

Symon letter 18

Private Mail bag Wynbring Siding S.A., 10/7/44

Dearest Kilmeny

The 'Times' and your dear self are inseparable in my thoughts of you. It is so dear of you to send England's 'Spokesman' to me, so that I shall have my glimpse here in solitude of the England of my deep love and faith. That Paper never has changed its course. It is so thoroughly HOME to us all and we always know that it will be the same for evermore please God. Without what England spiritually means to us all, it would scarcely be worthwhile to trouble. Thank you again and again for the bright ray of your generous friendship. The drought is extreme here. A few 'drops' this year and last year likewise and the short hours of daylight (I use no artificial light) give me plenty of tent work. Strong winds come and have a game with my tents and there is no postponement of repairs, but as I feel I am 'England' here and everywhere, I just go on with my own light-heartedness and carry on my duties and talk to my birds meanwhile.

In my childhood our elders used to say, pointing a moral now and then: Store your little mind as you store your little body, and I was encouraged to commit to memory everything that I liked. Through the years I've done so and so my long dark and sometimes boisterous nights are passed in memories, memories of all kinds from Washington Irving's writings to Eugene Fields lovely little poems and on to our own children's poets. I've retained them all. Did you see or meet Mrs Roosevelt? I would like to roam America and see how we Britishers can truly 'contact' with her after all this noisomeness of war and I often think that if in some way we could bridge the gap (without seeming) between those great Mayflower Adventurers and their British Kin and get the two atmospheres to mix and mingle and start a new kind old contacts. Mingling the Britishness meanwhile with their Americanness! It could be done. I want to see the Virginia Dare ancestors and their descendants and our own descendants meet on high ground in those epochs. I wander off into these memories in my long wakeful hours and find no weariness or loneliness and get up every morning with the sun and go to bed with him and so pass cheerfully along towards my 85th mile stone. I am not able to write here. My things are so mixed up and there is no assorting them in this confined space and I want to write a little native book of familiar natives and their outlook on their lives and their heaven and their legends of stars and animals and their inflexible laws and customs and make it as "writtenly interesting" as I always find by talking of these things does to my hearers.

I have never liked to chronicle sadness or worries or anything but brightness to any kind native or white and I can endure my absolute solitude here with my birds as joyful visitors. I think often of you all and your many restrictions and the "snooping horrors" in connection with censorship which are no more related to war precautions than they are to anything that is British and clean.

I am waiting quietly for release from my solitude here, but I wait in brightness and hope for its coming, and cannot move one finger or one line to help or suggest that release and so I mend my tent and carry firewood in my little go cart, and the first Australian edition of my book *The Passing of the Aborigines* (issued by the Oxford University Press Leighton House, Little Collins St Melbourne but with my John Murray's name as publisher always). I hope the rich young Wats's and Ants's and all the other "letteresses" will give copies to their pals and that it will be a success in Australia, because England and England's spirit colours it all and the true black fellow is represented there.

God bless you my dearest Kilmeny. I hope we may meet again. I should so love to see the dear Adelaide faces that gave me such pleasure to meet and know and retain in memories that will never fade. I'd love to visit Adelaide and recite my reaction to the new diet I'm constantly experimenting on! It's great fun. It takes me 5 weeks - 35 days - to negotiate a cabbage. Thanks again for the Times. I've not yet had time to see more than the illustrations.

Affy Daisy M. Bates