Venice, December 18th, 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 recollection 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...
could see a picture which in subject, color, technique and price convinced me in making the offer. I have seen hundreds among which were perfect, satisfactory as to the first three particulars. But too high in price to agree with my idea of what we usually speak of as a bargain, and I have decided to secure you a fine work at a fair price. You may know that the makers of purchases over here appreciate fine works even more than ourselves, and know well the value of them, and being accustomed to value and price, they never hesitate when they get a thing they desire because of special excellence. Then again the dealers are alert to secure any good things, hunting the studios diligently and doing night work to get from the firstتراحيت in my book 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 travelers and natives, and as neither Mr. Smith nor myself feared it, we decided to remain in Italy with our headquarters here. And I have had the fields quite to myself. Everybody going away who could, caused business of all kinds to languish, and also left some unexciting commissaries upon the coals 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 heard the demand of three of the best artists for a stipulated time to paint for me from native such subjects as Eagles. So I have spent my time with them here and there on the Largenters andleighing island and in the byways of the city, and in October, we went with one of them into the
Apologies. Here I record some choice views from Tivoli, the Bal di Cadore 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 southern France, but alone, because of its actual horrors, but because of the complete stagnation of all business, and the entire cessation of foreign travel. While to me it has been favorable because it has allowed possible some things which before were but possible.

I have also spent Christmas at the great Secin Einfenstum 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 noticeable in bookbinding & c., but particularly rich in the fine arts. Painting, Sculpture, Carsino, Bronzes, lace, majolica, textiles, and laces were among the richest I have seen, and it was altogether the finest collection of modern art 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 almost finished my private orders, a few needing only revising 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 committed 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 interest and for your advantage the sum should be at least five hundred dollars, and so
somewhat larger sum would not be amiss. There is one at my command which I think must 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, write the instant I hear from you and secure it to you; unless it should have been sold meantime, and in that case I will endeavor to procure it to do as well in some other direction.

Now I think I have exhausted the subject, but I hope I have not you patience. I have but one request 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 alone 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 more about
Here are a few words about our tour. We have had a very pleasant tour so far. We reached England in July 20th, 1882, and traveled 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 Western Route to London. Then we remained from Oct. 21st to Jan. 31st, then to Paris, remaining until July 7th. And spent the following time up to Oct. 25th, when we found ourselves through the St. Gothard Tunnel and at Lake Luzern. Spent eight days at the Italian lakes, three weeks at Milan, three weeks at Genoa. Steamed from there to Leghorn, and arrived at Naples, on Jan. 16th, 1883. And there enjoyed a most charming winter. I ought to say dining in Naples, staying all winter. We visited the surrounding cities and islands, including Capri and Ischia. Then we saw some of the horrors of an Earthquake, in which over three thousand persons lost their lives, at Cassaniscola. The departure for Rome.
the last of March, and staying at Monasteria, 
Florence, Bolgheri & Pisa we reached her in 
April, and have spent the summer here. Except 
then in the Pyrenees, and our trip to Tunis, 
Milan, Vienna & Sodern. 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. Then 
have things I wish to do. Don't you think we have 
 forgotten the little we consented to? There we have 
spent so many pleasant evenings. And if there 
we can then we speak almost daily, and it helps to be 
about to repeat these visits. Then we may have new 
subjects for conversation. So sincerely hope this 
will find my string of your family in good 
health, to whom Mrs. Smith joins me in sending 
their kindest remembrances, as well as yourself.

Sincerely yours,

E. H. V. Smith

Always Obedes,

31, Boulevard Haussmann, Paris, France.