne

Aug 28.02

My dear Balfour,

Very many thanks for your letter which I was glad to receive – please excuse my long delay in answering it but I have been having a rather busy time since returning home as a few days after that lectures began & what with these & routine work & Museum business & the attempt to write up our results I have had very little spare time.

On the whole we had a very interesting & successful time except just towards the end when were more or less marooned on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The newspaper reports of our being in a bad way were all nonsense but they fortunately resulted in the Queensland Government sending over a little steamer to bring us away. Apart from the usual discomforts of travelling in a country where you must carry everything with you & where heat flies & mosquitos are about as bad as they can be with not a vestige of anything in the way of natural beauty to cheer you we had no hardships & enjoyed the best of health luckily avoiding malarial fever.

As you will realize it is not an easy matter to study tribes in the course of a journey over such a big tract of country & what we did was to try & work out a few typical ones where we had the best opportunity of doing this.

Most of our work is of course a kind of elaboration of what we had done before in fact fundamentally all of our central & northern tribes are closely akin but it is something to know that the customs & beliefs of the central tribes extend with of course interesting modification right on to the Gulf country.

The reincarnation theory is common to every tribe with which we came into contact & I fancy that it is widely spread over Australia or rather was until the white man civilized & spoilt the black.

Roth as you know was sure that there were no totems amongst his tribes. On our way down we met him and he now says that he was mistaken. I asked him to state this as Keane has published saying that Roth has explained all the non-eating of animals & plants by certain individuals as due to an arrangement between the older & younger men – a simply absurd statement if one knows anything of Australian natives but Roth declines to do so & told me that he was going to say nothing. In some ways he is doing really good work but he comes very little into contact with the wild savage & only knows those who are gathered into the fold of the mission station. I think that his main work will be in the direction of language (which is when once one or two Australian dialects have been carefully investigated scarcely worth doing) & in describing games & ordinary things. His Boulia & Normanton blacks are all civilized & clothed &, as he himself describes, adjoin for tea!

Roth is the same as of old and I shall be very much surprized if he does anything except publish a series of bulletins dealing with games & con...ness [illegible] & dialects & at the same time hold a very comfortable billet. He has chances such as no one else in Australia has with a perfectly free hand & also a boat at his disposal & stores to distribute among the

natives by means of which he could if judiciously used do no end of ethnologic work. He will do good work but I fear nothing at all comparable to what might be done by a man in his position & with his really unique opportunities.

I wish that you could have been with us sometimes. We saw scenes such as would have delighted you ethnologic soul but I am afraid that your museum curatorial soul would have been too much for the savage who strongly objects to parting with everything that he holds most sacred. However I have got a real live Nurtunja for you & a good many Churinga & other things of lesser value. When you come out here I will show you a big case in our Museum of sacred ceremonial objects such as will make your mouth water. They are the actual objects and in ceremonies of which we have ordinary photographic, cinematograph & phonographic records & so far as a savage race is concerned it is a satisfaction to know that we have a really complete record of one such as is now preserved in Melbourne. Of the Arunta tribe we have a complete series illustrating every implement & weapon, article of clothing & ornament, foods & better still all their sacred things such as churinga, Nurtunjas & Waningas used in sacred ceremonies.

The ordinary public does not appreciate our collection but in years to come it is some satisfaction to feel that ethnologists will do so & meanwhile I wish that you would come out here & see what we have got. I can promise you that you would not be disappointed & that your collection would benefit from your visit

Of course apart from Australian things we have little chance of securing ethnologic things as our means are almost nil.

At the present time we are in a rather bad state. The awful drought which you can hardly realize here simply denuded the whole of Australia of its resources so far as cattle & wool are concerned. Instead of counting our sheep & cattle by millions we have only odd thousands. The result is that economy is the order of the day.

Added to this our University accountant has amassed himself by embezzling £30,000 of our trust funds & on the top of this the Government purposes to cut down the annual allowances out of which salaries are paid. The result is that we are really in a very bad way. Possibly in the course of the next few months I may be at home in search of something to do.

I am getting 'full-up' of a democratic government & am regretting the time when I left the old country, where if salaries are somewhat low they are at least safe & where one is in contact with civilized society.

How are things progressing in Oxford. Tylor wrote to me a week ago & I must reply to him. I was much interested in the account of your totem 'poles': they are a great acquisition & before long I hope to have the chance of seeing them. At present all of my spare time is taken up with writing out our results & in due course I will send you a copy of the book which Macmillan is publishing. It takes a lot of thinking about & when this is done I have a more popular work to write dealing with Central Australia generally. I have just been reading Johnson's 'Uganda'. Ethnologically there is not much in it but he is an artist & I wish that I had his skill. Please write again & send me all of the Oxford news.

Yours very sincerely

W Baldwin Spencer

I hope that you manage to keep in good health if you do not there is nothing like a trip out to Australia.

Balfour 8

Melbourne

Jan 6.03

My dear Balfour,

I have been very busy during the last year & do not remember whether I have written to you or not. In a few weeks you ought to receive one or two boxes containing certain things which Gillen & I collected. Since packing them up I have learned that you have secured a collection of northern Australian things so that probably most if not all of our specimens will not be of much use to you. However there are a few things which probably you have not got, principally a Nurtunja. When the Central Australian native is civilized he will doubtless make this for sale. Meanwhile this one sent is a genuine one & it is a most difficult thing to secure because it is made for the performance of a special ceremony & is then, under ordinary conditions, taken to pieces because the human hair string which is wound round it belongs to certain individuals who are not at all anxious to part with it & also the same Nurtunya is never used for the performance of more than one ceremony.

It is rather a poor kind of thing as compared with your magnificent totem post but it will be of interest to you as very typical of Australian totemism. During transit it lost a good deal of its down but I brought with me a supply of this & replaced that which came off & I hope it will reach you in a good state. As you will see it will not be safe to keep it in the open. I have a case 8' x 12' x 8' filled with ceremonial objects – Nurtunyas, Waninyas, head dresses etc which would make you envious. The [sic] are a revelation so far as our ideas of native Australian art are concerned & I am now pondering over a chapter on this subject – the last which remains to be written of our new book which will I hope be in Macmillans hands in about two months.

I have packed the family off to the seaside and am very hard at work writing up our results. It is only when you begin to do this that you realize your ignorance.

However I do not think that we could have done much more than we did but of course with our present knowledge we could do much more if we could only go over the same ground again. However this is not possible. The last expedition added a good many grey hairs to my head or rather gave me my first experience of these & another one might turn me white.

The Northern Territory of Australia is all very well if you have not to work hard but when the exertion of writing makes you perspire so that the water streams out of you, you can understand that work of any kind is very difficult. Also you cannot get native porters, as in Africa, to carry along soda water & champagne & other luxuries.

