

Symon letter 14

Private Mail Bag, Wynbring Siding SA, 20/7/43

I can't read my writing – can you? Enclosure for your kindness

Dearest Kilmeny

What I like so much about you all – those whom I've been privileged to meet and know is your thorough entry into the hard work that is new to you all! Giving up your every hour to Service – God bless you all.

Before I came to Adelaide in 1914 (and that visit was to have been just a passing one as I was attending the 1914 Science Congress on the urgent invitation of some English Ethnologists who wanted to know all about the Australian Natives at first hand. I had met several splendid S.A. women in W.A. That was in Sept. 1899. They had come there to reside to do any work given them. Clever well educated and of good sound family but their father's fortunes had been lost in sheep and cattle and they, one and all, made good and gave the first fine cultures British “[illeg.]” to the West Australian women. The Karrakatta Club was founded mainly by them and as I had met the mother of one of these S.A. families before I left...they met me in Perth and made me a club member in Sept. 1899 and I only arrived on the 6th of Sept.!! I have lovely memories of every one of them and Kilmeny dear – is it not delightful to retain all those memories and enjoy them as I lie awake on my tent stretcher! And the memory of all you who were so decent and courteous to me – is as fresh as it was in the 1914 years and following.

You are all so busy and I can't get just the employment I'm most fitted for. I do so want to write a “Guide Book” or a book dealing with the natives, their laws, customs, groups etc. etc. for the guidance of the asses that now go missionizing and never even try to find out one essential about the natives' own social system generally.

At my camp at Ooldea (16 years there) I had garnered full knowledge of the central groups and used that with my natives – arranging the new groups as they arrived from their far away waters, following the tracks of their predecessors and never going back. A charming and quiet Bishop who had founded a Native Mission in the N.N. E. called on me one day with his chaplain and we talked of the customs and one – the most important in their system and the most necessary for mission men and women to know – he had never heard of. I remember his sorrowful look and long silence and he turned to me and said, “Mrs Bates, I wish I had known that law 40 years ago!”

These laws and things – more everlasting than the Medes and Persians – I want to write up in a simple way that even idiots can understand but I can't get either the opportunity or a body of men such as one fine first Federal Members, among whom was John Forrest. If John Forrest were alive and in power today, I should be having my little office near my MSS in Canberra and be doing a big service for those central natives and for the Govt. because the less the Govt. know about the natives the more money of the Govt. will be spent on footling schemes. And so that is off my mind, Kilmeny and I shall laugh at myself tonight over it and your reception of it!

When are you starting “America” in Adelaide? What a great chance there will be for good and clever and well bred Australians and British and Scottish women and young people to get familiar in

America in just the way that Australians go home and meet the best of our British folk. Such a gallery of lovely men and women pass before me as I write! From the late 60's onward! God rest their souls. I send my prayers nightly to them all.

And my beloved friend Arthur Mee died on May 27. (I only saw the paragraph in the Advertiser of May 28th) and I am still receiving his delightful letters, and the first three violets formed by Mrs Mee in March and the primroses and his new and lovely house, the photos of which and the description he sent me. I know nothing of the cause of his death which must have been sudden.

Do excuse this long letter; my vocal chords are beginning to disappear. I have no one to speak to. My visits to the siding twice weekly are for my mailbag and supplies and I very rarely even see a woman – tho' I believe there are four married women but I greet the new babies - there have been three and to each baby's savings box I send 5/- so the wee thing will be reminded of me.

Thanks for that Monitor and Dickens' Articles on Kent I loved it as I love anything of Dickens. I think I was 10 years old when he died, but I had already "met" him in print, as the grownups were all Dickensians. God bless you, dear friend and may you have health and strength for many years. I always "see" you working at some good thing. I don't remember seeing you sitting down, my dear love. Affly Daisy M. Bates