

Venice, December 18<sup>th</sup>/84

Dear Mr. Mills,

On several occasions previous to my departure from Springfield members of your family expressed a desire that I should purchase for you a picture. I do not now remember whether you expressed the same wish or not, although I have an indistinct remembrance that you did speak to me upon the subject. All of you may recollect that I said but little in reply, and it was because I knew the difficulties always in the way of executing commissions, and particularly in fine arts. That I have not written to you before has not been because I had forgotten you or did not heed your request, but because up to this fall I have never seen an opportunity when I

could secure a picture which in sub-  
ject, color, technique and price recom-  
mended me in making the outlay. I have  
seen heretofore many which were per-  
fectly satisfactory as to the first three  
particulars, but too high in price, to  
agree with my ideas of what we usually  
speak of as a bargain, and I have de-  
sired to secure you a fine work at a  
fair price. You may know that the  
mass of purchasers over here appreciate  
fine works even more than our side, ~~.....~~  
know well the value of them, and be-  
ing accustomed to values and prices they  
never hesitate when they see a thing  
they desire because of special excellence.

Then again the dealers are ex-  
cited to secure every good thing, haun-  
ting the studios daily and I may  
say nightly also, to get from the first  
laying in my work promising a good  
result. Knowing all this I have  
been spending this year directly  
among the artists, in truth I have

Spent much of my time in the studio,  
and since July I have been greatly  
favored by the breaking out of cholera,  
which frightened almost everybody, and  
caused a stampede of both travellers and  
natives, and as neither Mrs. Smith nor my-  
self feared it we decided to remain in Italy  
with our headquarters here, and I have had  
the field quite to myself. Everybody going  
away who could, ceased business of all  
kinds to languish, and also left some  
most excellent commissions upon the  
cases of the very best artists uncalled for.  
So I just stepped in when others went out  
and purchased some of the very best things  
which just before were not at my command  
at any price. And later on I secured the  
services of three of the best artists for a  
stipulated time to paint for me from na-  
ture such subjects as I selected. So I  
have spent my time with them here and  
there on the logunes, and neighboring island  
and in the byways of the city, and in  
October, we went with one of them into the

Napoli. Where I secured some choice views  
from Fano di Lodi, the Pal. di Capone and  
the Dolomites. Do you see once more the  
truth of the saying that "it is an ill wind  
that blows nobody good. This cholera has  
been a great misfortune to Italy and south-  
ern France, but alone because of its actual  
ravages but because of the complete stagna-  
tion of all business, and the entire cessation  
of foreign travel. While to me it has been favor-  
able because it has rendered possible some  
things which before were not possible.

I have also spent some time at the  
great Turin Exposition which reminded  
me of our Centennial except that it was  
not as extensive, although very large.  
Unlike ours it was for Italian products  
only, but very notable in Machinery &c.  
but particularly rich in the fine arts.  
Painting, Sculpture, Carvings, Brasses, Laces,  
Majolica, Velvets and Silks were among  
the richest I have seen, and it was alto-  
gether the finest collection of Modern work  
that has ever been brought under one roof

at any time in the history of the Italian people,  
because it is the first time they have been a  
United Country since the Roman Empire.

I made some good purchases there and  
many valuable acquaintances which will be  
of use to me in the future in art matters.

The artists with whom  
I have been engaged have about finished  
my private orders, a few needing only re-  
vising for a touch here or there as may be  
advantageous. And they are now engaged upon  
some commissions for some New York  
gentlemen which I have had confided to me,  
which will yet occupy them for perhaps five  
weeks.

If you will by early return mail  
advise me as to what sum you wish to  
place at my disposal, I will immediately  
after the receipt of your answer proceed  
to the execution of your commands with my  
best judgment and taste. I will take  
the liberty to suggest that in your own in-  
terest, and for your advantage the sum should  
be at least five hundred dollars, and a

somewhat larger sum would not be amiss. There is one at my command which I think would be most desirable, it satisfies me perfectly, the size of the canvas is about 18 x 25 inches, and it can be landed in America for seven hundred dollars. Should you favor the above purchase I will the instant I hear from you secure it to you: unless it should have been sold meantime. and in that case I will endeavor if possible to do as well in some other direction.

Now I think I have exhausted the subject, but I hope I have not your patience, I have but two requests to make in this connection, and they are first to write me at the earliest moment, because I wish to act before I start upon a contemplated tour South, the second is to let the whole matter above narrated remain between you and your family and myself. I wish nothing said or known outside as to my acts, movements, or life. I have assumed the prerogative of Royalty, and travel and move about

incog.

Now a few words about ourselves. We have had a very pleasant tour so far. We reached England on July 25<sup>th</sup> 1882, and travelled about the West of England and North Wales, the English lakes, then through Scotland as far North as Inverness, visiting all the principal lakes and cities, then South via the East coast and Great Northern Route to London. Where we remained from Oct. 21<sup>st</sup> /82 to Jan. 31<sup>st</sup> /83 thence to Paris remaining until July 7<sup>th</sup> and spent the following time up to Oct. 28<sup>th</sup> <sup>in Switzerland</sup> when we found ourselves through the St. Gotthard tunnel and at Lake Lugano. Spent eight days at the Italian lakes, then crossed at Milan, then came at Genoa. Steamed from there to Leghorn, and arrived at Naples on Jan. 16<sup>th</sup> 1884. And there enjoyed a most charming winter I ought to say Spring for it was Spring all winter. We visited the surrounding cities and islands, including Capri and Ischia, when we saw some of the horrors of an Earthquake, in which over three thousand persons lost their lives, at Casamicciola. We departed for Rome.

the last of March, and staying at Vercelli, Genoa,  
Florence, Bologna & Ferrara we reached here in  
May, and have spent the summer here except  
when in the Tyrol and our trip to Turin,  
Milan, Verona & Padua. Do you see we have  
not stepped out of Italy in almost fourteen months.  
And life is much more enjoyable in Venice in Sum-  
mer than in winter. We soon leave again for a  
Southern trip to Florence, Rome & Naples, when I  
have things I wish to do. Don't you think we have  
forgotten the little <sup>parlor</sup> in Crescent Hill where we have  
spent so many pleasant evenings. And if those are  
seen then we speak almost daily, and we hope to be  
spared to repeat those visits when we may have new  
subjects for conversation. We sincerely hope this  
will find our members of your family in good  
health. to whom Mrs Smith joins me in sending  
our kindest remembrances, as well as yourself.

Cordially yours.

G. W. V. Smith.

Always Address

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