However in a year or two Gillen & I hope to get away to study a desert tribe out to the S.W. of Lake Eyre. I wish that you could come with us. We cannot promise you much in the way of luxury but you would enjoy it immensely & when once you have really seen a savage in his own natural surroundings you can understand him in a way which no amount of reading enables you to do.

What do you think of Haddon's last book on Head Hunters? Roth writes me that the Cape York natives had been 'pulling his leg'. I do not think so. Roth is a very good man in many ways but he does not really know the native & has never got below the surface. He has never even seen an initiation ceremony & all of the natives with whom he has come into contact have been civilized. He is going on publishing his Bulletin & has a big lot of material in hand. His work on same [sic] & classification is really good but he has not had much chance of getting information in regards to 'sacred matters'. However he is sending me down a 'bulletin' dealing with 'superstitions & beliefs' or rather the proof of this which is to be issued shortly. Also I have been going through the ms. of a magnificent work by Howitt – the result of 20 years & more of correspondence & work of his own. What with this & Roth's & our own work I am pretty full & might unto bursting with Australian ethnology.

I cannot think why the ceremonies etc. of the tribes with which Gillen & myself have worked amongst seem to differ so much from those described in other parts of Australia or rather why we seem to get so much more in the way of these sacred ceremonies and can only think that it is because they have been overlooked in the other tribes.

Feb.3. 03.

I came across this unfinished letter this eveg. As is my custom I start a letter & stow it away in a drawer until a convenient time comes to finish it. By now you will probably have received the cases containing our specimens. They left the Museum some time ago.

Today I returned Roth his 'proof.' This Bulletin contains some real good stuff and you will doubtless receive a copy of it in due course.

I am still hard at work on our book but hope to send the ms. home to Macmillans in about two weeks. The drawing of implements is tedious work & occupies much time & my long vac. will be over before my work is done & then will come once more the infernal grind of lectures of which you may feel thankful that you know nothing.

We have just had a real hot week culminating in a day with 105 [degrees] in the shade followed by one with 187 [degrees] in the sun. Then after sweltering & perspiring we began to cool down.

What are you doing with yourself. I hope that you at least keep well. The Oxford climate always makes me feel very depressed and though it is rather warm here at times still this endless sunshine & bright weather is very pleasant & helps to make up for the absence of other things.

If you see Hatchett Jackson give him my best regards & also Thomson.

We never hear anything now of the morphological department. Weldon seems to have put an end to anything like morphologic work & the expiring effort of Oxford in this line was Boume's work. His text book is the best elementary work yet published & I cannot help wishing that he

had the chair. It seems ages ago since you & Bourne & Sclater & little Pöde & Tommy Roth & myself were working in the old lab but it was a very pleasant time & I wish that those of us who yet remain in the flesh could meet together for an evenings confab. I have often thought over this & really if one of you men at home could communicate with those of us who are now scattered over the world it might be possible for us to plan a meeting. Those of you who live at home are in constant touch with old friends but it would be a very great pleasure to us who are living in distant parts to have the chance of once more meeting old friends. If we had a long enough notice the original members of the 'science club' of 1885 or 1886 might come together. Think this over & if you can possibly arrange for such a meeting I will 'by hook or crook' be present.

Yours very sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer.

Balfour 9

Melbourne

July 7.1913

My dear Balfour,

Very many thanks for your letter that has just come. Needless to say I very much appreciate the honour that you propose to do me the only thing is that I do not think it quite right or justifiable that I should appear side by side with men like Lankester & Lyell. I know of course that thanks to opportunities that come to few workers, I have been able to do some good anthropological work & the capacity to do this I owe to Moseley & Tylor.

[margin note by Balfour] This relates to my having incorporated his name in the design of a stained glass window which I presented to Exeter College – to commemorate Exeter men of Science. (H.B.) [end margin note]

It was just the merest chance that when I was demonstrating for Moseley the Pitt Rivers Collection was left to the University & Moseley asked me if I would help him pack it up. Of course I went & for about a month I was daily with him & Tylor & from both of these but especially the latter I learnt much – little dreaming that I should ever come to Australia. Any work that I have done has been due to this initial stimulus of Moseley & Tylor & later & still more to that of Frazer.

I have no armorial bearings and so my initials W.B.S. must suffice and I thank you again most sincerely for the honour that you do me in associating me with such distinguished men.

As to archeological work. Your letter reached me when I was attempting to prepare a lecture that in a weak moment I consented to give on the Stone Age in Australia. As yet I have been collecting 'recent' material together with, very rarely, older – but the latter is very difficult to find. However I am going to devote time to this as soon as possible. As to recent stuff I have now apart from uncounted rough flakes etc some 16 000 specimens. I think that amongst them I have Chellean, Mousterian, Acheulian & of course Neolithic forms and all of them at the present day in use amongst the natives. When the Brit. Ass comes out next year I hope to be able to show the Anthropologists a series of stone implements that will astonish them. In Victoria & Central Australia I have roughly chipped stones which are apparently exactly similar to those of the Tasmanians in fact, if it were not for the labels attached to them I could not possibly distinguish them.

It is just possible though please do not mention it as I have not spoken to anyone here about it that I may have to run home before long for a hasty visit on business. If so I will bring my Kinemat. & Photograph records with me. They will give you a much better idea of our natives than anything you can gather from a written account. If there be any serious likelihood of my coming I will send you word.

I hope this will be in time. You know I am a wretched correspondent but this is actually catching the first possible mail.

Yours very sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer.

Will you give my regards to Hatchett Jackson & Thomson.

Balfour 10

[Morley's Hotel,
Trafalgar Square,
London.W.C.]

Jan 7. 14.

My dear Balfour,
I am working "like a nigger" – all day at the R.S.. Can you call there – I have some things that will interest you & we can lunch & discuss matters.
Yrs
W. Baldwin Spencer.

Balfour 11
[The Athenaeum,
Pall Mall. S.W.]
Feb. 3. 14.

Dear Mrs. Balfour,
I ought to have written to you before to thank you & Mr. Balfour for the two most delightful days that I have had in England. Many a time & oft I shall think of Headington & your delightful house & surroundings. Yesterday I was out beyond Leatherhead to see my old Professor, Sir Henry Roscoe & though the Downs were very beautiful, there was nothing equal to the view from your windows.
Manchester after Oxford was something truly awful though of course I did not tell them so & they gave me a degree & a most gorgeous gown.
Kindest regards & many thanks to yourself & Mr Balfour. I only wish we could see you as well as him in Australia.
Yours very sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer.
Annals & Memoirs of Court of Peking
E. Backhouse & Bland

Balfour 12
Darley,
Armadale.
University
Melbourne
22.4.14.

