

COPY OF LETTER FROM DAISY M. BATES TO MRS. HOSKING.

So many thanks for your beautiful thoughtfulness, but I can't touch these things.

Private Mail Bag,
Wynbring Siding, S.A.
21/12/44.

Dear Mrs. Hosking,

Have I told you that my old Natives (from 1917 in the Bight Area) have been collecting each other over these wide areas and have come to me, saying "We are not a Police Mob, Kabbarli; we are your own mobs!" Some were children (1918) at Wirilya Camp and at other camps until Ooldea (1935), and it is so happy for me to know that they are trying to gather together (in a native bush sense) all those who are yet alive and who had been with me in my first camp (all were blind, diseased, and one demented man), in my first S.A. camp. All were blind or heavily diseased. None of their living folk wanted to take charge of them, but the children of these are here - several, and though their mothers and elder sisters refused to look after their blind, they watched them during these years, and saw my work, and today I am hearing all the old gossip of those days, (and I note from it that not one incident was left unnoticed, and so my heart rejoices that those long years outside of civilization are spoken and remembered by the generations, and it fills my heart with gladness to know that they can speak of these things when I have passed on.

To think that they have memories is such a surprise, as their wandering lives keep on in restlessness. Now I have Mothers, Grandmothers, daughters and sons and fathers, and the faces of all are filled with memories. Isn't this lovely, to come to me at Christmas time! I had about 20 here this morning, and for three hours we were busy as a hive of bees - attending to each individual.

How glad and happy this has made me. I am going to make them a "Plum Pudding". (There wont be a 'plum' within cooee, but there will be thousands of things). Your darling little parcel is going holus bolus (when I've squashed it all indiscriminately with a rail bolt) into the pudding - which wont be boiled, as the ground work is Weeties or Crispies, and there will be condensed milk and mix and stewed peaches and boiled currants, and pennies wrapped in paper for the nice children (some whose mothers were wee children in those years), and I have a great big wide two-gallon tin dish; and cooked apples will be squashed up, and the top (when stiffened by heat or resting) will have a lovely topping of condensed milk (sweetened and I must have it stiff enough to slice it into as many slices as there are guests. And with the little children I'm practising games that their mothers and grandmothers remember my teaching of them ('Here we go round the Mulberry Bush' etc.) I don't have the men come unless they are ill and need attention.

(soup mix)

Dear Friend, I am going to have such a happy

Christmas as I have not known since the last one I had with them at Ooldea (700 miles west of here - where I had camped from 1919 to 1935). And they are all feeling so proud and strong with me.

"We are Kabbarli's mob," they tell the train people. They attend each train, and Heaven knows what they say to questioners - but - the good impression they make on travellers is always shown to menin the little gifts of food etc. they receive.

My success, thank God, lies and has lain with my forbearance and readiness to serve them in trouble, and never never worrying them. Their time is so short with us - more than fifty of these groups have passed on. They used not to speak of their dead, but here with me, they are so keen to let one another know, about Kabbarli" that each knows what had been done for sick and dying Mother, sister or child. I hear it all as I remember and name each little or grown-up friend.

Dear Mrs. Hosking, you will I know forgive my returning the coupons - I can't ask anyone to use them for me and I cant send them to the Commonwealth Store, and now that my natives will drink the sweetened milk in tea (they used not to like the milk taste) I can do without sugar. But your lovely little package of Mutual Tea will give me a first cup, and then I keep the leaves, for they love black tea, and boil ~~ad~~ boil it. I can't see the lines in the coupons, and what with tent mending almost hourly in these wind-swept places and the never ending activities of every day, I am racing to and fro except during meals. They let me have my simple meals in perfect quiet; I take rather a long time over my cups of tea.

I have returned to my old place in their high regard, and that is the loveliest Christmas God could give me. I do not ask them to do service of any kind - I ~~like~~ "to serve them in their illness and discomfort - and really they have in them that "nicety" of leaving you quiet and alone, that I remember among the poorer classes at home.

In the little village of Crathie, near Balmoral in Scotland, our beloved Queen Victoria used to drive in her little pony carriage and have a cup of tea at a villager's invitation. No wonder she was beloved by every one round and about. And I think there is that sense of courtesy, though unknown in 'words', in every village in our beloved England, Scotland and Wales.

I shall give them specially a two-gallon bucket of your tea (leaves) which I'm keeping after I've had my cups (two) out of each spoonful, and Nestles Milk will do for sugar; and the Plum Pudding will be 'Top Hole', please God.

And I'm going to send you a little tea towel that I have had from Northern Ireland, for you to use with your own tea cups. Others like it have gone to Red Cross and other fine

activities. I have to wash it - and as I can't wash and have no iron it - got - wet such a long time ago.

Drought continues and winds roar and tear my tent daily, and I rarely sleep on these windy windy nights. I have lost my old star companions as I cannot trace the Zodiacal or other Signs nowadays; but I often rise at or after midnight when I have waked from my first sleep, and such night walks send me back tranquilly to bed.

You won't mind that my Irish tea towel has been "washed", especially as I can't wash and have no iron. I want you really just to handle it and think of me in my present happiness of having my old friends round and about me - they have always been a sort of 'Holy Grail' to me, as I have always been trying to find out why they were passing so steadily, and I wanted to do things in my own way.

And now, with their return to me, and pride in being 'Kabbarli' Mob', I find my instincts were right, and that I took the quiet gentle way and the never faultfinding way with them.

God bless you and your dear sons, and may their services help them to take their own fine part in the Australia that will be re-made by them and all their kind.

I don't think I'll touch the Northern Ireland little teatowel; it got stained with the few raindrops that fell after a big wind. I'm afraid my Private Mailbag will not be reliable from now on. The man in charge of telephone has gone, and there is no one to take delivery of it, and only the guard on train to handle it and he may or may not throw it off the train!!

My kindest regards to you and your dear sohs. Out of range of all War matters.

Affectionately,

s/ Daisy M. Bates.