My dear Balfour,
Dont forget that you are staying with me out here. We cannot in Melbourne offer you such hospitality as you can in the old country – at least I cannot – but we shall be delighted to have you with us & we are hoping that the domestic servant problem will not seriously interfere with the arrangements of the many people who have offered to entertain guests.
I am wondering whether you would prefer to have a quiet weekend in Melbourne or go on one of the Excursions. Your only chance of having a quiet look round the collections in the Museum is on Sunday.
I would much like you to see the giant gum trees & the tree fern gullies & so I am trying to arrange for you together with Haddon to be taken up by motor car early on Saturday morning to a place called the Black's Spur. This will show you the pick of the gum forests & you can be back again in Melbourne in the evening & so have Sunday free.
The organized excursion to these places returns on Monday but with a motor car you can see all that is typical in the one day.
I would like you to see the material that I have in the Museum & Sunday is the only day for this. If you would prefer to spend the week-end up country please tell me & I will arrange for you.
I must confess that on my return to Australia it felt like coming back to a very "one-horse show". However there are many things out here that will interest you. I am simply head over ears in work so please excuse only this short note.
Kindest regards to yourself & Mrs Balfour.
Yours very sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer.

Balfour 13
[Darley,
Armadale.]
Aug 30. 14.
My dear Balfour,

I have just finished labelling the prints that you & Haddon left behind. Those in the right hand drawer belong to you, I think, & those in the left to Haddon. However I am wrapping them up separately & sending both lots to you so you can select which you want & send the others to Haddon.

The half plate prints of New Guinea had been taken away from one set (the left hand) so I presume that Haddon has these with him.

Your other things are being packed up and will I hope reach you in due course.

Things feel very 'flat' at present now that you are all gone & we are left to begin the usual grind of lectures.

We are realising what it would have meant if only you could have spent a month in each centre & really seen things & we could have had the chance of seeing you. I was very much disappointed to see so little of you & to be able to do so little for you but really my time was so occupied with work that I was obliged to do as Sec. for Victoria that I scarcely saw anything or anybody except for a few seconds at a time. The most annoying part was having to settle down to work in Sydney when things were not organized as they should have been. I had hoped to have been a 'free lance' there with the opportunity of attending sections. As it was during the whole meeting I only attended one sectional meeting & that a very uninteresting one at the Museum in Sydney.

In a day or two some of the overseas party will begin to return to Melbourne on their way home & we may see them for an hour or two but they will all be anxious to get back again.

The war news is not altogether reassuring & before you reach England the Germans may be in Paris – let us hope the Russians will be in Berlin.

I have sent a wire up to Darwin to Gilruth the Administrator saying that you will be passing through.

I hope you will have an interesting time on the way home – if you can get up to Java you certainly will. By the time you reach England the war will have taken a decided turn one way or another.

Of course no one is thinking about anything else & it seems a perfect farce to be going on with ordinary University work just as if nothing were happening in Europe. If only this war had not come on what a meeting we could have had in Australia.

However it might have been worse & under the circumstances I think that things passed off fairly well & hope that those who came out will not regret having attended the Australian meeting.

If only Australia were as near to England as Canada is it would be a more pleasant place to live in because then one could get home more easily & with less expenditure which is a serious item.

I can imagine how much you will enjoy your garden when you get back again. I very often think of the lovely view that I had from my bedroom window in your house. It will be many long years in Australia before we can have anything like the old associations of English scenery & you can hardly realize how much we miss that kind of thing out here. In the course of a year or two I hope to be home again.

Kindest regards to Mrs. Balfour. I trust that you will find all well on your return.

Yours very sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer.

Balfour 14
[Telephone No. 2.
Langley Lodge,
Headington Hill,
Oxford.]

Jan. 2. 1915

My dear Spencer

I have been wanting to write for a long while but what with running over to France for 2 or 3 weeks at a time, Admiralty work & trying to do Museum work as well – I am fairly stumped for time, so you must excuse me. I am off again on a mission to France the day after tomorrow. By the time this reaches you it may seem belated to wish you & Mrs & Miss Spencer the best of luck in 1916, but as it only just turned 1916 here now, as I write, I am really wishing it hard. We have started the new year with severe gales & trees have been falling all around, also the floods are well out & it still pours with rain.

One doesn't yet see daylight in the War, but as far as I can see our prospects are all right & I

feel quite optimistic in spite undesirable happenings [sic]. The strain is a long one & may for a while become more severe, but in the long run we are bound to win.

I am awfully anxious about my things, which you were sending off when you wrote in June. Nothing has yet turned up, nor have I any notice from shipping agents. You did not send a bill of lading & I don't know in what ship the things were forwarded, so I can't make enquiries. I fear I must give them up as lost on the way home, a very serious matter for me as many of the papers & a book or two are of great importance for my work & by no means easily replaced. I also had slides, notes & specimens, many of which were of value. So I am mourning the loss & abusing ships that sink & still more those who sink them. I am sorry you should have had so much trouble without the desired result.

I shall be delighted to see the collection of Australian implements put together for me by Kenyon & shall greatly appreciate this accession to the Museum, but hardly like to think of their being risked on the sea – unless they are sent via S. Africa, which is probably a safe route. The Mediterranean just now is by no means safe.

D. Mahony came to see me some while back. I was delighted to see him again. He has got a commission in the army & will no doubt do himself & Australia justice like other Australians have done. I have not yet seen Miss Stirling & do not know where she now is. I hope so very much to see her while she is over here I heard that she had left Rouen & was doing motor driving, but where I do not know.

I have visited & reported on some 50 or 60 French Hospitals so far & have done other jobs for the French Red Cross in many parts of France. I do not know how much ground I shall cover this trip.

Well I must stop now & pack up so with renewed good wishes to you all from us both & much looking forward to our next merry meeting –

Yrs very sincerely

Henry Balfour

P.S. The photos you were sending have not yet arrived.

Balfour 15

The University Of Melbourne

13. 2.15.

My dear Balfour,

How & where are you. We have not heard anything of you since the day you left but I hope you had a good trip home and managed to do & see something en route.

I have had a very busy time trying to make up arrears of work & for once have spent all the summer (your winter) in Melbourne writing amongst other things a guide to our Australian Ethnological collection.

Dont be alarmed because your box has not come. It has been packed up for long but is simply waiting until I can get Kenyon to fix up your stone collection.

Ever since the Association meeting he has been away from Melbourne. He is in charge of a department that has to deal with "drought areas" – a thing you know nothing of in England but of great importance out here. On the top of the war we are suffering from a very severe drought & he has to make all arrangements for tiding our up country settlers over bad times – seeing after supplies of seed wheat in some areas & in others looking after the removal of starving stock to distant places where they can get food.

Australia is a strange place – we are either very much up or very much down. It is a new country as you know with none of the stability of an old land with many centuries of history behind it & just now we are rather "down". However we are doing our best & are by no means downhearted & it is quite astonishing how people are giving to funds. At home of course the war is close to you but out here it is far away & the native Australian who has never been out of the country cannot naturally realize except vaguely what it really means.

We are just endeavouring to get a rally of our sportsmen – football - cricket, rowing, baseball everyone including even golfers – in order to get them to enlist. Next week we hold a big meeting in Melbourne & I have no doubt but that the result will be a big enlistment of men who will give a good account of themselves when once they are trained & they will be more quickly trained than the average man.

I wish that I were young enough & able to go out to the front but at 55 with few serviceable teeth & a knee that is liable to go at any moment this is not possible. All that I can do is to subscribe to various funds & try to get our University men to enlist.

Feb. 16

Your letter from Oxford came today. As you say the postal service was much disorganised at the beginning of the war & we did not receive your letter from Cairns or Thursday Island. I am very sorry to hear of the bad time that both yourself & Mrs Balfour have had but trust that all is well with you now.

I am adding to your collection a few things that you may be glad to have more especially one or two stone knives that it is rather difficult to secure & a few churinga. It is most exasperating to know that thanks to a German mission station in Central Australia Leipzic [sic] has secured a great collection which ought never to have gone outside Australia. These German "missionaries" have been subsidized by the Australian governments & have sent to Germany collections such as we do not possess out here.

Kindest regards to yourself & Mrs Balfour & I most sincerely hope that in the course of a year or two when this war is over & Germany is brought to understand what "Kultur" really means we may once more meet in your delightful home. Australia may have interested you very much but you can hardly understand what it means to an old Oxford man to be so far away from the old country. Mrs. Gilruth is staying with us & sends you her kindest regards. Mine also to Mrs. Balfour.

Yours very sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer.

Balfour 16
[Darley,
Armadale.]
University
Melbourne
26.2.15

My dear Balfour,

Just a line. Yesterday for the first time since you left I was able to get Kenyon down to the Museum.

He has been away from Melbourne ever since the Brit. Ass. meeting & is pretty well worn out but though very tired just as enthusiastic as ever about "stones".

As I told you he has been in charge of the distribution of wheat in our drought-stricken areas which are much the same as if a German army had been over them. He has had to supervise the distribution of £600,000 to relieve settlers & is just about played out. However In the course of the next month he is coming to the Museum with Mahony & will fix up matters in regards to the collections that are to go home to you & others. I am also sending you a few things of my own which you may be glad to have.

I will however wait for a few weeks until I see whether the German barbarians have ceased or have been made to cease their present idea of sending every ship to the bottom. If by any chance they should come out on top which is scarcely conceivable then I think that I shall take the whole of the collection into some remote part of Australia or else blow the whole museum up rather than let it fall into such barbaric hands.

16.3.15

I have been waiting in vain for Kenyon to come. He is away on a holiday & may turn up any day. Until he does I cannot make your collection complete because I dont know exactly what "stones" he wants to keep here.

I hope that by now Mrs. Balfour is quite well again. You must be having a very anxious time – it is bad enough out here but of course nothing compared with what it is in England.

I have nightmares of the Zeppelins dropping bombs on Oxford. However they have done very little damage as yet & it is difficult to understand – if they are really efficient – the very slight amount of harm that they have done.

During the course of one or two years I hope to be 'home' again.

Much as I like Australia there is no place like England & I look forward with intense pleasure to the time when I may once more see the old country. Let us hope that before that happens no German troops have landed in the old country. I don't think they will but the next few months will determine matters.

Kindest regards to yourself & Mrs Balfour
Yours very sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer.

Balfour 17

[Telephone No 2.
Langley Lodge,
Headington Hill,
Oxford.]

June 7. 1915

My dear Spencer

Many thanks for your letters. I am much distressed to hear that my letter written to Mrs. Spencer never reached her. You must have thought me both rude & ungrateful, whereas I would not be rude & I could not be ungrateful after all your kindness. I expect that the letter must have been given to a steward to post & he may not have thought it worthwhile. I apologise for the seeming neglect. I am sorry that you have exercised in mind over my box. Don't worry about it. From what you say about the things which you are so kindly adding in the way of specimens the consignment will have greatly increased in interest by the time it reaches me. I shall be awfully keen to see what you are adding to my series here. Also Kenyon's selection is sure to be of much interest. There is a type of stone axe which I am most anxious to get examples of, the [Drawing] kind with a well-defined hafting groove round it. With the exception of America (where it is very common), Australia &, to a limited extent, Denmark this type is rare, & I badly want Australian examples for comparison with New World ones. So if you can persuade Kenyon to let any of them go, they would be of very great interest here. Stone implements fascinate me & are very absorbing, & the show at your museum was a revelation in Australian varieties.

Thank you so much for having thought to send me the news of Sir F. Suttor's death. I should have remained ignorant of it but for you. I am extremely sorry to hear the sad news, as I got very fond of the old man when I stayed with him. He was awfully kind & genial & I should think would be greatly missed. I am very sorry for Miss Suttor. Miss Stirling is in London & I am greatly hoping to see her & get her to stay with us. As usual she is busying herself with doing work for others (feeding Belgians just now).

The war certainly keeps us alive here, & the appalling waste of life recorded day by day makes sad reading. So many of one's friends have gone under already. However I must say I feel optimistic still, in spite of the mean, barbarous methods of the Germans who are no better than mere cut-throats. Their "blockade" by submarines is a stupid & ineffective bit of boorish spitefulness.

Strategically it is worth next to nothing & no one is frightened. I only hope that when they go under, they will be made to reap the full reward of their savagery. Oxford has a bare third of its complement of undergrads, & those are largely physically unfit, Americans or other non-combatants. Pretty well every athlete has joined the forces. I expect you say [sic] that Poulton's son was killed recently. He was a very nice unassuming chap & a magnificent footballer. Jenkinson (the embryologist) is a great loss from the Oxford museum. He has just been killed in the Dardanelles. It is all very sad, one's friends are going so fast. As to the nett result of the war I still feel quite optimistic, but the sacrifice is awful. The Australians have been doing splendidly & I hear that their rushing of the high ground when the landing of Gallipoli was effected was as fine an achievement as ever was.

I have been awfully glad to read lately that the Australian drought is over & that there are good harvest prospects. I hope it is true. We are having a drought here now & gardens are suffering badly.

My wife, I am glad to say, is quite recovered from the effects of her operation, & is as energetic & busy as ever.

Have you published your guide to the Melbourne Museum yet? Some day I should be awfully obliged if I could have a photograph or drawing of your fishing kite from the Solomon Ids. I was only able to make a very rough sketch in a hurry. I will post to you a copy of my short monograph on Fishing-Kites which will show why I want to get all records I can of the practice & varieties of apparatus.

Did I tell you that I picked up on the way home a number of fine Melville Id. spears. They were given to Dixey in Port Darwin & he passed them on to me. Nothing like your magnificent series however.

I will write to Mrs. Spencer in a day or two & hope my letter will have better luck than the last. Please remember me very kindly to Kenyon, the Grimwades & my other friends in Melbourne – I also send my very kind regards to Mrs. & Miss Spencer, I hope you are all quite flourishing.

My wife joins me in all kinds of messages ("tante cose" as the Italians say) to your good self

Yrs ever
Henry Balfour

Balfour 18
10.7.15

I am very sorry that this note was put on one side & escaped my notice till today. We are having a vigorous recruiting week in Victoria where almost 6000 men enlisted during the week. There will be more to follow & those of us who cannot go will be doing other work.
W.B.S.

[The University of Melbourne]

10. 6. 15.

My dear Balfour,

After many months of waiting I have at last been able to get hold of Kenyon who as I told you before has been away from Melbourne. He is making for you a good representative series of stone implements in our Museum which will be sent to you & will be of use to you in your Museum. Meanwhile I am sending to England your material because though Kenyon is now free for a short time I do not really know when he will be able to complete his work in the Museum – it may be some time ahead as he is liable to go up-country at any moment. When it comes the collection will be a fairly representative one so far as Australia is concerned & Kenyon is selecting a good series for you.

Of course as you can understand the war has upset everything out here & with you at home in England it must be far worse.

Our men in Gallipoli seem to have been having a very bad time & as day after day the casualty lists are cabled out the real meaning of war is being brought home to the Australians who have never had such an experience before. It is quite a different thing from the S. African war in which a mere handful were killed.

The worst thing is that, just as with you in England, the best of our younger men are going while thousands of men whom we could better spare are not offering to go to the front.

However the government here seems at last to be waking up to the fact that some more organised plan of work is needed. Recruiting is going on fairly well but the trouble is to get the necessary material for the men and not only this but the officers to train them.

By the time this reaches you it will be just about a year ago since you left England for Australia. It has been the worst year that I ever remember but it looks as if even worse times are ahead of us.

In Oxford ordinary work must be more or less at a standstill – we of course are too far away to be effected to this extent but already we have nearly 500 of our University men at the front & more are going. Work however goes on much as usual but it feels somewhat farcical for us to be doing our usual work while this tremendous thing is going on in Europe. As you can understand it must be very difficult for the average Australian who has never been out of the country to have the slightest idea of what it really means. He cannot realize what military rule means after having lived all his life without any need of defending himself.

To our disgust the Federal government is going on with its labour policy & is about to throw the country into a state of turmoil so as to secure some legislation that it wants. Our engineers have just gone out on strike which means closing up all work-shops where munitions could be made. It would be a very good thing for our Australian workmen if they could just have the Germans here for six months. In England things seems to be now in a better state but it strikes one as lamentable that the Government is only now awakening to the fact that the scientific men should be called in to help.

It is once more a case of 'muddling through' not perhaps quite so bad as in the past but still quite bad enough.

Let me have a line from you when you have time. I trust that you & Mrs. Balfour are well & that the latter has quite recovered We are just as we were when you were here. It was a real pleasure to us to see you but I only wish you could have stayed longer & not had quite such a 'rush'.

Kindest regards to Mrs Balfour & yourself. I often think of the two days at your delightful house & am wondering whether the Germans will succeed in dropping a few bombs on the old Colleges. May we meet again soon.

All good wishes from

Yrs

W. Baldwin Spencer.

Balfour 19

[Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria.

The National Museum,
Melbourne,] 28. 1. 20.

No.

My dear Balfour,

It is ages since I have heard from or of you but I trust that all goes well with you. Did you ever receive the box containing all your papers and stone implements. Communications with England have been so irregular that one loses trace of things. The box left here on Jan 4 [insert] 4 [end insert] 1917 & I sincerely trust that it arrived safely. It had passed out of my memory until the other day when I came across a note referring to it. At the present moment I am in the midst of removing or rather packing up preparatory to this. After some 33 years of lectures one becomes rather tired of the routine work so I have resigned and hope to devote myself to Museum work and ethnology. Both of our daughters are married – one living in Scotland, the other in West Australia – so we are selling the house in Melbourne and are going to live in the country about 20 miles out of the city. The new house is really only a little bungalow on the hills but it has a good garden & orchard and a delightful outlook & is quite big enough for my wife & myself. As you know, Australian towns are merely feeble imitations of those in the old country but the wild bush amidst which we shall be living has strong attractions. We have some 20 acres of bush land with gum trees such as you saw on the hills outside Melbourne.

It seems a very long time ago since you were here and I am afraid that it will not be my fortune to see England again. So far as one can see travelling will be reserved for profiteers & the so-called "labouring classes". Let me have a line from you when you have time to write.

Oxford must be a very different place from what it was five years ago.

Melbourne is practically just what it was when you saw it.

I cannot get anything for the Museum. Sydney University has just had a benefaction of approximately £500,000 & Brisbane of £200,000 but a halfpenny to us or to Adelaide.

Kindest regards and all good wishes from

Yours very sincerely

W. Baldwin Spencer.

I have been writing with thick ink & a pen with crossed nibs [sic].

Balfour 20

[Telephone No. 2

Langley Lodge,

Headington Hill,

Oxford.]

4 Aug. 1920

My dear Spencer

I was awfully glad to hear from you & get some of your news, but I am much concerned about the evident loss of one or more letters which I sent to you during the war. They must have gone to the bottom (a fate which met other letters sent abroad) as you got no acknowledgment from me of the books, papers & collection of stone implements which you kindly forwarded on to me. They did arrive all right, much to my joy & I wrote to thank you & Kenyon. I wish I had duplicated my letters & forwarded by different mails. Judging by the state of the Mediterranean which was infested with submarines, the wonder is that any mails got through. Anyway I send you my hearty thanks for the consignment & enclose a formal acknowledgement of the most interesting series of Australian stone implements sent by Kenyon. These are very valuable to the museum & include types which were not already represented in the Museum. I don't know Kenyon's address now, but I hope that he may know how grateful I am to him. I remember so well his wonderful exhibition of implements, which was such a feature during the Brit. Ass. meeting.

There is one type of Australian axe which I cannot get hold of. It is the rather large [Drawing of two axe heads] type with groove for hafting with a bent stick. So far this have [sic] evaded me, though the type is well-known. It is so interesting to compare this with the similar grooved types from N. America. Do you know of any good-natured altruist who would spare a couple of examples for the P.R. Museum. I remember seeing one in an office in Brisbane, where it served as a letter weight (!). A delicate hint failed to dislodge it & only the tattered remnants of

what was once a conscience prevented my stealing it & doing a bolt. Consciences are incompatible with curatorial functions. Brutal methods are the thing – just as in Oxford one never gets any credit for one's labours unless one perpetually thumps a big drum & makes oneself generally unpleasant by blaring away on a trumpet. I have slaved singlehanded for the University for 35 years or so & have spent a heap of money to keep the Museum going, & have never received any encouragement, except from the outside. However I still survive & am awfully keen on the work. It is sad to hear of your resigning your post, but you have so many interests that you will be just as busy as ever, & ethnology will gain the more, & the museum will benefit from your concentration. I hope that you will thoroughly enjoy your new abode in the country, though my own recollections of "Darley" make me believe [sic] that the move will cost you many a pang. I have liked to picture you & your wife at "Darley", where I spent such a ripping time with you.

So both your girls are married and scattered far & wide. It is a sad penalty for getting on in life. Our only grandchild (aged nearly nine) is staying with us just now. Quite a jolly little person. Remembering my own early views as to middle aged people (i.e. anything over 30), I assume that she regards me as a hopelessly decadent (if not decaying) patriarch. Maybe she is right, but I don't feel old.

I heard quite incidentally through Chinnery that Lady Spencer was in England, & I have been hoping to hear from her that Oxford is one of the places which she proposes to visit. I don't know her address (Chinnery merely said Scotland) or I should have written to beg her to spare us a few days. We would so much like to have her with us. You absolutely must show up here again. I doubt if I should get out to Australia again much as I long to. I got rather bowled out during the war, as I had a roving commission on behalf of the Anglo-French Red Cross, & I managed to overdo it. Result, my heart went all to pieces & I was picked up for dead in Amiens. Got bored with being dead & came to after a couple of hours & was packed off to a military hospital in Rouen. Eventually I got home & got back to my world. I'm much better, though I have to go slow & avoid physical exertion, though how to avoid it is a puzzle to me which I have not yet solved. I had a very interesting time through the war & saw much in the French war zone, in Macedonia & N. Africa. The actual fighting lines were a great attraction & my missions were of a very varied nature & kept me on the move all the time. I was up here during term & spent my vacs on Red Cross work abroad. I was amused in Salonika at accidentally happening upon the delightful person, Mary Stirling, whom I had not seen since Adelaide. We met at a restaurant where we had severally drifted for afternoon tea [mine was Greek beer] & as I had no idea that she was there, it was some time before I took courage & accused her of being Mary Stirling. She was working like a good un for the Scottish Women who were very active in Salonika in 1916. She came & stayed with us when she got back to England.

I saw Malinowski a little while ago. He has done very good ethnol. work, & performed a masterly coup by going into partnership with one of those charming & clever Masson girls. He certainly is a lucky man!

Oxford has reverted to normal, except that the numbers of undergrads has been far in excess of normal. After years of being a garrison town it has now again the resemblance of a University.

One's work increases steadily, & the Museum grows apace. It has outgrown the original building & I badly want an extension.

Do let me hear your news now & again. This is a very rambling letter, I fear, but I have an engagement very shortly & must keep it.

Kindest regards to Lady Spencer & yourself, in which my wife joins.

Yrs ever

Henry Balfour

Balfour 21
National Museum
Melbourne
24.9.20.

My dear Balfour,

I was very glad indeed to get your letter of Aug 4. & to know that the box reached you safely. We were feeling very anxious as so many things have gone to the bottom – also I was anxious for news of you & am very relieved to hear that you are well again. Time goes by and one does not possess the resilience of thirty years ago – not that I feel much older. After 7

years of strenuous work as President of the Professional board which left me no time for research work I gradually got more & more out of touch with zoological work & realized that I was losing interest in it so I resigned on reaching the horrible age of 60. to give place to a more 'modern' man who was versed in recent methods. I must confess that I had become completely out of date but preferred to recognize this myself rather than have it pointed out to me by the Council which had the power to do so on my 60th. birthday. We have been most fortunate in Dr Agar – he is not only a good field man – having [torn] in S America – but he is very keen on & most [torn] regard to matters of heredity etc & will have a g [torn] opportunity. After 33 years of lecturing at 9 a.m. [torn] first year students it is a wonderful relief to think [torn] a morning that some one else is doing it & that you can sit down quietly in your study & work away at what you want to. It was however as you will understand somewhat of a wrench to walk out of my old Lab. & hand it over to another though nothing could have been kinder than the expressions of my old students or more courteous & thoughtful than the way in which Dr Agar acted. I go to the old Lab. every now & then but of course it only takes a year or two before an entirely new generation of students arises & one realizes fully the meaning of "A Pharoah has arisen who knows not Joseph". Taking advantage of the absence of my wife in England I sold, as you know, the old Darley & now we have a new one – only really a little bungalow – some 22 miles out of Melbourne - it is quite big enough for us in fact we cannot live save on a very modest scale but it is delightful to be in the country & to have ones own fruit & vegetables & milk & butter & flowers galore From the front verandah we look down on the little township & railway station & from the back one we walk straight out into the wild bush. For a country cottage it is not inconvenient as we have our own electric plant, hot & cold water, 'vacuum cleaners' worked by electricity, 'radiators' if we don't want fires & any amount of wood which costs me just 6/. a ton to cut. This must be almost as cheap as your fuel. The whole place is about as big as three of your rooms & of course all on one flat. I am much wondering what my wife will thi [torn] now on her way out having spent some fourteen months with our elder daughter in Scotland – she was very far from well – some form of nervous breakdown partly due to much war & other work & partly to anxiety about our two daughters' husbands both of whom by good fortune came through safely. If you should ever be near Glasgow my elder daughter (Mrs Arthur Young) lives in a most delightful spot called "Core" on the Clyde & would be very glad to see you. I have told her you & Mrs Balfour may someday announce your arrival. She has now 3 picanninies which makes one feel older. My other daughter Alline – whom you met here – lives with her husband on the land in West Australia – a very wild part – she has a little boy & is coming with him over here for the summer as there is another little one 'en route'. For many months she has had a very rough time in the 'back-blocks' & needs a rest.

I was much interested in your lecture to the Somersetshire Society more especially because it was the old Pitt Rivers collections that first gave me my real interest in Anthropology.

It was I think in 1884 or 5 that Moseley asked me if I would spend the vacation in helping to pack up the collection which was then housed at South Kensington. I did a great deal of the packing up & it was intensely interesting – have Moseley & Tylor coming in & hear them talking about things. I remember well that Moseley seemed to know a great deal more than Tylor in regard to detail & of course after his experiences on the "Challenger" he could speak of many things with first hand knowledge but Tylor with his curious way which you may remember of every now & then as it were 'drawing in his breath' – I don't know how otherwise to express it – simply fascinated me. It was intensively interesting to a young man like myself & also a great privilege to come into such personal contact with two such workers. of the two it struck me at that time Moseley had the greater technical knowledge but Tylor the wider outlook. Chinnery who met you in Oxford was in Melbourne for sometime but is now in German N.G. He left his wife behind – there was a still born child since he left & she has been in a dangerous state for weeks but I am glad to say she is now out of danger – but has been a very serious matter. C. Is a nice fellow & an excellent worker: I trust you are all well. Kindest regards

Yours very sincerely

W. Baldwin Spencer.

I wish we could hear news of your being appointed Professor.

Balfour 22

[1923][date provided from internal evidence as Balfour returned from India in January 1923]
Langley Lodge, Headington Hill, Oxford

August. 30.

My dear Spencer

I have been owing you a letter for ages & beg forgiveness for the long delay. The fact is I was in India when your last letter came & ever since I got back I have been in a state of rush – trying to cope with work which accumulated while I was away & at the same time to deal with current work which has been exceptionally heavy. Correspondence has gone to pot in consequence. I was awfully glad to get your letters & news. It is sad to think of your having retired from Melbourne University, especially as you are still full of go & have so much knowledge to disseminate around. Still you have earned your rest. I am very glad that you are doing a general account of Australian Aborigines. It will be very welcome to all of us who ethnologists, but it is a big piece of work. It certainly wants doing, the local differentiations are very important & I hope you will deal with the distribution of particular types of appliances, as that will be of great value to museum curators and others. You mention having sent some things per C.T. Ride, a Rhodes Scholar, but I do not think that he has turned up at the Museum. I will make enquiries & try to get into touch with him & also ask for the specimens – for which, in any case, heartiest thanks. Things have been coming in to the museum apace & I want another building badly. I brought back a collection from the Naga Hills, Assam. I spent three months among the Nagas, visiting most of the tribes & covering about 800 miles (Including a run down into Manipur, to Imphal, the Capital). In the Naga Hills proper there are no roads, & only jungle paths & it was all walking or riding. I found it very strenuous work, averaging 10 miles a day in great heat, especially as my heart had gone to bits at the end of the war, through me having overdone it a bit doing Red X work abroad. However I got through fairly well, with only one bad heart attack. I got malaria all right, but that is inevitable & I don't see how it can be avoided. I was immensely interested in the Nagas. They are excellent savages, some of them quite intelligent. Nearly all the time I was either with Hutton or Mills, both very keen on the Natives whose affairs they administer as I.C.S. men. They have written excellent books on some of the tribes. The Eastern Nagas are still inveterate head-hunters & hardly touched by civilized contact. I must say that those who still carry on the practice are far more interesting than those that don't. They are more virile & alert & of course preserve the old time culture – and they didn't seem to want my head. The motto in the Hills should be "Memento rebus in arduis servare – capitem" otherwise you lose your capitem & the Nagas get the 'memento'. From a technological point of view they are most interesting & I managed to discover some new points, one of which (a peculiar type of fishing trap) helps to link their culture with that of peoples as far East as Santa Cruz Ids. & the Solomons. I can now trace this trap through Burma, the Malay Peninsula, Borneo to New Guinea & Melanesia. It is the same with their fire-making method which carries as far as the Philippines & New Guinea, & there are plenty of other links with the East. I wish I could get back to the Naga Hills & go on with the work, but I doubt if my doctor would allow it even if I could afford another trip. I wrote to George Pitt Rivers, whom I knew in Oxford, saying how glad I would be to have his collection. He sent me photos of some of the things & he evidently did very well as a collector. Malinowski's book is very fascinating & he has brought out much that is new. His collection from the Trobriands is a very good one & I hope to get a proportion of it. He is, as you say, inclined to think that no one else can do decent work, but he may grow out of that. I was lecturing in Manchester a little while ago & saw Hickson who seems very flourishing & unchanged.

Do let me hear from you again sometime. I wish there were a chance of your coming over. I wish so much that I had had a chance of seeing Lady Spencer when she was home.

Kindest regards from my wife & self to you & yours & good luck to you

Yrs ever

Henry Balfour

Balfour 23

[Postcard annotated 'Baldwin Spencer's house, Armadale, Melbourne']

[Postmark 29 Mar 24]

I will write to you soon meanwhile this is only to say that I am feeling very sorry that I was not asked to sign your nomination form for the R.S. It might not have been of any use but it would have given me very peculiar pleasure to have done so.

Yrs

W. Baldwin Spencer

This is an ancient P.C. we no longer live at Armadale

Balfour 24
Royal Society
6.12.27

My dear Balfour

I have sent you a copy of "The Arunta" which Macmillans have taken an unconscionable time in printing. It represents a good deal of hard work & contains I think some new material of interest. Anyhow it is a relief to have it done & since it was off my hands I have been busy with another book to be called, I think, "Wanderings in Wild Australia" which will replace "Across Australia" & include later things & wanderings in the far north. It goes on slowly & will not be done before I must return. Am just off to Amsterdam for a few days to see picture galleries in Holland then to Scotland for Xmas to my daughter but shall be back in January & will hope to see you before returning to Australia – probably early in February. I hope you had a good time up the Amazon.

Kindest regards to yourself & Mrs. Balfour.

Yours very sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer.

Balfour 25
30 Charlotte St
W.1.
18.i.1929.

My dear Balfour,

Many thanks for your letter – I had been intending to write to you for some time but after getting the "Wanderings" through the press I had a spell. I am glad to see that you can go to S. Africa for the Brit. Ass. meeting. The anthropologists will be glad to have you there & it ought to be an interesting gathering. Personally I much dislike such assemblages but they seem to be necessary evils. I went to the Brit. Ass. at Glasgow being asked to do so from Australia but it was rather dreary & the Anthropol. section almost exclusively archaeological. Towards the end of February I am off to Tierra del Fuego in the hope of being able to see a few natives if perchance any be left. It will be getting on towards their winter but I could not leave earlier so it may simply result in nothing save a spying out of the land. Before then I want to run up to both Cambridge & Oxford & will much like to see you & will let you know the date when I can fix it.

Kindest regards to Mrs Balfour

Yours
W. Baldwin Spencer.

Balfour 26
A. 16.7.1929
c/o Anglo-South American Bank
Magallanes. Chile.
24.4.29

My dear Balfour,

After a somewhat protracted voyage of ten weeks on a cargo – frozen mutton steamer – I arrived here. This place used to be called & still is on most maps, Punta Arenas – it has now changed its name to Magallanes & is quite an interesting spot. As my boat, the "Tudorstar", (Blue Star line) did not officially carry passengers, owing I think to the fact that a higher rate of port dues is charged to passengers ships, I had to be "signed on" at a place on the wharf in Newcastle where they pick up seafaring men who are in search of a job & suddenly found myself elevated to the rank of "Purser" which fortunately included the possession of the Purser's cabin – the best of [insert] on [end insert] the boat with plenty of room to move about in. As there were no duties attached to the office I carried them out with perfect satisfaction to the Captain & had a most pleasant voyage spending most of the time in the vain attempt to master a little of the Spanish tongue – the prevalent one in these parts.

We called nowhere – in fact saw neither sun nor land – as it was, you may remember, rather a cold winter – until we went in to Cape St Vincent to signal & then on, slantwise across the Atlantic & past Fernando Noronha – a wonderfully picturesque little tropic island that you may have seen – till we saw the Brazil coast in the distance & finally called in at Deseado – a God-forsaken out-of-the-way little settlement on the southern Argentine coast. While the steamer

was loading frozen mutton which in England you probably buy & appreciate under the designation of "Best Canterbury" there was a chance of working over an old kitchen midden of the Teuelche (or Thehuelche) Indians of what was once known as Patagonia – a name now discarded. During recent years the municipal authorities have selected the same site for the general town-tip for refuse which makes rather a mix-up of old & new. However there were yet, though the "middens" had already been often searched over by an enthusiast who lives here, a few things to be found & yielded three little arrow heads two scrapers & lots of rough chipped flints. The same enthusiast kindly presented me with a few more arrow heads. I did not like to take many when he showed me his things in an old cigar box & now regret deeply that my natural diffidence prevented me from taking more as I easily could have done, because the stewards abroad took some afterwards.

[Drawings 1-6 of arrow heads]

Mine vary in size from 1-5 – the latter being a specially good one of a size, so the people here say, that was used only by "chiefs". No. 6 puzzles me. I have about a dozen of these given to me at another port further south – Santa Cruz. They are all made of a very dark almost black stone & roughly chipped. It is quite evident that they are not simple unfinished ones & as yet I cannot find out exactly what they are – they were given to me as unfinished arrow heads that had been thrown away – but I doubt if this be true & were found on the surface of the surface of the ground. However I am only at the very beginning of my work & am just groping my way along.

[Drawings 1 & 2 of throwing stones]

There seems to be two types of throwing stones (bolera). The first (1) is about double the size of the sketch – quite spherical with a very shallow groove round the equator.

[Drawing of lasso]

For their lassos with which to catch guanacos (I saw plenty of these on the pampas behind Santa Cruz) they use three stones each attached to a thong the three thongs being tied together as in the sketch. They hold the one lowest in the sketch which I think, but am not quite sure yet, is a smaller one, in the hand & while galloping along swing the other two round & round & "let go" at the guancho [sic]. The whole thing twists round the beasts legs & down it comes. At Santa Cruz the owner of an estancia about 40 miles inland to which we – that is the captain of the Tudorstar, Miss Hamilton my secretary who is very keen on the work & is going to study the native women, & myself motored out, gave me first a very fine Teuelche skull that he had dug out of a grave, secondly some of the blunt arrow heads & thirdly a beautiful bolera with thong attached & all complete, used for catching what they call 'ostriches' here (Rhea). which also I saw on the Pampas.

[Drawing of bolas & thong marked a & b]

The stone (fig 2) has a much deeper groove than the larger ones & is only about half the size of these; also whilst the latter are only 'pecked' over their surface this one is ground down quite smooth. It is almost enclosed in leather. The thong goes round the groove: at a & b it is excellently plaited & has a handle of leather (horse hide like the thong) enclosing I think a short round piece of wood. I suppose you have got plenty of these things in the Pitt Rivers but they were the first that I had seen in their home country & I hope to get much more later on. At St. Julian I visited the Frigorífico – the one place of importance in all these settlements & had my introduction to the dietary system of S. Argentine which is as follows. At 7 a.m. or thereabouts or at any time convenient to yourself you have a cup of coffee & roll: this lasts you till 12.30 when comes almuerza (z = th) our menu at the Frigorífico was – Course 1. Cold ham & sheeps tongues, plenty of the latter of course near any Frigorífico: 2 hot roast beef supplied by the ship (as no cows thrive in this country) with potatoes in their skins (all vegetable imported as there is no water for gardens) 3. liver & bacon with potatoes & cabbage – I thought this quite enough meat for one meal but to my horror it was followed by 4. hot pork chops & vegetables. Then came 5. pastry & pudding & 6 bread & cheese & coffee. Mrs. Balfour may like to know what Argentines & Chileans expect if ever any find their way to you at Oxford. When all was over I furtively undid a button or two, when my hostess was not looking, and lay back & rested. After almuerza there is a break till 8 p.m. – broken usually by a heavy afternoon tea – when cena or supper with much the same the same menu as at Almuerza.

At the present moment I am staying at a quite comfortable little hotel at Magallanes & from my window look down the Magellan straits with Tierra del Fuego on the east & away to the south the snow-clad peaks of the southern part of the Andes. In a day or two I am off on a small schooner to a little settlement called Ishuaiya on the very south of Tierra d. Fuego

where I hear there are two or three surviving Indians. As winter is coming on I may perhaps be marooned here for two or three months but if there are any Indians that will not matter. Write me a line to the Bank here – it will find me sooner or later. Kindest regards to Mrs. Balfour.

Yours sincerely
W. Baldwin Spencer

Balfour 27

[This reply to Spencer's last letter failed to reach him before he died on July 14, 1929, & was returned to me – H.B.]

[Union-Castle Line

S.S "Llandoverly Castle"]

July 16, 1929

My dear Spencer

I was awfully glad to get your letter of 24th. April from Magallanes. I had no chance of answering it before, as I was examining till the last moment before I came away for South Africa. So I am sending a line from Cape Town which we reach tomorrow evening, hoping that it will somehow find you. Your voyage out to the Straits must have been most interesting & I hope that your duties as Purser did not overwhelm you! Your Tehuelche arrowheads must be an interesting lot. As for the [Drawing] shaped one, is it perhaps one of the scrapers which were hafted by clipping between the ends of a bent stick. If the 'business' edge is bevelled this seems likely. The 'boleras' or boleadores' are very interesting things. I haven't got any of the grooved examples with their thongs in the P.R. Museum The sort that one knows best have the balls encased in hide to which the thongs are attached, some with single balls, some with two, others with three. I am very keen on the varieties of this weapon & lately rearranged my series to show varieties as far as I can & distribution. There is also a form of bolas which has the balls perforated [annotated Drawing – section] & a metal rod is rivetted [sic] through the hole & to a ring at the top the thong is fixed. I have one but do not know which people use this form. Probably the Gauchos, but I wish I knew.

I hope that you will find your Fuegians & have a good chance of studying them intensively. I wonder if you will investigate the Patagonian Channels. I suppose there are still a few Fuegians there who are not too much altered. Any you can find should be worth studying. The details of their boat life want further investigation. Anyway I am sure that you wont miss anything that is there. Try & get some of the Fuegian hafted scrapers. Some of their old camp sites on the islands should be worth digging into & might be profitable as the earlier culture is so little known. I hope that you will return via Oxford, so that I may hear of all your doings. I hope to be back early in October. So do come & stay with us if you can.

I am not sure how I am going home from S. Africa. I may have to return by mail boat from the Cape, but I am hoping to motor across Tanganyika Territory from Broken Hill to Dar-es-Salam [sic]. It can be done if there are no wash outs on the 'road', & I want to set people onto doing archaeological work in Tanganyika, as it is most important.

Well I hope this may reach you. Best of luck in your interesting venture. I'll be awfully keen to hear the results, & if possible to see you on your return.

With kindest remembrances

Yrs ever

Henry Balfour

Transcribed by Alison Petch June 2015